

## Gender and Literature: A Feminist Study in A Collection of Short Stories *Rokat Tase'* by Muna Masyari

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to reveal the gender injustice experienced by female characters using feminism theory, focusing on gender inequality from Mansur Fakhri. The object of this research was a collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'* by Muna Masyari by taking five samples from twenty short stories population. This study uses a qualitative method, namely research that examines the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument of the research. This research was a review study. Then to analyze the data, the researcher used the descriptive method. The results of this study indicate that there are gender injustices such as marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and the workload experienced by female characters in Muna Masyari's collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'*. In addition, there are traditions and rules in the household and the domination of men over women, which causes women to be powerless.

**Keywords:** *Gender inequality; female; Mansour Fakhri; short story; feminist.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Wollstonecraft (in Tong) says that women are complete human beings. In his opinion, women are not boys' toys or male bells that must ring in his ears, regardless of reason, whenever he wants to be entertained. In other words, women are not objects or tools used by men for personal satisfaction. Sex equality will be created if women and men get the same educational, political, and economic opportunities.

For this reason, feminist fighters such as Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Ally McBeal, Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mill, Taylor, Rosemarie Putnam Tong, and other feminist figures are fighting for equality between the rights of men and women. The feminist movement is a movement that demands equality between men and women, without any inequalities that harm each other. It is said that the feminist movement first exploded in America. In 1776, when America proclaimed independence, there was a declaration stating that *all men are created equal*.

The declaration immediately made feminist fighters angry and started a movement because the American government did not heed the interests of women, instead putting the interests of men above the interests of women. In 1848, the beginning of the organized feminist movement and also considered the women's great

rebellion, proclaimed another version of the American Declaration of Independence which read that *“all men and women are created equal.”*

Gender inequality in America also has an impact on the literary canon. In the 1960s, a survey revealed that male names dominated the literary canon in America. Elaine Showalter (in Djajanegara, 2000: 18) says that many literary forms, from periods, even centuries in the history of American literature, do not mention a single female writer. Therefore, women in America who wanted to write literary works had to use male pseudonyms so that their writings were accepted and published by the literary media at that time. In another attempt to revolt, the feminist movement established a publication that publishes explicitly women's writings and writings on feminist literary criticism.

Still looking at Djajanegara, one of the early activities of critics of feminist literature was to explore, study, and evaluate the works of women writers from the past. Still in touch, Annette Kolodny, one of the literary critics of feminism, defines that literary criticism exposes women according to sexual stereotypes, both in literature and in our literary criticism, and also shows that inadequate currents and methods have been used to examine women's writing. Unfairly and insensitively.

Culler mentions feminist literary criticism as reading as a woman. Yoder said that feminist literary criticism does not mean criticism of women, or criticism of women, or criticism of women authors. This means that feminist literary criticism is a critic who views literature with special awareness, the awareness that there is a gender that has a lot to do with our culture, literature, and life (Sugihastuti and Suharto, 2015:5). Feminist literary criticism is a powerful tool for unifying the notion that a woman can read as a woman, compose as a woman, and interpret literary works as a woman.

Culler also states the general limitation of feminist literary criticism that feminist literary criticism is reading as a woman. The purpose of reading as a woman is the awareness of gender differences that distinguish meaning or interpretation when reading literary works. There are some feelings, happiness, and pain of women that men cannot feel, express, even describe or write in the form of literary works. For example, the feelings experienced by women when giving birth or giving birth, and the happiness when the baby they are carrying comes out of the womb. Therefore, gender differences also trigger differences in taste and meaning when reading, writing, interpreting, and studying literary works.

Muna Masyari is one of the women writers from Madura who often raises or mentions the practice of gender injustice that afflicts women through her short stories. In the collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'*, Muna Masyari reveals how the practice of subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, violence, and workload occur to female figures due to the patriarchal culture rooted in Madura society. In the collection of short stories, *Rokat Tase'* shows the powerlessness of women because of patriarchal cultural stereotypes, religious teachings, and education that corners women. So the marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and division of labor contained

in the collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'* is very interesting when examined in the perspective of feminism Mansour Fakih formulation of gender differences that give birth to injustice.

