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Women between Domestication and Resistance: *Housewifization* in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah*

Widya Nirmalawati
widyanirmalawati@ump.ac.id
English Literature Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, INDONESIA

Titik Wahyuningsih
English Literature Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, INDONESIA

Sulasih Nurhayati
English Literature Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, INDONESIA

Akhmad Fauzan
English Literature Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, INDONESIA

Abstract

This research examines the representation of housewifization in Ahmad Tohari's works, Bekisar Merah and Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk. The study investigates the impact of patriarchal, economic, and state ideologies on women's social roles and identities, utilizing Maria Mies's notion of housewifization. This research investigates the placement of female characters within public and domestic spheres through qualitative descriptive methodology and textual analysis. The findings indicate that the two novels demonstrate distinct forms of housewifization. In Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, Srintil does not directly suffer housewifization since she is seen as a public woman whose body is used as a commodity by community norms. But the community does not like that she wants to live like a normal wife. On the other hand, Bekisar Merah employs the figure Lasi to show a more obvious sort of housewifization. Lasi's identity and social value are limited to doing housework, having children, and being submissive in marriage. Both works explain how patriarchal, cultural, and social power structures that are connected to each other limit women's freedom. Tohari's writings illustrate the persistent marginalization of women in both public and private spheres through these representations. This work promotes feminist literary theory by showing how Indonesian literature both reflects and opposes the ways women's roles are shaped by patriarchal society.

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Introduction

The development of feminist philosophy is closely linked to political movements advocating for gender equality and women's rights. Feminist scholars have long disputed the notion that gender disparity is normative or scientifically endorsed. Instead, they argue that patriarchal standards have historically perpetuated and socially constructed these discrepancies. Historically, most societies have been set up to favor men over women. This has resulted in gender disparity in the social, political, and economic spheres (Taylor, 1999). Feminist ideas are still growing in modern research to deal with new kinds of unfairness. D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) introduce the concept of data feminism, which examines the dynamics of power in the generation and utilization of data. Their work demonstrates that feminism encompasses more than just gender; it also addresses power dynamics in general, including who is in authority, who is not, and how to resolve these issues.

One of the most enduring social structures in human history is the patriarchal system, which has long been used to justify why men are superior to women. Men were perceived as being physically stronger than women in many old nations, which served as justification for institutions that oppressed women. Men were frequently regarded as more valuable than women in feudal and patriarchal societies, and gender rules were strictly enforced.

However, gender relations have seen significant transformation within the last century. For instance, women's rights are more acknowledged, and they now have greater access to legal, political, and economic opportunities (Akbar, 2023; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In many situations, gender inequity persists despite these advancements. According to recent research, women's economic marginalization is strongly linked to patriarchal cultural norms and uneven access to resources. For instance, Khair Amal and Ampera (2023) show how the feminization of poverty is made worse by structural limitations on economic prospects and women weakened bargaining power under paternalistic social institutions. According to their research, women often experience complicated poverty, which is made worse by social restrictions that limit them to household chores and financial reliance.

Since the eighteenth century, feminists have criticized women's marginalization. According to Brace (2000), women's social and economic standing in Europe had significantly declined during that period. Both men and women worked for pay at the time, and a large portion of the work was completed at home. But when industrial capitalism took hold, this was no longer the case. Women began working primarily to meet the demands of emerging industries as capitalist production systems developed. Instead of empowering women, this strategy frequently strengthened gender hierarchies and further disenfranchised them in both society and the workplace.

According to Mudzakkir (2021), gender bias in capitalist institutions was eventually legitimized by neoliberal economic frameworks. A number of feminist ideologies, such as liberal feminism, which highlighted women's capacity to attain equality within pre-existing socioeconomic structures, emerged as a result of these circumstances. Critics claim that this perspective occasionally overlooks the true causes of the patriarchy and capitalism that perpetuate gender inequality.

Feminist thought underwent a dramatic shift in 1963 with the release of *The Feminine Mystique*. This marked the beginning of what is now referred to as the second wave of feminism in the United States, which subsequently served as an inspiration for feminist organizations worldwide (Udasmoro & Setiadi, 2021). Radical feminist viewpoints that examined the connection between biological sex and socially produced gender roles emerged during this time.

