

**POSTCOLONIAL MELANCHOLY AND FEMINIST
AESTHETICS IN SITI RUKIAH'S 1950 NOVEL *KEJATUHAN
DAN HATI*: A SUBVERSIVE TENDERNESS**

By

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Abstract

*This study reexamines *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) by Siti Rukiah Kertapati as a foundational yet neglected work in Indonesian literary modernity. Departing from the masculinist and nationalist revolutionary narratives of its time, the novel articulates postcolonial melancholy through emotional interiority, intimate loss, and the crisis of female subjectivity. Using qualitative textual analysis informed by feminist narratology and postcolonial theory, the study investigates how Rukiah's fragmented, epistolary form constructs a feminine interiority that resists nationalist and patriarchal ideologies. The analysis draws on the critiques of gendered silencing by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Trinh T. Minh-ha to interpret Susi's psychological fragmentation as an act of affective and epistemic resistance. The results reveal that Rukiah transforms vulnerability and melancholy into political agency, redefining emotion as a site of historical meaning. Her narrative techniques—fragmentation, introspection, and affective honesty—subvert the masculine heroism of socialist realism, asserting tenderness as a radical feminist aesthetic. The article also traces the novel's critical reception, from early marginalization to later reevaluation by scholars such as Annabel Teh Gallop and Yerry Wirawan. As an affective archive of postcolonial disillusionment and feminine resistance, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* emerges as a politically potent reimagining of nationhood through gendered emotion.*

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Keywords: *Feminist aesthetics, postcolonial melancholy, Indonesian literature, women's subjectivity, resistance*

Abstrak

Artikel ini meninjau kembali *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) karya Siti Rukiah Kertapati sebagai karya mendasar namun terabaikan dalam modernitas sastra Indonesia. Berbeda dari narasi revolusioner nasionalis yang maskulin pada masanya, novel ini mengekspresikan melankolia pascakolonial melalui interioritas emosional, kehilangan intim, dan krisis subjektivitas perempuan. Dengan menggunakan analisis tekstual kualitatif yang berlandaskan naratologi feminis dan teori pascakolonial, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana bentuk epistolari dan fragmentaris Rukiah membangun interioritas feminin yang menolak ideologi nasionalis dan patriarkal. Analisis ini mengacu pada kritik Chandra Talpade Mohanty dan Trinh T. Minh-ha tentang pembungkaman gender untuk menafsirkan fragmentasi psikologis Susi sebagai bentuk resistensi afektif dan epistemologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Rukiah mentransformasikan kerentanan dan melankolia menjadi agensi politik, menempatkan emosi sebagai ruang makna historis. Teknik naratifnya—fragmentasi, introspeksi, dan kejujuran afektif—menentang heroisme maskulin realisme sosialis dan menghadirkan kelembutan sebagai estetika feminis yang radikal. Artikel ini juga menelusuri penerimaan kritis novel tersebut, dari marginalisasi awal hingga penilaian ulang oleh Annabel Teh Gallop dan Yerry Wirawan. Sebagai arsip afektif dari kekecewaan pascakolonial dan resistensi feminin, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* tampil sebagai imajinasi politik tentang kebangsaan melalui emosi yang berperspektif gender.

Kata kunci: Estetika feminis, melankolia pascakolonial, sastra Indonesia, subjektivitas perempuan, resistensi.

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian literature in the immediate aftermath of independence has often been read through a nationalist-revolutionary lens that valorizes collective struggle, ideological commitment, and masculine heroism (Kratz 1996). Canonical works, especially those aligned with *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (LEKRA), privileged socialist realism and political clarity over psychological nuance or emotional interiority. Within this paradigm, women were typically represented as symbolic nurturers of the nation or passive supporters of male protagonists, their inner lives

largely excluded from the literary imagination. Against this backdrop, Siti Rukiah Kertapati's *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) stands out as a radical departure. Rather than glorifying revolutionary zeal, it offers an intimate portrayal of Susi, a woman grappling with heartbreak, alienation, and psychological disintegration in the wake of independence. Through her, Rukiah exposes the emotional costs of nation-building and the constraints imposed on women's subjectivity during political upheaval.