## **METHOD**

The object of this research is a collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'* by Muna Masyari, which has twenty short stories population and takes five short stories as research samples. While the formal object is the study of feminism as a scalpel for the practice of gender injustice afflicts women. In addition, the research method uses a qualitative-descriptive type of research. According to Moleong (2005: 6), qualitative-descriptive research intends to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by the research subject, for example, behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others, holistically and descriptively in the form of words. -words and language in a special context that is natural and by utilizing it as a natural method. Technical data collection uses library research, where data and information collection is done through the help of various materials contained in the library, such as books, magazines, articles, scientific manuscripts, scientific notes, theses, journals, theses, dissertations, and other library spaces.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In the collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'* by Muna Masyari, gender injustices against female characters include marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and workload. The sample of this research is five titles among twenty short stories population. The five titles are *Gentong Tua*, *Rokat Tase'*, *Kasur Tanah*, *Celurit Warisan*, and *Talak Tiga*. The data obtained in the five short stories then focused on research using the feminist approach to gender inequality from Mansour Fakih.

### **1. Marginalization**

Marginalization is the economic impoverishment of women (Fakih, 2020). Marginalization of women occurs in the household in the form of discrimination. Customs and religious interpretations also reinforce marginalization. For example, in a tribe that does not give women the right to inherit. Besides, religious teachings explaining women's inheritance rights are half of men's inheritance rights. Women always have boundaries in the household. Not only in the distribution of inheritance, women's limitations also exist in economic issues in the household. Religious teachings that encourage women at home narrow the space for women to take part in managing and contributing financially in the family.

Marginalization can be interpreted as a condition or process of preventing individuals and groups from fully participating in life in the social, economic, and political fields. Marginalization can also be seen as a dynamic process related to the inhibition of the attainment of income (income), human progress, and equal rights of citizens (Alakhunova, 2015). Marginalization can also be referred to as a process that makes a group or individual to experience prevented access to important

positions, economy, religion, and others (Halsey, 2015). In this study, marginalization is seen in the short story *Talak Tiga*. In more detail, here's an example quote:

*Matrah memang pencemburu berat. Sejak Marinten jadi istrinya, ia paling tidak suka melihat perempuan itu disapa lelaki lain, sekalipun sama kakek-kakek yang tidak bisa melihat kecantikan Marinten dengan sempurna. Matrah akan merasa terbakar adanya jika ada segerombolan pemuda tengah membicarakan Marinten dan berharap perempuan itu kembali bergabung dengan grup Tandak sebagaimana dulu. Oleh sebab itu, mengapa Matrah membatasi gerak istrinya supaya tidak sering keluar rumah. Lebih-lebih, ia khawatir perempuan itu tergoda untuk jadi tandak lagi. (Talak Tiga, 2020:75)*

The impoverishment in the short story *Talak Tiga* afflicts a female character named Marinten, due to family rules made by her husband, Matrah. It is said that before marriage, Marinten worked as a Tandak dancer who was very famous throughout Madura because of her beauty and good voice. Marinten's strengths make him coveted and eagerly awaited by the audience, even though he has to spend a lot of money. However, after Marinten married Matrah, she was forbidden to dance or work. Finally, Marinten spent a lot of time at home.

Marinten's marginalization is the limitation of her space to develop herself and earn a living. Giving a narrow space to develop themselves and make money from existing talents is an act of marginalization by Matrah against Marinten. Rules for limiting going out of the house began an economic impoverishment plan for Marinten. The reason for jealousy is also unethical, as shown by Matrah towards Marinten, a Tandak dancer. In addition, Marinten is a dancer whose salary is quite high, even higher than Matrah's income. Her golden period was just buried because of the rules in the household that harmed Marinten.

The prohibition of working and earning money is continued in the next paragraph. In more detail, the following is an example of an excerpt from his short story:

*Setelah menjadi istri, Matrah tidak pernah membiarkan Marinten bekerja keras apalagi beraktivitas di luar rumah. Marinten sekadar jadi ibu rumah tangga yang kerjanya hanya memasak, mencuci, dan merias diri. (Talak Tiga, 2020:76)*

The diction of cooking, washing, and making up has the same meaning as the diction of the kitchen, the well, and the room. Matrah's domestication shows the powerlessness of women in front of the men, who mainly control the rules in the family. It is this gender difference that gives birth to injustice: injustice targets or sacrifices women. Marinten's placement in a domestic space and prohibiting her from going to public spaces hinders Marinten from developing her potential. Then because of Matrah's rule, Marinten had to leave her job and work as a housewife waiting for a bribe from her.