Gayle Rubin's idea of the sex/gender system illustrates how societies turn biological differences into socially structured systems that control identity, behavior, and power dynamics (Udasmoro & Setiadi, 2021). From this perspective, the formation of masculine and feminine identities, which often perpetuate male supremacy and female oppression, is founded on the physiological

differences between men and women. Consequently, gender is perceived as a societal construct shaped by socialization processes, religious doctrines, cultural norms, and governmental policies, rather than as an inherent characteristic (Arévalo & Peñaloza, 2025). Shabir (2024) similarly emphasizes that gender roles are socially constructed expectations arising from perceived differences in the characteristics, roles, and behaviors of men and women.

Consequently, it is imperative to differentiate between sex and gender to understand the cultural preconceptions that affect women's social circumstances. This difference has led to the belief that women are naturally less capable than men in many places. Consequently, biological assumptions rather than social equality are frequently employed to assess women's negotiating circumstances (Hoyt et al., 2025). These beliefs keep people on the outside in many areas, including the workplace, politics, and how decisions are made. Consequently, women are often confined to domestic duties and primarily seen as housewives, mirroring broader patterns of gender discrimination embedded in societal frameworks.

The way men and women interact in Indonesian homes and society has long been influenced by patriarchal cultural beliefs. Men and women's perceptions of their social standing and obligations at home and in public are shaped by these standards (Amallia et al., 2024; Chin, 2018; Septiana, 2022). Throughout the New Order government, gender ideology was institutionalized through the use of familialism, a state-sponsored discourse. Women were primarily viewed as mothers and wives in this setting, while the president was referred to as the "Father of Development." In a figurative sense, the state was formed like a family. The idea that women's primary responsibilities are at home and men's primary responsibilities are to earn money was deliberately disseminated through official organizations.

According to this perspective, women's identities are primarily shaped by their responsibilities to their families. Their social worth as moms is frequently limited to bearing and caring for children. Women are expected to support and assist their husbands as spouses (Jakimow, 2018). People therefore believe that women who perform these tasks successfully are socially acceptable. The word "housewifization" is used by Maria Mies to describe the structural and cultural pressures that limit women's identities and labor to unpaid household chores.

In 1982, Maria Mies coined the term "housewifization" to characterize the perception of women as unproductive members of society and economically dependent on their husbands, despite the fact that they perform a lot of domestic work. Further examples of how internalized gender ideology causes many women to view their financial contributions as "assistance" to their spouses rather than as autonomous labor are provided by (Kusujiarti & Tickamyer, 2012). The belief that women are less competent in politics and the economy is perpetuated by government policies, cultural norms, and customs (Amallia et al., 2024).

Despite women attaining important positions in the public sphere, including political leadership, gender stereotypes frequently endure. For example, Tickamyer and Kusujiarti (2012) discuss the difficult political path of Megawati Sukarnoputri, the first female president of Indonesia. People frequently talked more about her as a mother than as a political leader, despite the fact that she accomplished something that had never been done before. This demonstrates the continued conflict between traditional gender roles and women's public authority.

Along with political and social reality, literary works both reflect and influence how society views gender roles. In addition to being a cultural artifact, literature serves as a discursive space where women's identities and experiences are created, challenged, and reinterpreted. According to Pandapatan (2025), the representation of women in Southeast Asian literature is greatly influenced by historical events, local cultural customs, and opposition to prevailing Western feminist narratives. From a decolonial feminist perspective, women can utilize literature to discuss their own experiences and question

long-standing social structures. By connecting social realities to cultural representations, these tales teach readers how gender standards are upheld or questioned in many societies.

The concept of housewifization is often reflected in literary depictions of women. Stereotypical qualities like fragility, gentleness, emotional sensitivity, and reliance are frequently linked to female characters. In patriarchal societies, these have always been associated with women in general. It is common to depict these qualities as "natural" feminine attributes. However, from the standpoint of housewifization, these attributes are more than just descriptions of women. Instead, they are ideological constructs that serve as justification for women's limited duties in the home. The social trend known as "housewifization" defines women mostly as mothers, wives, and caregivers whose work is either underappreciated or unappreciated. Stereotypes like emotionality and dependence are used in this process to justify women's exclusion from the public and commercial realms.