Kejatuhan dan Hati is less a chronicle of external conflict than a meditation on the fractured postcolonial self. Its fragmented letters, introspective monologues, and non-linear structure mirror the disorientation of its protagonist. Susi's psychological instability becomes a subtle form of resistance against ideologies that demand female sacrifice in the service of nationalist ideals. In this sense, Rukiah's novel constitutes one of the earliest feminist interventions in Indonesian literature, foregrounding affect, emotional labor, and gendered vulnerability as sites of political meaning (Shackford-Bradley 2000; Andaya 2000). Yet the novel long remained marginalized—its interiority clashing with the collectivist ethos of the 1950s, and its author silenced following her association with the banned Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) during the 1965 anti-communist purges (Heryanto 1999; Foulcher 1986). As Barbara Hatley (1990, 101) observes, “the female voice in Indonesian literature has frequently been muted by the noise of nation-making.”

Scholarly rediscovery began with John H. McGlynn's 1983 English translation, *An Affair of the Heart*, in *Reflections on Rebellion: Stories from the Indonesian Upheavals of 1948 and 1965*. McGlynn's encounter with Rukiah in Purwakarta revived interest in her work, followed by Annabel Teh Gallop's (1985) M.A. thesis at SOAS—the first sustained feminist reading of Rukiah's fiction. More recently, Yerry Wirawan (2018) reframed *Kejatuhan dan Hati* as an act of feminist agency, arguing that Susi's emotional turmoil reflects “independent subjectivity” rather than passivity. These studies have repositioned Rukiah's novel as a critique of postcolonial masculinity and ideological conformity. Building on these insights, this paper reads *Kejatuhan dan*

Hati as a pioneering feminist text whose narrative form and affective focus subvert the masculinist assumptions of nationalist literature.

Theoretically, the study draws on feminist and postcolonial thinkers such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) and Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), who critique how nationalist discourses appropriate and silence women's experiences. Mohanty's notion of the "strategic use of experience" informs this reading of Susi's emotional interiority as a politicized terrain, while Trinh's call to "speak nearby" rather than "for" others resonates with Rukiah's fragmented, indirect narrative voice. The novel's epistolary structure undermines the authority of omniscient narration, foregrounding longing, confusion, and rupture—what Wieringa (2002) calls "gendered interventions" in narrative form. Susi's silence and withdrawal thus operate as quiet acts of rebellion against the triumphalist discourse of the revolution.

Unlike her male contemporaries who romanticized struggle, Rukiah portrays disillusionment, fragmentation, and feminine vulnerability as political experiences. By highlighting the emotional toll of ideological commitment, she legitimizes interior life as a site of historical meaning. This focus on affective reality expands the political scope of post-independence literature beyond heroism, gesturing toward what feminist scholars identify as a decolonial recovery of women's voices (Blackburn 2009). In doing so, Rukiah redefines both literary modernity and national consciousness through a distinctly gendered lens.

Despite her pioneering contributions, Rukiah has occupied an ambiguous place in the Indonesian canon. While contemporaries like Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Chairil Anwar were celebrated for articulating national identity, Rukiah's work—focused on emotional and ethical ambivalence—was often dismissed as "apolitical." Early post-independence criticism (Foulcher 1986; Wieringa 2002) favored overtly political fiction that reinforced masculine visions of nationhood, marginalizing texts that foregrounded women's experiences. Rukiah's dual identity as both writer and the only female member of LEKRA, later stigmatized under Suharto's New Order regime, deepened her erasure. Her exclusion from literary syllabi thus reflects both political censorship and gender bias.

Nevertheless, critical reappraisal has grown. Gallop's *The Work of S. Rukiah* (1985) offered the first sustained feminist analysis, while Wirawan (2018) emphasized Rukiah's subtle critique of patriarchy and ideological conformity. These studies highlight Susi not as a victim, but as a woman asserting agency through emotional authenticity—a radical stance in a culture where women's voices were constrained. Yet a comprehensive feminist-narratological reading of *Kejatuhan dan Hati* remains lacking. This study fills that gap by analyzing Rukiah's use of fragmented narration and introspection as forms of resistance to both patriarchal and nationalist discourses.