Many ways can be used to marginalize a person or a group of people. One way is to curb their activities outside the home or regulate their movement space. Moreover, religious teachings, cultural construction, and society justify and support the restraint of women. Men in the family control women's lives, even though it is very bad for gender relations.

## 2. Subordination

Subordination is considering women's opinions to be irrational or unimportant. The assumption that women are irrational and emotional makes women unable to appear to lead, resulting in the emergence of attitudes that place women in unimportant positions (Fakih, 2020). Subordination can be defined as the subordination of one gender (women). Subordination is a belief that considers one gender important compared to the other gender (Karwati, 2020). However, in practice, many cases of subordination afflict the female sex. This means that women are the second gender in a certain society or group.

William de Vries and Nuril Sutarti (2006) said that the partiality of women is the beginning of the practice of gender inequality. From time to time and place to place, massive female subordination occurs. For example, Madura, written in the short story *Kasur Tanah*, tells of a woman powerless over male domination. In fact, women's words are considered a passing wind that disappears with time. Women must submit to the words of men. Only men have power over women, including managing the future, choosing a life partner, etc.

In the household, women are the only a sweetener in the family. Women do not get an important role in the household because their position is suppressed by the role of men (masculinity), who has power in managing the household. Subordination to women is closely reflected in the short story *Rokat Tase'*. The following is an example of subordination to women in the short story *Kasur Tanah*:

*Semasa muda ibumu memang lebih cantik darimu. Ia menjadi perawan desa yang diperebutkan. Namun, perbedaan status sosial, tradisi pertunangan sejak bayi, hingga martabat yang harus dijungjung tinggi telah menumbalkan sebihi cinta yang dimilikinya. Tidak ada pilihan baginya kecuali tunduk di hadapan orang tua. Pada tradisi takdir perjodohan sejak bayi. (Kasur Tanah, 2020:34)*

The story above tells of a woman who, from birth has been betrothed to a man who is the same age as her parents (father). The parents (father) decide the matchmaking unilaterally, without first asking whether or not the child agrees or disagrees. A mother has no discretion when her husband has decided. The powerlessness of women against men's decisions will make them always under the control of men. Therefore, men arbitrarily regulate women's lives and don't listen to what women want because men have power over women. Subordination to women does not positively impact women; in this case, women are victims. The matchmaking tradition is a big wall for women to determine their partners.

Below is also an example of an affirmative quote on the powerlessness of women in the short story *Kasur Tanah*:

*Ayahmu memang sudah tua saat menikahi ibumu, dan ia tidak memiliki keturunan satu pun dari istri-istrinya terdahulu. Kakekmu terpaksa menjodohkan ibumu yang baru lahir dengan lelaki kaya yang sudah beristri tiga itu demi membalas budi setelah membantu biaya kelahiran ibumu. Kata kakekmu, ia tidak mau menanggung utang budi hingga mati. (Kasur Tanah, 2020:34)*

Because of the culture of prestige and upholding self-esteem, it gives birth to injustice in women. The woman's father, who is the mother of the child's character, becomes a victim of male prestige because he has been assisted in the financing of childbirth. To return the favor, men match their newborn children. An unexpected act and a symbol of rebellion, the mother of a girl who is the victim of an arranged marriage has a special relationship with another man. Before marriage, she really hopes to marry the man she loves. However, matchmaking rules bind the woman and cannot be broken, so she must bury her feelings of love for her mistress.

### 3. Stereotypes

Stereotypes label or mark a certain group (Fakih, 2020). Stereotypes are always detrimental and cause injustice, especially for women. Many tribes believe women must be in their rooms, wells, and kitchens (domestic spaces). Meanwhile, men can do business outside the home (public) and domestic space. The stereotypical view exists because of gender differences which embed women as gentle creatures and men as mighty or strong creatures. There is also a claim that women were created to serve and urinate on men.