These traits influence how society views women and may restrict their access to leadership, work, and educational opportunities (Abdullah, 2006). Women's status as second-class citizens is reinforced by the ongoing marginalization of their rights and social circumstances. Additionally, these gender stereotypes have an impact on how society functions generally, including how individuals participate in the economy, how leaders are selected, and how choices are made.

As a result, feminist study emphasizes gender as a central social organizational principle entwined with intricate power dynamics (Barker, 2005). Numerous academics have noted that female characters in Indonesian literature are frequently depicted as being socially and economically inferior to their male counterparts. This pattern is also evident in *Bekisar Merah* (Tohari, 2011a) and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (Tohari, 2011b) by Ahmad Tohari.

Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk is a novel by Ahmad Tohari that tells the story of Srintil, a young girl from the poor village of Dukuh Paruk in Central Java. The villagers believe that Srintil has a special talent and destiny to become a ronggeng (traditional dancer). As a ronggeng, she becomes the pride of the village because her performances bring happiness and prosperity. However, her role also requires her to follow traditions that limit her freedom and place her under the control of others. While *Bekisar Merah* tells the story of Lasi, a young woman from a poor village.

Lasi is different from other villagers because she has mixed heritage, which makes her physically attractive and noticeable. Although she dreams of a better life, she faces poverty, social prejudice, and exploitation. After leaving her village, she enters the urban world, where wealthy and powerful people are interested in her beauty.

The experiences of women living in patriarchal societies are effectively depicted in these two works. Because they depict various but complementary aspects of women's experiences of housewifization, they are particularly pertinent to feminist literary analysis. While *Bekisar Merah* emphasizes the overt domestication of women within marriage and their economic dependence, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* depicts a more subtle and pernicious kind of housewifization influenced by cultural norms and communal regulation of the female body.

By analyzing these two literary works, this study aims to investigate how housewifization functions in various socio-cultural situations and narrative frameworks. This study attempts to clarify and classify the types of housewifization that the main female characters in both novels undergo in order to advance feminist literary criticism and more general conversations on gender inequality in Indonesian culture.

Methodology

Instead of using numerical data, this study uses a qualitative descriptive methodology, focusing on the interpretation of textual meanings through concepts, categories, and

linguistic units. Because it enables researchers to examine social meanings, ideological frameworks, and symbolic representations present in literary texts, qualitative research is very useful for literary studies.

Two novels written by Ahmad Tohari, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah*, which were released by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2011, served as the study's main sources of data. These books were chosen for their portrayals of women's lives in nations where males predominate and for their gripping stories that highlight the phenomenon of housewifization in a variety of social and cultural situations. Words, phrases, sentences, conversations, and narrative descriptions that highlight the roles, identities, and social circumstances of female characters are among the literary elements that this study examines.

The method of data collection is founded on the qualitative data analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, the researcher meticulously examined both novels to identify text segments relevant to the research purpose. At this point, words and sentences with dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character expressions that show diverse techniques of housewifization were meticulously written down. The research corpus for further analysis was created by putting these text bits together.

Data condensation, which involves the selection, concentration, simplification, abstraction, and modification of the gathered data, was employed in the study. At this stage, the researcher reviewed the corpus and saved only the passages that directly addressed the research question. In analytical notes, we recorded new themes, patterns, and contextual meanings. This technique allowed the researcher to analyze the data in smaller, easier-to-manage groups while maintaining their usefulness for the study's objectives.

The investigation was carried out using textual analysis, which focuses on deciphering how meaning is constructed in literary texts. The analytical process was divided into several stages. First, the shorter text data were assessed and categorized using similar themes about women's duties in the home, their financial reliance, and gendered expectations. Second, by combining the coded data into more comprehensive analytical groups, the housewifization patterns in the stories were identified. Third, by examining the narrative voice, characterization, dialogue, and plot development, we examined how gender ideology is created and perpetuated in the books.

Results and Discussion

Housewifization is the process of placing women largely in domestic duties, like being a wife or housewife, and keeping them out of or limiting their responsibilities in public or productive economic activities. Cohen (2004) came up with this word, which is often used in feminist studies. This socio-cultural phenomenon systematically exerts a considerable influence, not only concerning women's economic dependence on husbands but also in limiting their participation in the public sphere. Even if they work for the government, their job is not considered productive work that adds to the economy in the same way that men's (husbands') work is. People believe that their work is merely supporting their husbands or that it is "free" since it is "natural," whereas in reality, it is essential to the capitalist process (Amallia et al., 2024). Women can only play positions that are less powerful or more submissive in the social order.