Rukiah's novel also exemplifies the “minor literature” that Toril Moi (1985) and Sara Mills (1991) urge feminist critics to recover. Dismissed for its perceived emotional excess, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* destabilizes dominant tropes of revolution as masculine progress or sacrifice. Through its female-centered voice and narrative ambiguity, it exposes the silenced experiences of women under nationalist ideology. From a postcolonial perspective, this aligns with critiques by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) who notes how nationalist narratives erase subaltern women's subjectivities. Susi's breakdown embodies this epistemic violence—the cost of being forced to inhabit ideological roles that deny emotional autonomy.

Methodologically, this study employs qualitative textual analysis informed by feminist narratology and postcolonial theory. Drawing on frameworks from the following theorists (Gouda 1995; Chow 1993; Parashar 2016; Suryakusuma et al. 2011), it examines how Rukiah constructs Susi's internal voice as a counter-discursive space. The analysis also draws on insights from Spivak (1988) and Mohanty (2003) to understand how colonial and nationalist ideologies shape women's emotional lives. This approach treats the novel not merely as a story of personal crisis but as a gendered critique of postcolonial ideology.

The research engages both the 1950 Pustaka Rakjat edition of *Kejatuhan dan Hati* and McGlynn's 1983 English translation, *An Affair of the Heart*, comparing narrative tone and the preservation of gendered affect across languages. Supplementary materials include Rukiah's short stories and poems in *Mimbar Indonesia* and *Kisah*, along with

biographical accounts of her meeting with McGlynn in Purwakarta. Archival sources from LEKRA and the *Indonesian Writers' Institute* contextualize her shifting political affiliations and later disillusionment.

A systematic review of existing scholarship—particularly Gallop (1985) and Wirawan (2018)—reveals persistent research gaps, notably the scarcity of analyses that integrate feminist theory, narratology, and historical context. Addressing this, the study employs a hermeneutic approach that moves between textual detail and ideological structure, emphasizing how Rukiah's narrative strategies—fragmentation, internal focalization, and poetic diction—construct a feminine interiority that resists patriarchal realism. Intertextual comparisons with contemporaneous works by Chairil Anwar and Pramoedya Ananta Toer further illustrate how Rukiah's refusal to romanticize revolution subverts masculine narrative conventions.

Finally, the paper incorporates archival and paratextual analysis to interrogate how Rukiah's work has been published, translated, and framed within Indonesian literary historiography. The placement of *An Affair of the Heart* in a 1983 anthology of “rebellion” narratives, for instance, raises questions about the global visibility of Indonesian feminist writing and the politics of translation. By combining feminist narratology, postcolonial critique, and archival recovery, this study argues that *Kejatuhan dan Hati* is not only a literary artifact of emotional disillusionment but also a cultural intervention that destabilizes dominant narratives of revolution and gender. It demonstrates how Rukiah reimagines the nation through feminine subjectivity—tender, fractured, yet politically potent—and why reclaiming her voice is vital to decolonizing Indonesian literary history.

B. READING *KEJATUHAN DAN HATI* AS FEMINIST COUNTER-NARRATIVE TO NATIONALIST LITERATURE

Siti Rukiah Kertapati's *Kejatuhan dan Hati* offers a quietly revolutionary reconfiguration of post-independence Indonesian literature by foregrounding the interior, affective world of a woman protagonist rather than the dominant masculine heroic mode. While most canonical post-

revolutionary texts, such as Chairil Anwar's poetry, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Keluarga Gerilya*, or Rivai Apin's essays, center on the collective sacrifice of men, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* chooses to depict Susi's emotional and psychological breakdown as a deeply political narrative. This section analyzes *Kejatuhan dan Hati* through three critical lenses: (1) Feminist narratology and the politics of interiority; (2) Emotional labor and the gendered costs of revolution; (3) Ideological pressures and the disciplining of women's political desires. The discussion engages scholarly works by Annabel Teh Gallop (1985) and Yerry Wirawan (2018) as well as recent feminist critiques such as those by Wieringa (2002), situating Rukiah's work within a broader Southeast Asian and postcolonial feminist context.

