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Women's Struggle in Brian Khrisna's *Sisi Tergelap Surga*: A Feminist Perspective on Indonesian Urban Patriarchy

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ABSTRACT ENGLISH:

This study examines the representation of women and the dynamics of patriarchal oppression in *Sisi Tergelap Surga* by Brian Khrisna through the lens of feminist literary criticism. It seeks to uncover how female characters experience, negotiate, and resist oppressive structures, while also exploring how the narrative constructs forms of feminist agency. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the study identifies three dominant manifestations of oppression: patriarchal control embedded in family institutions, emotional and psychological violence, and structural marginalization shaped by the intersection of gender and socio-economic disadvantage. The findings reveal that patriarchy operates not merely as an individual attitude but as a systemic force reproduced across domestic and social domains, limiting women's autonomy, silencing their voices, and eroding their sense of self-worth. Nevertheless, the novel does not position women solely as passive victims. Instead, it foregrounds their inner struggles, critical awareness, and gradual processes of resistance and identity reconstruction. Through narrative strategies that center women's voices and lived experiences, the text opens a space for reclaiming agency. Ultimately, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* functions both as a documentation of gendered suffering and as a subtle yet powerful feminist intervention that challenges patriarchal norms and reimagines women's positions within society.

Keywords: Feminist literary criticism, Patriarchy, Women's agency, Structural marginalization, Psychological violence

ABSTRACT INDONESIAN:

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi perempuan serta dinamika penindasan patriarkal dalam novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* karya Brian Khrisna dengan menggunakan pendekatan kritik sastra feminis. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap bagaimana tokoh-tokoh perempuan mengalami, menegosiasikan, dan melawan struktur-struktur represif, sekaligus menelaah bagaimana narasi membangun bentuk-bentuk agensi feminis. Dengan menggunakan analisis tekstual kualitatif, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tiga bentuk utama penindasan, yaitu dominasi patriarki dalam institusi keluarga, kekerasan emosional dan psikologis, serta marginalisasi struktural yang dibentuk oleh persilangan antara gender dan kondisi sosial-ekonomi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa patriarki tidak hanya beroperasi sebagai sikap individual, melainkan sebagai sistem yang terlembagakan dalam ranah domestik maupun sosial, yang membatasi otonomi perempuan, membungkam suara mereka, serta mereduksi nilai diri. Namun demikian, novel ini tidak semata-mata merepresentasikan perempuan sebagai korban pasif. Sebaliknya, narasi menyoroti pergulatan batin, kesadaran kritis, serta proses bertahap dalam membangun resistensi dan rekonstruksi identitas. Dengan strategi naratif yang memusatkan pengalaman dan suara perempuan, teks ini membuka ruang bagi pemulihan agensi. Pada akhirnya, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* tidak hanya mendokumentasikan penderitaan perempuan, tetapi juga menghadirkan kritik feminis yang kuat sekaligus menawarkan imajinasi baru tentang posisi perempuan dalam masyarakat patriarkal.

Kata Kunci: Kritik sastra feminis, Patriarki, Agensi perempuan, Marginalisasi struktural, Kekerasan psikologis

Introduction

The portrayal of women's challenges in literary works has been a key focus in feminist criticism, as literature not only reflects women's lived experiences but also reveals how cultural and social systems shape and constrain their identities (Belia et al., 2025; Pillay, 2023). Furthermore, growing awareness of gender inequality has been amplified by digital campaigns and social movements, particularly through social media platforms that advocate for gender justice and equality (Belia et al., 2025). This increased awareness makes sense when considering the many facts that show how often gender inequality occurs. Gender inequality refers to the different treatment of people based on their gender identity (Chotban & Kasim, 2020). This idea fits with the core ideas of feminist theory, which argue that women are often placed in a lower position within social hierarchies and in literary discussions.

Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by looking at women's life experiences and their social roles (Shuo & Min, 2017). It uses various terms to describe different feminist trends, each showing the social, economic, and historical backgrounds in which they developed, such as French feminism, Enlightenment feminism, Liberal feminism, Black feminism, and others (Escudero-Álias, 2021). Brian Khrisna's (2025) novel, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* (The Darkest Side of Heaven), portrays a grim picture of urban poverty, social breakdown, and the moral issues present in modern Indonesian society. At its core, the story highlights the intense struggles of women as they try to survive in a system that marginalizes them and makes them vulnerable due to their gender. While previous studies, such as those by Umifa & Subandiyah (2024), which use Soerjono Soekanto's (2012) theory, have focused on the depiction of poverty, family breakdown, and violations of social norms in this novel, the experiences of women in a patriarchal society have not been thoroughly examined using a feminist perspective. This gap shows the need for more detailed research on how the text portrays and challenges gender-based power relations.

Feminist literary criticism shows how literary works often support patriarchal control by presenting women as less important or secondary figures. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, explains this by pointing out that women's identities are always understood in relation to men, while men's identities are seen separately from women (Beauvoir et al., 2012). This approach is important because it highlights aspects of women's struggles that go beyond economic issues, such as the search for personal freedom, their presence in cultural stories, and their ability to shape the narratives they are part of (Rahman et al., 2025).