Julia Suryakusuma first used this word in her book *Ibuisme Negara* (State Ibuism) in Indonesia. The theory explains how the Indonesian government, especially during the New Order period, used social ideas about women's duties as wives and mothers to prohibit them from being able to move around freely in society. This idea argues that the best woman is a wife and mother who is in charge of taking care of her family and her country when it is put into government policy. In Julia Suryakusuma's concept of State Ibuism (*Ibuisme Negara*), women are not completely excluded from the public or state sphere. Rather, their participation is allowed and regulated according to their roles as wives and mothers. This condition created a culture of

"following one's husband," which turned into an organization for the wives of civil servants called *Dharma Wanita* (Jakimow, 2018).

This concept is evident not just in state and communal life but also in Indonesian literature during the New Order period, particularly in Ahmad Tohari's books *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah*, through the prominent female characters Srintil and Lasi. These two female protagonists in the two novels embody the processes of domesticity and state motherhood.

As a male author, Ahmad Tohari occupies an equivocal position in depicting female autonomy and suffering. In *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah,* women are at the core of the story. By focusing on their personal struggles, Tohari makes readers feel sorry for them because they don't have many choices. But this agency is still limited since patriarchal, cultural, and economic forces keep dictating how women feel about themselves.

Tohari's portrayal does not advocate state ibuism; instead, it subtly condemns it by showing how bad it can be. Srintil's mental breakdown and Lasi's repeated assault demonstrate the detrimental effects of relegating women to roles only associated with domestic duties, procreation, or sexual activities. But this criticism is not very useful because it demonstrates that people are fighting back by suffering instead of changing. This shows that state maternalist ideology is still prevalent and that the author is part of a literary tradition that is mostly made up of men.

This state ideology makes them want to be spouses and mothers at home since those roles are considered more important than their roles in public life. The table below demonstrates how Srintil and Lasi became stay-at-home moms.

Table 1. The process of housewifization experienced by Srintil and Lasi

Aspect	**Srintil (*Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*)**	**Lasi (*Bekisar Merah*)**
Main role	*Ronggeng*/Dancer (public woman)	Wife (domestic worker)
Housewifization	Not experienced directly, but there is resistance to the desire to become a wife	Experienced explicitly in marriage
Resistance	Wanting to escape the role of a dancer, but failing	Successfully escaped from a toxic domestic role, despite facing challenges
Criticism of patriarchy	Strong, through Srintil's body as a public commodity	Strong, through violence and oppression against Lasi

1. *Housewifization* in *Ronggeng* Dukuh Paruk

The dance Ronggeng comes from Java. People generally think of mysterious things when they see the Ronggeng dance. When the dance is performed, the dancers are thought to be interacting with another planet, and the men who take part in the dance will also have supernatural experiences (Adryamarthanino & Nailufar, 2021). The art of *ronggeng* has existed for centuries, where female dancers are considered symbols of fertility and intermediaries between the earth and the other world. People in Javanese society also see Ronggeng dancers as manifestations of Dewi Sri, who is a symbol of fertility. A Ronggeng is a traditional dancer who has cultural and spiritual importance in Dukuh Paruk in the Banyumas culture. Srintil is one of these dancers. She is not only a dancer, but also a symbol of fertility and is even thought of as public property. So, she was chosen not just because she could dance and sing well, but also because the *indang* (spirit) of the last Ronggeng dancer who inhabited Srintil's body chose her. This made her good at dancing even though she had not learned how to do it previously.

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> *"In that hamlet, there was a strong belief that a true Ronggeng was not the result of teaching. No matter how much she was taught, a virgin could not become a Ronggeng unless the spirit of indang had entered her body. Indang was a kind of divine revelation that was revered in the world of Ronggeng" (Tohari, 2011b, p. 13).*

Srintil's experience of housewifization in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is influenced by the convergence of gender, rural poverty, and the cultural belief in indang. Srintil was chosen as a Ronggeng because she is a woman from a poor hamlet. This is more of a way for the community to survive than a way for her to become stronger. The *indang* belief makes her spiritually selected, which means that her body belongs to the public community instead of the private self. This role may take her away from traditional household duties, but it does not relieve her from being subordinate because of her gender. Instead, patriarchal control moves from the home to the cultural arena, where obedience and submission are seen as sacred duties.