1. Feminist Narratology and the Politics of Interiority

Siti Rukiah's *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) employs a confessional first-person voice, giving readers unfiltered access to Susi's mental anguish, ambivalence, and emotional breakdown in the aftermath of political and romantic disillusionment. Through Susi's diary entries, Rukiah articulates a woman's internal world torn between ideological expectation and affective autonomy. Unlike contemporaneous male-centered narratives that valorize physical struggle and public heroism, Rukiah elevates emotional turbulence as a legitimate revolutionary condition (Rukiah 1950, 15–22). This mode of storytelling aligns with feminist narratology, which highlights how female-authored texts often use interior monologue and affective fragmentation to subvert dominant patriarchal discourses. Susi's fragmented thoughts, her guilt over loving someone ideologically impure and her repeated emotional ruptures become the very substance of the novel's critique of masculinist nationalism. For example, Susi writes, "Aku tidak tahu kenapa aku harus merasa bersalah... padahal hanya karena aku mencintainya" (Rukiah 1950, 31). This confession of emotional conflict in a revolutionary era defies the prevailing narrative of ideological purity demanded from women. The political revolution is thus filtered through the lens of private betrayal and romantic despair, experiences often dismissed as trivial or apolitical in the masculine canon. However, Rukiah's centering of the emotional and the intimate acts as a rebellion against such

hegemonic narrative expectations. As Wirawan explains, “Rukiah transforms the private realm into a battlefield of ideology, challenging the binary between the personal and the political” (Wirawan 2018, 92). Through her deliberate rejection of linear storytelling and her emphasis on introspection and diary-like disclosure, Rukiah undermines the teleological and masculine-coded narrative structures of national progress. This formal resistance to narrative closure and ideological totality reveals her feminist and anti-authoritarian stance: that nation-building is neither linear nor emotionally coherent, especially for women who must shoulder the invisible labor of both emotional caregiving and political expectation.

2. Emotional Labor and the Gendered Costs of Revolution

Throughout *Kejatuhan dan Hati*, Susi is positioned as the emotional caregiver not only to her love interest but also to her family and political comrades. Her constant emotional negotiation—between loyalty to the revolution, romantic attachment, and familial obligations—maps what Arlie Hochschild (1983) terms “emotional labor,” typically assigned to women in both domestic and political spheres. For example, Susi writes, “Saya ingin menangis, tetapi tak boleh. Saya harus kuat demi Ibu dan demi dia. Tapi mengapa saya yang harus mengerti semua ini?” (Rukiah 1950, 45). This internal monologue reveals the gendered expectation that women remain emotionally composed despite their own despair. The revolutionary male characters in the novel are free to leave, fight, and return as wounded heroes. Susi, however, remains emotionally tethered, forced to reconcile the demands of ideology with the affections of the heart. This asymmetry illustrates the gendered dimension of post-independence struggles. According to Wieringa (2002, 137), “The Indonesian revolution, like most nationalist projects, required the silencing of female grief, sexual autonomy, and emotional ambivalence in the service of a masculine historical narrative”. Rukiah’s depiction of Susi’s breakdown—her fainting spells, tears, insomnia, and moments of silence—is not merely melodrama. These are acts of embodied protest against ideological rigidity. On the other page, Susi confesses, “Kadang-kadang aku merasa dadaku sesak sekali, aku tidak bisa bernapas, dan aku ingin lari jauh dari semua ini.” (Rukiah 1950, 72). These psychosomatic

expressions mark the limits of political obedience and emotional suppression. In fact, Susi's body becomes a site where the contradictions of nationalism are made visible. Her illness is both literal and metaphorical, signaling the incompatibility between the demands of the emerging Indonesian state and the lived realities of its female citizens.