In the field of modern feminist studies, the idea of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, has gained significant importance. It helps explain how women face oppression due to the overlapping influences of different social structures like gender, class, and status (Crenshaw, 1991). This framework is also relevant when examining contemporary Indonesian literature, where female characters are often shown dealing with multiple forms of marginalization, as seen in Saud et al.'s (2023) analysis of Oka Rusmini's novel *Tarian Bumi*. Additionally, feminist discourse analysis highlights how language and storytelling can either reinforce or challenge gender-based power structures. This view is supported by the

work of Udasmoro (2018), who point out that modern Indonesian texts often reflect patriarchal power dynamics through their language and narrative styles.

Gender identity is viewed as a flexible concept that is shaped by social norms rather than fixed by biological traits, a viewpoint supported by feminist scholars analyzing current cultural stories (Holm et al., 2020, pp. 421–434). This idea is essential for understanding how female characters in Khrisna's novel navigate strict norms around morality, sexuality, and femininity (Belia et al., 2025). The internal struggles these characters face often reveal the emotional effects of external control and the acceptance of patriarchal standards (Pillay, 2023, pp. 393–410). Feminism created a social movement and theory that sought to oppose the patriarchal system, a system that positioned men as a superior and women as inferior. Feminism aims to eliminate the social, political, and economic inequalities experienced by women. Even from a liberal feminism perspective, feminism emphasizes gender equality in public spaces such as education, employment, and politics (Purwarno et al., 2021). Ultimately, this study contributes significantly to Indonesian feminist literary criticism by utilizing the feminist framework to move beyond socio-economic analysis, thereby offering a deeper understanding of women's agency, resistance, and the complex narrative disruption of urban patriarchy in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyse the representation of women's struggle within the novel. This study is a qualitative literary analysis. Tracy (2024) states that qualitative research serves as a foundation for a study, outlining its purpose and research questions to guide the systematic analysis of textual element. Approach: A feminist literary criticism approach is applied to examine the narrative structure, character portrayal, and gender relations. The primary data source is Brian Khrisna's (2025) novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*, supported by secondary sources such as journal articles, books, and feminist theoretical texts. Data were collected through close reading, annotation, and thematic categorization of narrative elements.: Data were analysed by identifying patterns of oppression, resistance, and agency, supported by relevant feminist theories including Beauvoir et al. (2012), Crenshaw (1991), and contemporary studies (Holm, 2020; Pillay, 2023). The analysis process followed Miles & Huberman's qualitative flow model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing.

Result and Discussion

This research found that Brian Khrisna's *Sisi Tergelap Surga* (The Darkest Side of Heaven) presents a complex portrait of women's experiences in patriarchal social structures. Through feminist analysis, it was found that this novel not only depicts the forms of oppression experienced by women, but also offers a perspective of empowerment through narrative representation. The findings of the study are divided into two main focuses: the forms of oppression experienced by female characters, and feminist interpretations that show resistance efforts in the text.

Forms of Oppression Experienced by Female Characters

The patriarchal dominance in *Sisi Tergelap Surga* is reflected through various forms of oppression experienced by female characters, ranging from violence in family structures, emotional and psychological violence, to structural marginalization related to social class and gender (Rahman, 2025). This representation shows that oppression does not exist as a single event, but rather as a system that works in layers and reinforces each other, thus shaping a complex experience of oppression for women.

The three forms of oppression identified in *Sisi Tergelap Surga*—patriarchal domination within family structures, emotional and psychological violence, and structural marginalization—should not be understood as isolated phenomena. Instead, they operate as an interconnected system that reinforces and sustains gender inequality across multiple levels of women's lives. Patriarchal authority in the family establishes the ideological foundation that legitimizes control over women, while emotional and psychological violence functions as an internal mechanism that weakens resistance and normalizes subordination. At the same time, structural marginalization, particularly through the intersection of gender and poverty, limits women's access to resources, thereby restricting their capacity to escape oppressive conditions. This interrelation reflects a broader pattern in feminist theory, where oppression is systemic, layered, and reproduced through both visible and invisible forms of power. Consequently, women's experiences in the novel illustrate not only personal suffering but also the operation of a deeply embedded social structure that continuously shapes and confines their agency.

Patriarchal Domination in Family Structures

The novel portrays the family as a deeply patriarchal space dominated by male authority, where men exercise full control over decision-making processes. This authority operates not merely at a practical level, but also ideologically, reflecting the internalization of patriarchal values as unquestioned social norms within the household. Men are positioned as the legitimate holders of power who determine women's behavior, life choices, and social boundaries. Such a structure reinforces hierarchical gender relations in which women are systematically subordinated to male authority (Zulia & Rahman, 2024). This domination is explicitly reflected in the statement:

Kewajibanku itu cuma menafkahimu saja (Khrisna, 2025, p. 47)

Translated (English): My obligation is only to provide for you.