This procedure exemplifies a non-direct approach to housewifization. Instead of being limited to unpaid household work, Srintil's reproductive and sexual labor is exploited for communal advantage under the pretext of tradition and spirituality. In a poor setting, her body becomes a symbol of reproduction and economic circulation, but her personal aspirations and freedom are stifled. Housewifization functions through cultural legitimacy and class-based vulnerability, engendering a distinctive type of gendered exploitation that precedes and ultimately precludes the prospect of an autonomous household existence.

It gets worse for Srintil when she realizes that the people in her community do not agree with her choice to abandon the social role that has been set for her, which is the *Ronggeng of Dukuh Paruk*. As the next part says:

> *"Indeed, Srintil was born to be a Ronggeng, a woman belonging to all men" (Tohari, 2011b, p. 51).*

This comment shows that Srintil, as a Ronggeng, does not have full authority over her life and body. People in society think that a Ronggeng is not a person who can choose to live a normal life or be a normal wife. As a Ronggeng, Srintil is treated like an object: her body is used to meet men's ceremonial and amusement needs. In this scenario, Srintil is not a "housewife" in the strictest sense, but she still does not have control over her body or the decisions she makes in life. So, when she says she wants to be a normal woman or *somahan*, that want is turned down. Srintil is a woman who is owned by males who can pay for her.

> *"From the people of Dukuh Paruk, I also learned about the final requirement that Srintil had to fulfill, called bukak-klambu. My hair stood on end when I found out what that requirement was. Bukak-klambu was a kind of contest, open to any man. What was being contested was the virginity of the prospective Ronggeng. The man who could hand over a sum of money determined by the Ronggeng shaman would have the right to enjoy that virginity" (Tohari, 2011b, p. 51).*

The practice of *bukak-klambu* is a ceremonial event marking a young woman's formal initiation as a ronggeng dancer. The ritual involves a competition in which men offer money for the right to be the first sexual partner of the new ronggeng turning Srintil's body into a commodity for any guy who can pay the most, as decided by the Ronggeng shaman, who is the custodian of culture. This means that she has no control over her own body. In this case, making women housewives can be perceived as taking away their choice to choose their own future and societal role. The Ronggeng shaman has decided Srintil's fate not only during the *bukak-klambu* procedure, but also in her everyday life. In the end, when Srintil steadily develops negotiating power against the Ronggeng shaman, she fights back. Srintil's resistance as a woman who belongs to the public is her wish to become a somahan woman, or a woman who works in the home. Srintil wants a regular family life, but the wider social framework that has established women's roles in society does not want her to have one. Srintil is not only forced to stay a Ronggeng, but she is also not allowed to have a household life or be a wife. This is an example

of how patriarchy does not let women choose their own social roles.

> *"On my last night in Dukuh Paruk, I could hardly sleep a wink until morning. All night long I had to deal with a woman who was driven by her instincts. A woman I wanted to think of without any label, neither as a dancer nor as a woman from Dukuh Paruk. Srintil just wanted to be known as a woman in her own right. She truly wanted to bear my child. She wanted me to stay with her in Dukuh Paruk, or to go with me and join Sergeant Slamet's group" (Tohari, 2011b, p. 105).*

> *"Srintil gave me a myriad of reasons and promises. As a twenty-year-old man, she almost made me give in. But as a child of Dukuh Paruk who knew a lot about the outside world, I had a thousand reasons to consider, even to reject Srintil's request. Srintil could have anything from me except a baby and marriage" (Tohari, 2011b, p. 106).*

The two quotes above illustrate that this novel shows that patriarchal societies do not let women choose their own roles. Women were forced by society as a whole to think that they had to have children and rely on men. However, because she was a woman and could not choose the life she wanted, her desire to fulfill her role was rejected. Her reliance on patriarchal culture is implied by the fact that society even controls her life decisions.