3. Ideological Pressures and the Disciplining of Women's Desires

One of the novel's most compelling critiques lies in its depiction of how ideology disciplines women's desires. Susi's love for a man labeled 'non-revolutionary' subjects her to intense scrutiny, both by her comrades and her own conscience. This internalized surveillance mimics Michel Foucault's (1977) theory of disciplinary power, wherein individuals become self-regulating subjects of dominant ideology. However, Rukiah complicates this framework by showing how the revolutionary ideology fails to accommodate complex emotional truths. In a key moment from *Kejatuhan dan Hati*, Susi writes: "aku tahu ini salah, mencintai dia yang bukan bagian dari perjuangan, tapi aku tidak bisa menyangkal hati" (Rukiah 1950, 65) ["I know this is wrong, to love someone who is not part of the struggle, but I cannot deny the heart"] (Rukiah 2011, 65). In a scene where Susi confesses her love yet insists on her political commitments, Rukiah crafts a poignant dialogue between affect and ideology. Annabel Gallop (1985, 74) notes that this moment in the novel marks a "turning point, where romantic desire confronts the full weight of political orthodoxy". Moreover, this disciplining is gendered: male comrades can have ideological doubts or moments of escape, but Susi's doubts are framed as betrayal. Her moral purity is expected to mirror the purity of the revolution. The disciplining of desire thus becomes a mechanism for upholding ideological purity, revealing how nationalism is deeply invested in controlling female sexuality and emotionality.

4. Narrative Silence, Historical Erasure, and Canonical Exclusion

Despite its critical depth, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* has remained marginalized in the national literary canon. The reasons for this erasure are multifaceted. First, Rukiah's affiliation with LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) and the Indonesian Communist Party led to her exclusion following the anti-communist purges of 1965. Second, her

focus on emotional nuance and female psychology was deemed ‘too soft’ for the post-1945 canon that privileged militant masculinity. In one of the novel’s deeply introspective passages, Susi reflects on her fragmented self: “aku ingin berjuang, tapi juga ingin merasa dicintai” (Rukiah 1950, 48) [“I want to fight, but I also want to feel loved”] (Rukiah 2011, 48). Such emotionally complex moments were often read as apolitical or sentimental, contributing to the novel’s exclusion. John H. McGlynn, in translating the novel as *An Affair of the Heart* (1983), notes that he was drawn to its “emotive strength and political quietude, a rare combination in the canon of revolutionary literature” (Rukiah 1983). McGlynn’s translation project, followed by his meeting with Rukiah in Purwakarta, underscores the global recognition of her literary merit, even as she remained obscured within her own national context. Recent feminist scholarship has begun to reclaim Rukiah’s voice. Scholars like Yerry Wirawan (2018, 211) argues that her marginalization is symptomatic of a broader tendency in Indonesian literary history to privilege male-authored revolutionary narratives. As the previous writer asserts, “Siti Rukiah is a necessary voice in understanding how women remembered and lived through national history not as symbols, but as sentient agents of change”.

5. Feminist Counter-Canon and the Future of Literary Criticism

Rukiah’s *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) offers fertile ground for developing a feminist counter-canon in Indonesian literature. Its emphasis on the emotional, the affective, and the ambivalent challenges not only gendered assumptions of political engagement but also dominant aesthetic values. In moments such as Susi’s internal turmoil, her oscillation between personal affection for Hasan and her disillusionment with the ideological rigidity surrounding her (Rukiah 1950, 88–91), the novel foregrounds emotional contradictions often erased from nationalist discourses. At one point, Susi confesses, “Aku merasa lelah karena memikirkan semuanya. Aku tidak bisa mencintai atau membenci dengan sederhana” (Rukiah 1950, 90), revealing a psychological complexity rarely granted to female protagonists in revolutionary literature. As scholars such as Toril Moi (1985) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) have emphasized, the feminist project in literary criticism involves