Girls and boys are born into the world to appreciate differences. Even in a family, women must be in the house to do the three "urs", while men do activities outside the home and stay away from the three "ur" jobs (Amelia, 2021). Gender stereotypes simplify the roles of men and women in the family and society. Blackstone (2003) provides an example a common gender stereotype that men should not show emotions (even not have emotions), while women are seen as emotional.

Therefore, even though rape occurs in women, it is women who are blamed. Because women are considered to provoke men to commit acts of rape and harassment. This stereotype is what makes it natural for parents to subordinate their daughters in all aspects, including the aspect of educational equality. The case of educational injustice is in the short story *Gentong Tua*. In more detail, here's an example quote:

*"Tidak usah jauh-jauh!"*

*"Masih di seputar Jawa."*

*Sudah biasa aku melihat kau merajuk setengah memaksa.*

*"Keluar dari kampung sendiri namanya tetap jauh. Tidak baik untuk anak perempuan!" (Gentong Tua, 2020:6)*

The placement of women to receive education in their own homes or hometown is an act of injustice for women. Injustice occurs because of the stereotype of women who are always considered weak. Dialogue Out of the village itself is still a distant name. Not good for girls! Become a marker in society that women are seen as weak creatures and cannot take care of themselves.

Injustice to women is emphasized in the next paragraph. Here's an example quote:

*"Kau bisa melanjutkan sekolah di sini," jawab ibumu, setelah diam sesaat.*

*"Sukdi melanjutkan ke Jogja! Masa aku di Madura terus?" sungutmu.*

*Untuk kesekian kali aku tersenyum menang.*

*"Dia laki-laki!" (Gentong Tua, 2020:6-7)*

Gender differences also distinguish the space for movement in the field of education, which is detrimental to women. The patriarchal culture was not only perpetuated by a man named Sukdi. Even his female mother Sum also helped perpetuate the culture. Yet clearly, women do not get equality in the education space. Equality in education leads women to gender equality, politics and the economy in the family and environment. The stereotype of women who are stagnant in low education or scope prevents women from developing themselves. Sum's demand for education in Jogja does not mean that the quality of education in Madura is lower. Experience and environment can affect a person's mindset. Sum's desire to study outside (Jogja), most likely also helped shape Sum's mindset which was within the scope of patriarchal culture.

#### **4. Violence**

Violence is an invasion (assault) of a person's physical and mental integrity of psychology (Fakih, 2020). Fellow human beings can do violence. More often, violence happens to women because gender perceptions refer to women as weak creatures. Inequality of power within society is the main cause of violence. One of the violence experienced by women is rape. Rape does not only apply outside the marriage relationship. In a married couple, there can also be an act of rape. Rape occurs because someone is forced to get sexual services without the consent of the person concerned. If, in the household, the husband forces his wife to be served while the wife does not want to, then the act can be categorized as rape in marriage. Violence can occur in the world of reality and fiction.

Like the sexual violence in a collection of short stories entitled *Celurit Warisan*. Here's an example of an excerpt from his short story:

*“Tidak hanya itu. Tadi Martipah pulang sendirian, karena teman-temannya menonton tanggapan saronen. Aku sengaja mengikuti Murtipah diam-diam kerana sebelumnya aku dengar ada lelaki itu memang selalu mengganggu Murtipah dan teman-temannya sepulang dari langgar. Ternyata benar. Lelaki itu mencegat Murtipah di tikungan jalan. Tidak sekadar menggoda, ia juga menyeret Murtipah ke balik rimbun pohon singkong milik Nom Sakrah!” (Celurit Warisan, 2020:69-70)*

The dragging into the cassava trees was one of the physical abuses perpetrated by several male figures against a female character (Murtipah). It does not stop there, the act of raping a female character is also one of the fatal forms of violence. The acts of violence and rape committed by a group of men could damage Murtipah mental and psychological state. It is very likely that Murtipah finds a traumatic side when meeting men or walking on the highway. You could say, violence and rape are actions that can damage a person physically and psychologically.