Srintil did not completely experience housewifization as being restricted to the home; rather, she was taken from the family and became a public commodity. This is yet another way to take advantage of women. As a representative of the Dukuh Paruk community, Rasus does not want Srintil to come back and choose the path of a normal woman, like the ladies of Dukuh Paruk who, when they become adults, become brides and housewives. Rasus' refusal reveals how strong the patriarchal structure is in a country where women still cannot say no to their own duties. The community does not see Srintil as just another lady. Instead, they see her as a symbol of fertility and the identity of their village, which is to have a Ronggeng, whose appearance the community is very excited about. Like women in cultural prostitution, Srintil is put on display, and her body is turned into a product. She does not go through the typical process of becoming a housewife, but she still lives in a patriarchal and local capitalist society where women's bodies are used for rituals and men's enjoyment.

2. Housewifization in *Bekisar Merah*

Lasi was married to a palm sap tapper named Darsa, who was a little different from Srintil, who desired to be a *somahan* woman. Lasi's major jobs were to take care of her husband and handle housework, just like most women in the village where she lived. This included everything from getting her husband's tools ready for tapping palm sap to handling all the other jobs around the house.

> *"Kang, I'm going home now. Your clothes need to be washed. I'll come back tomorrow morning".*

> *"Darsa just nodded. Then he looked at Lasi, who was wrapping up the dirty clothes, which smelled really bad" (Tohari, 2011a, p. 37).*

Lasi's job as a wife was tied to her job as a mother, which included having kids. She was busy with household responsibilities like washing clothes. Lasi, who was a physically perfect woman, felt defective since she never had children with Darsa.

> *"Three years of marriage without children often weighed heavily on Darsa. Some friends, albeit jokingly, said that Darsa was incompetent, which was why Lasi had not yet become pregnant after so long. These jokes alone were very hurtful to him. Even more so when he realized something more serious and fundamental: children are proof of self-actualization, which is very important, and at the same time, the foundation of his marriage to Lasi. As proof of marriage, the marriage certificate can be kept under the mat. But children? When Lasi is carrying a baby, Darsa can hope that all the gossip will soon disappear" (Tohari, 2011a, p. 14).*

Cohen (2004) posits that within a patriarchal-capitalist framework, women are predominantly characterized by their functions as "life givers" (biological reproducers) and familial caregivers. This function is depicted as inherently linked to

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women's identity, concealing its status as a socio-cultural construct. In Lasi's instance, motherhood is also a way for society to control people. Motherhood ideology, or idealizing the role of motherhood, is often used to keep women in the home and stop them from fully participating in the public and economic spheres. This perspective fortifies women's reliance on men and the government. Jakimow (2018) agrees with Mies that becoming a mother is a criterion of value for women, and that women who are not married or do not have children are typically seen as "imperfect" or "abnormal."

The maternal role is regarded as the fundamental identity of women, perceived as a natural and inevitable fate. This information makes Darsa, her spouse, feel unsafe. Lasi was born physically perfect as a lady, and as a wife, she was very dedicated to her husband, Darsa. However, Darsa was worried since Lasi could not have children. The housewifization of this circumstance can be linked to the fact that women will need to rely on their males in order to become pregnant because Lasi's body was tied to her mother's body, which had not yet given Darsa, her husband, any children; society's demands deemed Lasi's body defective. So, Darsa married Sipah, another woman who was not flawless but could have children for him.

Lasi did not like this and would rather leave Darsa than live with his concubine. After that, Lasi fled her village to start a new life far away from people who looked down on her.

Lasi ran away to the city after being humiliated in her marriage. As a worker and a lady from the village who was seen as "lowly," she was exploited in new ways in the city. She worked at the food booth owned by Bu Lanting. Lasi worked at the store and did basic chores around the house that were adequate to get by without getting paid, since society thought that housework was something women did and did not need any skills. People thought this role was natural or something they had to do, but it was really more of a cultural creation. The way that men and women do different chores around the house shows how uneven their power is. After staying in the city for a while, Lasi met Handarbeni, a rich retired military officer, by chance. But after they got married, she had to live a quiet life and stay inside the house. She could not work or talk to anyone outside of the house.

> *"Almost a year into her marriage to Handarbeni, Lasi had become immersed in the life of Jakarta's wealthy elite. Everything that had once been only a dream, Handarbeni had made a reality for Lasi. Mrs. Lanting was right when she said that as long as Lasi could be a beautiful, obedient doll, she would get everything she wanted. That was true. Handarbeni pampered Lasi like a bird lover cherishes his pet" (Tohari, 2011a, 190).*

> *"Yes, Las. You are indeed needed by Mr. Han, especially for display and prestige," said Mrs. Lanting once when Lasi visited her home in Cikini. "Or perhaps to maintain his image of masculinity in front of his friends and associates. Yes, after all, your husband is the CEO of a large company. So, can't you accept it?" (Tohari, 2011a, p. 191).*

After being married, Lasi had to leave the public realm and stay at home all the time. She was not allowed to work; she could only do tasks around the house.