recuperating silenced voices and deconstructing the ideological basis of canon formation. By analyzing Rukiah's work as a pioneering feminist text, this study intervenes in ongoing debates about whose voices count in the narration of Indonesian national identity. It asserts that the affective and the intimate are not distractions from political narratives but are instead essential components of understanding the human costs of state formation. In Susi's confession that "revolusi ini merampas bukan hanya tubuhku, tapi pikiranku juga" (Rukiah 1950, 103), the novel critiques how revolutionary ideals are often sustained through gendered emotional sacrifice. The novel thus invites a rethinking of what constitutes revolutionary literature. It reminds us that revolutions are not only fought with guns and flags, but also through the daily, painful, and often invisible emotional negotiations that women undertake. As Wirawan (2018, 99) rightly states, "Rukiah's greatest contribution may not lie in her ideological clarity, but in her honest depiction of ideological confusion, something we all live with but rarely articulate".

Siti Rukiah Kertapati's *Kejatuhan dan Hati* is an early example of feminist literature in post-independence Indonesia that reveals the dissonance between personal emotions and political commitments. This section offers an in-depth literary analysis of the novel's themes, narrative strategies, and characterization, drawing from feminist narratology, affect theory, and postcolonial criticism. The protagonist, Susi, is emblematic of a woman caught in the maelstrom of nationalistic ideology and patriarchal norms. Her story unfolds against the backdrop of Indonesia's revolution, but rather than celebrating militant heroism, the novel focuses on the psychological deterioration and emotional alienation Susi experiences. This choice alone distinguishes *Kejatuhan dan Hati* from the dominant realist novels of the era, which often glorified nationalist ideals and male heroism. Through its introspective mode and emphasis on emotional labor, Rukiah's novel exposes the cost of nationalist ideologies for women.

The narrative voice in *Kejatuhan dan Hati* is quiet, meditative, and lyrical, evoking a tone of interiority rather than militancy. The plot follows Susi's disillusionment with her romantic partner, Lukman, a revolutionary figure who embodies the kind of ideological zeal that

becomes emotionally reclusive. Her heartbreak is not simply a personal tragedy; it is entwined with a larger political failure to accommodate women's emotions and interior lives. By portraying Susi's depression and withdrawal, Rukiah writes a counter-narrative to the dominant masculinist discourse of revolution. This narrative strategy can be read through the lens of feminist narratology, which emphasizes the importance of subjectivity, silence, and fragmentation in the representation of women's experience (Wieringa 2002). Rukiah's critique extends beyond the personal to address broader systemic structures. Lukman's dismissive and condescending attitude toward Susi's emotional distress reflects the broader silencing of women's affect in political discourse. Rather than supporting her desire to join the movement, Lukman accuses Susi of selfishness for not subordinating her individual needs to the national struggle and waiting for his arrival after long abandonment. In this sense, the novel critiques the patriarchal nature of revolutionary ideology that demands women's participation yet denies them agency. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003, 55–56) has noted, nationalist movements often mobilize women while simultaneously marginalizing their voices. Moreover, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* centers on a form of affective resistance rather than overt political confrontation. Susi's decision to withdraw from the relationship and the revolutionary cause is an act of self-preservation that also functions as a subtle critique of the emotional exploitation she suffers. Feminist scholars have argued that such acts of refusal and withdrawal can be understood as forms of "quiet" resistance that disrupt hegemonic expectations of women's roles. By valuing inner life, emotional complexity, and ambivalence, Rukiah offers a radical redefinition of resistance not as violent rebellion, but as a defense of self and sanity.