Violence is not only physical, inappropriate speech is also an act of verbal violence. The following are excerpts from examples of verbal violence perpetrated by male characters against women:

*“Apa kau mau jadi senok lagi di luar sana?” tukas Matrah dengan mata berkilat-kilat, menuding keluar.*

*Marinten tercekot. “Apa? Senok?”*

*“Iya. Apa namanya bagi perempuan yang menari dalam tatapan laki-laki seperti itu kalau bukan senok? Pelacur?” (Talak Tiga, 2020:79)*

Matrah obscene remarks against Marinten were an act of violence and harassment. Verbal violence has categories, one of which is hurting or embarrassing someone with dirty talk. The term *senok* made by Matrah against Marinten has been categorized as violence. *Senok* in the Indonesian sense is male entertainer. Plus, the jokes came out of Matrah's mouth in front of Maksar, a guest at their house. Indirectly Matrah humiliated Marinten in front of Matrah.

## 5. Workload

The workload is a productive activity seen in terms of the ability of the worker's body to accept work. The physical workload can be in the form of heavy work such as lifting, caring and pushing, while the psychological workload can be in the form of the extent to which the level of expertise and work performance of individuals with other individuals (Manuaba, 2000). The workload does not have to look at gender as a benchmark for individual abilities because each individual has their own abilities and gaps.



However, in the construction of a patriarchal society, the assumption that women are neat, painstaking, and gentle in doing work puts women in the realm of cleaning, tidying, and making up. Meanwhile, men are labelled as strong, mighty, and rude creatures placed in heavy work (Fakih, 2020). This assumption is the determinant for determining the workload carried out between men and women. In the short story *Rokat Tase'* itself, this assumption is still inherent in Madurese society, which places women in domestic work and men in public. In more detail, the following is an example of an excerpt from his short story:

*Riuh anak-anak menyanyikan lagu Tonduk' Majang sambil berjoget riang mengikuti irama lengking saronen yang menusuk telinga, dengan kaki telanjang. Mereka berjalan di depan mendahului arak-arakan yang bergerak menuju tempat syukuran. Para peniup saronen berjalan dari belakang mereka. Disusul para pemuda yang menggotong pearahu githek yang sudah dihiasi bendera merah-putih selebar telapak tangan dan diuntai pada tali rafia. Ada yang membawa jajan pasar, kue cucur, serabi dan lainnya. Seorang pemuda menenteng kepala sapi yang matanya melotot dan darah mengental hitam di leher yang terputus.*

*Sementara perempuan-perempuan muda mengiringi di belakangnya. Ada yang membawa belanga berisi cendol bergula merah. Ada yang membawa kelapa muda. Ada yang membawa piring setengah lusin. Cankir setengah lusin yang direntang ganggangnya dengan tali rafia. Ada yang membawa bakul setengah lusin. Seorang lagi membawa semampian nasi kuning. (Rokat Tase', 2020: 10-11)*

The excerpt above is the opening paragraph in a short story entitled *Rokat Tase'*. At the story's beginning, it is clear that the injustice in the workload in the *Rokat Tase'* tradition is clearly shown. The tasks of men and women tend to contain inequalities that harm women. The division of labor places women in the domestic sphere, while men in the public sphere.

Another inequality occurs in the procession to the sea, where the position of women is behind the men. Injustice to women is emphasized in the quote below:

*Di antara arak-arakan itu, kau membawa belanga berisi air kembang dan irisan pandan. Sesekali kepalamu menoleh ke belakang, mencari sosok yang tadi malam sudah diperingatkan ayah agar ikut ke pantai. (Rokat Tase', 2020:*

The phrase You carry a pot filled with flower water and sliced pandan symbolizes the entry of domestication in society. The tradition commemorated yearly with such a division of labor can be concluded that inequality exists in Madura, which is reflected in the short story *Rokat Tase'*.

## CONCLUSION

Gender inequality in female characters is found in the collection of short stories *Rokat Tase'* by Muna Masyari. The forms of injustice experienced by female characters include marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and workloads that are detrimental to female characters. Factors that support the practice of gender inequality

due to the dominance of men who regulate the domestic and public fields. The patriarchal culture that is rooted in society also perpetuates the gender injustice experienced by female characters. Plus the primitive society that upholds norms, noble values, and self-esteem such as reciprocation in the end, suppresses the position of women. In addition, the assumption that women are weak, gentle, loving, and motherly makes men increasingly show their dominance. Because men here are considered as powerful, strong, and rational beings. The impact of gender injustice damages or harms women in the world of education, economy, and politics.

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