> *"Yes, Las. Mr. Han certainly needs you—mainly as a trophy and a status symbol," Mrs. Lanting remarked one day when Lasi visited her home in Cikini"* (Tohari, 2011a, p. 191).

This is what Cohen (2004) calls "housewifization," where Lasi's productive role was taken away, and she became a complement to her husband with no chance to grow as a person. This comment demonstrates that Lasi was trapped in a home that limited her mobility and independence, both physically and mentally. In Lasi's instance, housewifization was more pronounced because she had to follow social and patriarchal conventions that only permitted women to be spouses and not explore or develop their potential outside the home. Her typical status as a woman who must obey her husband severely limits her life. This is an example of patriarchal capitalism that keeps women in jobs that are not appreciated socially or economically. Julia says that state ideology affected motherhood in Indonesia, especially during the New Order era. Women

were seen as perfect wives and mothers who were loyal not only to their families but also to the state. For Lasi, too, the most important thing for a wife to do was to be obedient so that her husband might keep his good name in the eyes of society. Housewifization is more obvious in this book. Lasi is compelled to assume a wholly domestic position, forfeiting her autonomy and lacking the opportunity for personal development. The two explanations of housewifization in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* show that society does not accept women who want to take on domestic roles. In *Bekisar Merah*, on the other hand, housewifization is more clearly defined and used by patriarchy to control women.

3. Comparative Analysis of Srintil and Lasi

Srintil and Lasi's stories show two different but related ways that women are made into housewives. Srintil's story shows how patriarchal cultural traditions can use women's bodies for the sake of the community, while Lasi's story shows how marriage and domestic ideology keep women in lower roles in the home.

Even though these two individuals are different, they both show how patriarchal civilizations limit women's freedom. Srintil is not allowed to have a family life, while Lasi is forced to have one. In both instances, women's autonomy is constrained by societal expectations that elevate male authority and communal standards over female self-determination. Ahmad Tohari's novels show how gender inequality works in both public and private life. They show that women's oppression cannot be comprehended just by looking at how they are kept in the home. Instead, housewifization is a bigger ideological tool that controls women's positions in many social institutions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how Ahmad Tohari's works *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah*, in particular, closely mirror Maria Mies's concept of "housewifization."
Both novels in this research reveal how social and patriarchal standards keep women out of public and productive places. On one hand, Srintil is not allowed to leave her social function as a Ronggeng. On the other hand, Lasi is forced to stay in the house and be a good wife. The process of housewifization that happens in both circumstances shows how women are often not given the freedom to select or modify their social roles, in public or at home.

Through the characters of Srintil and Lasi, the novels show how the intersection of capitalism, patriarchy, and state maternalist ideology affects women's lives. Capitalism seen in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is the exploitation of Srintil's body and labor is an example of capitalism. Srintil becomes a valuable resource for the village's economy as a ronggeng. Her performances bring in money, and customs like *bukak klambu* make her sexuality a commodity. Meanwhile, in *Bekisar Merah,* capitalism emerges as a result of wealthy metropolitan elites taking advantage of Lasi. She is viewed as an object that can raise the status and prestige of men due to her beauty and social fragility.

Since women's bodies are commercialized in the public sphere while their autonomy is suppressed, Srintil represents a paradoxical form of gender oppression. Lasi, on the other hand, is a more overt form of housewifization in which women are confined to household duties as obedient spouses and symbols of masculinity. Both characters demonstrate how deeply embedded cultural and societal norms restrict women's freedom of choice, despite their divergent paths.

These findings demonstrate the significance of literary texts as critical frameworks for examining how gender discrimination has permeated society. By illustrating many ways that housewifization occurs, Ahmad Tohari's writings demonstrate how patriarchal concepts operate in both public and private settings. In order to understand how cultural narratives uphold, challenge, and perhaps undermine gendered power dynamics in Indonesian culture, feminist literary analysis is crucial.

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