The novel's treatment of mental health is particularly noteworthy. Susi's psychological deterioration is portrayed with sensitivity and nuance, challenging cultural taboos surrounding depression and emotional fragility. Rather than being dismissed as weakness, her breakdown is rendered as a legitimate response to structural and emotional violence. This framing prefigures later feminist attention to the intersections of mental health, gender, and oppression. Additionally,

the spatial symbolism in the novel underscores the gendered divide between the domestic and the political. Susi's movements between spaces—her home, Lukman's journey, the school, mirror her oscillation between different roles and expectations. Her ultimate retreat into the private sphere is not a surrender, but a reclamation of space where her emotional truth can be affirmed. As scholars of feminist geography have noted, space itself is political and gendered, and the domestic sphere can become a site of both containment and resistance. Narratively, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* employs techniques of fragmentation, flashback, and internal monologue to foreground Susi's subjectivity. These formal strategies contribute to a narrative rhythm that prioritizes emotional states over linear plot progression. The result is a literary form that mirrors the affective instability of the protagonist, and by extension, critiques the artificial coherence demanded by ideological narratives. In doing so, Rukiah's work resonates with feminist literary efforts to destabilize traditional narrative structures that marginalize women's experiences.

Another critical aspect of the novel is its subtle but powerful challenge to the sexual politics of the time. Although the text avoids explicit sexual scenes, it is charged with affective tensions that speak to the policing of female desire. Susi's yearning, her ambivalence about love and intimacy, and her deep emotional bond with her mother offer a rare exploration of female relationality in Indonesian literature of the 1950s. Her pain is deeply embodied, suggesting a corporeal dimension to emotional suffering that has long been ignored in literary portrayals of women. The enduring significance of *Kejatuhan dan Hati* is evident in its limited but meaningful reception. The English translation by John H. McGlynn in the anthology *Reflections on Rebellion* (1983) introduced Rukiah's work to a wider audience, sparking renewed interest in her contributions. Gallop's MA thesis (1985) and Yerry Wirawan's (2018) re-evaluation of Rukiah's feminist potential suggest that although the work has been historically marginalized, it remains a fertile site for scholarly engagement. However, mainstream literary histories often reduce Rukiah's role to that of a politically compromised figure, given her association with LEKRA, without acknowledging the radical gender politics embedded in her fiction.

This literary neglect points to a broader issue in Indonesian literary studies: the under-theorization of gender and affect in revolutionary fiction. The privileging of political content over emotional complexity has contributed to the marginalization of works like *Kejatuhan dan Hati* that do not conform to dominant paradigms of nationhood and masculinity. By centering female subjectivity, Rukiah complicates the notion of revolutionary sacrifice, suggesting that emotional well-being is also a terrain of struggle. In sum, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* deserves to be re-positioned within the canon of Indonesian literature (Aveling 1986; 1992; 2007; Damono 1997) not merely as a historical curiosity or a political artifact, but as a foundational text in feminist and postcolonial fiction. Its unique narrative structure, interior focus, and affective depth challenge the masculinist norms of its time and offer a critical reimagining of both personal and political liberation. As contemporary scholarship moves toward more intersectional and inclusive literary historiography, Rukiah's work stands as a necessary corrective to narratives that have historically silenced women's voices and experiences.

The research reveals that *Kejatuhan dan Hati* offers a unique critique of the psychological toll exerted on women by ideological commitments and patriarchal nation-building. While the nationalist movement promised liberation, Rukiah's novel underscores how women continued to be silenced, instrumentalized, or marginalized in the name of ideological purity. Susi is neither heroine nor victim in the traditional sense. Rather, she embodies the complex consequences of living in a transitional political period where private emotions and public loyalties are no longer reconcilable. Despite its literary and historical importance, *Kejatuhan dan Hati* remains underrepresented in scholarly literature, particularly in Anglophone and feminist postcolonial studies. This critical neglect is symptomatic of the broader marginalization of women's voices in Indonesian literary historiography, where figures like Rukiah are often overshadowed by male contemporaries such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Idrus, or Chairil Anwar. While these writers have rightfully received extensive critical attention for their roles in shaping Indonesia's literary and revolutionary discourse, Rukiah's

contribution remains peripheral despite offering a distinct and necessary perspective.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated feminist and postcolonial analysis of Rukiah's text. By employing feminist narratology, the research foregrounds how narrative voice, structure, and internal monologue are deployed as acts of resistance. Susi's fragmented narrative, her retreat from public life, and her disillusionment with revolutionary dogma are not merely symptoms of weakness or emotionality but are instead literary tactics that challenge ideological certainties. The novel does not resolve Susi's inner conflict because Rukiah resists closure, resists a return to national or patriarchal order, thus affirming the ambiguity and pain of feminine political subjectivity. Furthermore, this study situates *Kejatuhan dan Hati* within a wider framework of postcolonial and feminist discourse, drawing connections to critiques of ideological nationalism that suppress dissenting voices, especially those of women. In this light, Rukiah emerges not just as an early feminist writer in Indonesia but as a global interlocutor in the postcolonial feminist tradition, resonating with authors such as Tsitsi Dangarembga, Buchi Emecheta, and Arundhati Roy, writers who similarly grapple with the tensions between gender, nation, and identity during and after the colonial experience.

The methodological triangulation employed, archival recovery, feminist narratology, and historical contextualization, has allowed for a deeper reading of the text that reclaims Rukiah from obscurity and highlights the urgency of revisiting neglected literary voices in Southeast Asian feminist scholarship. The rediscovery of *Kejatuhan dan Hati* by scholars such as John H. McGlynn, who translated the novel into English as *An Affair of the Heart* (1983), and Annabel Teh Gallop, who dedicated her postgraduate research to Rukiah's oeuvre (Gallop, 1985), marks the beginning of a slow but significant critical reengagement. However, much remains to be done in fully integrating Rukiah into discussions of global feminist fiction and Indonesian political literature. One of the major contributions of this study is to argue that feminist literary history in Indonesia cannot be complete without acknowledging the pioneering voice of S. Rukiah. Her writing expands our

understanding of the costs of nation-making, not only in material or strategic terms but in psychic and emotional registers that are often dismissed in political histories. *Kejatuhan dan Hati* invites us to reflect on the intimate wounds of war, the silences surrounding women's political disillusionment, and the power of literary form to express what history suppresses.

C. CONCLUSION

This study has examined *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (1950) by Siti Rukiah Kertapati as an early and crucial feminist intervention within the Indonesian literary canon. Far from merely a tale of personal heartbreak or ideological confusion, Rukiah's novel articulates a profound psychological and political exploration of female subjectivity amidst revolutionary Indonesia. Through the story of Susi, a woman caught between affective obligations and the ideological demands of a nascent nationalist state, Rukiah constructs a counter-narrative to the dominant masculinist discourse of heroism and collective sacrifice that has long shaped representations of the Indonesian independence struggle. Rukiah's literary strategy, a quiet, introspective, and emotionally layered narrative, subverts the expected revolutionary narrative that celebrates male camaraderie and public resistance. Instead, she stages a revolutionary interiority, where the real struggle is not only fought on the battlefield or in political meetings but within the conscience of a woman negotiating loss, love, and the expectations of patriotism. This shift from public to private, from external to internal, signifies a feminist intervention that challenges how history and nationalism are recorded, remembered, and narrated in literature.

Furthermore, the paper suggests that *Kejatuhan dan Hati* can be productively incorporated into literature pedagogy in Indonesia, especially in higher education settings that seek to decolonize the curriculum and center diverse voices. As part of a growing effort to teach literature critically, with attention to gender, ideology, and postcolonial subjectivity, Rukiah's novel offers a valuable case study in how fiction can serve both as aesthetic experience and as political critique. In this way, the paper intersects with the broader goals of critical pedagogy as

articulated by theorists such as bell hooks (2005) and Gayatri Spivak (1988), who emphasize the emancipatory potential of marginalized narratives. In closing, Siti Rukiah's *Kejatuhan dan Hati* is more than a forgotten novel; it is a literary landmark that reconfigures how we understand post-revolutionary Indonesia, not from the battlefield or parliament, but from the intimate, conflicted, and gendered spaces of the heart. It is a work that reminds us of the unfinished project of feminist literary criticism in Southeast Asia and the urgency of revisiting our literary canons with eyes attuned to emotional nuance, narrative complexity, and political silence. The task going forward is to ensure that voices like Rukiah's are no longer relegated to footnotes in history but are reclaimed as central to the story of Indonesian literature and nationhood.

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