This reduces the husband's responsibility solely to economic provision while simultaneously legitimizing unequal relational power. Furthermore, one of the clearest manifestations of patriarchy in the novel is the marginalization of women's voices. Female characters who express objections, emotional struggles, or critical perspectives are frequently dismissed, trivialized, or silenced by other family members. This dismissal functions as a mechanism for preserving patriarchal control, where women are constructed as irrational,

overly emotional, and therefore unworthy of participating in decision-making processes. The violence of this patriarchal discourse is vividly illustrated in the utterance:

Kalau kau bukan istriku, wanita mandul kaya kau sudak aku jual jadi buruh kupas pisang di tukang bolu di terminal (Khrisna, 2025, p. 47).

Translated (English): If you weren't my wife, I would have sold a barren woman like you to work peeling bananas at the sponge cake maker at the terminal.

The statement not only degrades women through verbal abuse, but also objectifies them by associating their value solely with reproductive capacity and domestic usefulness. As a result, women are denied equal agency in determining the direction of their own lives, both within the family sphere and in the wider social context.

In addition, the novel highlights how women are burdened with rigid domestic expectations that are socially framed as natural obligations. Women are expected to maintain the household, preserve family harmony, and prioritize the needs of others above their own aspirations. These expectations confine women to traditional gender roles and reinforce the belief that domestic labor is inherently feminine (Green, 2020). At the same time, the novel reveals the restrictions imposed on women's mobility, both physically and socially. Their access to education, employment, and public spaces is limited under the guise of "protection," morality, or family honor. This oppression is reflected in the statement:

Kalau saja anak setan itu tidak lahir, mungkin aku sudah pergi dari tempat busuk ini (Khrisna, 2025, p. 71).

Translated (English): If only the devil's child hadn't been born, maybe I would have left this rotten place.

This conveys the emotional suffocation and entrapment experienced by women within patriarchal domestic structures. Through these portrayals, the novel demonstrates that patriarchy operates not only through direct domination, but also structurally by confining women to the domestic sphere and restricting opportunities for autonomy, independence, and self-actualization.

Emotional and Psychological Violence

Emotional and psychological violence in *Sisi Tergelap Surga* emerges as a significant mechanism through which patriarchal dominance is maintained within the domestic sphere. The novel illustrates how abusive language, manipulation, and emotional degradation are employed to assert male authority and weaken women's autonomy (Zulia & Rahman, 2024). This violence is explicitly reflected in the utterance:

*Kont*Imu itu nggak akan pernah mampu membayarku! Preman miskin (Khrisna, 2025, p. 52).*

Translated (English): Your dick will never be able to pay me! What a poor thug.

This demonstrates the hostile and degrading verbal interactions embedded within intimate relationships. Such expressions reveal that violence in the novel is not limited to physical aggression, but also manifests psychologically through language that humiliates, intimidates, and destabilizes the victim emotionally.

A central form of psychological violence portrayed in the novel is gaslighting, a manipulative strategy used to distort women's perceptions of reality and undermine their emotional credibility. Female characters are repeatedly made to question the validity of their thoughts, emotions, and lived experiences, leaving them emotionally dependent on male figures who occupy positions of moral and psychological authority (Rekha & Manjula, 2022). The gaslighting dynamic is directly articulated in the statement:

Kau yang terlalu sensitif. Kau saja yang lebay (Khrisna, 2025, p. 57).

Translated (English): You're the one who's too sensitive. You're the one who's overreacting.

Through such dismissive language, women's emotional suffering is trivialized, while patriarchal control is normalized as rational and justified behavior. In this context, women are positioned as emotionally unstable, overly dramatic, or incapable of objective judgment, thereby reinforcing unequal gender relations within the household.

The novel further demonstrates how guilt induction functions as another instrument of patriarchal domination. Female characters are subtly blamed for domestic conflicts and family disharmony, even when they are not responsible for creating such conditions. This continuous emotional pressure forces women to internalize feelings of inadequacy and self-blame, ultimately diminishing their confidence and personal agency (Rekha & Manjula, 2022). Repeated exposure to verbal degradation and emotional invalidation inflicts profound psychological trauma that gradually erodes women's emotional stability and sense of self-worth. This destruction of identity is vividly conveyed in the statement,

Lonte, pelacur, perek. Terserah apa katamu! (Khrisna, 2025, p. 51).

Translated (English): Whore, prostitute, slut. Whatever you call yourself!

The use of stigmatizing labels objectifies and dehumanizes women, reducing them to derogatory stereotypes that strip them of dignity and individuality. As a consequence, the female characters experience a gradual deterioration of self-identity under the pressures of patriarchal control. They begin to internalize the belief that they are unworthy, incapable, or lacking the authority to make decisions about their own lives. The resulting psychological trauma creates emotional dependency, making it increasingly difficult for them to escape harmful and oppressive relationships. In the long term, this trauma affects women's ability to establish healthy social relationships, express themselves authentically, and develop trust in others. Through these representations, the novel powerfully asserts that emotional and psychological violence operates as a subtle yet deeply destructive tool of patriarchal domination. Rather than relying solely on physical force, patriarchy in the novel functions

through emotional manipulation, verbal humiliation, and psychological control, all of which sustain the broader structure of gender inequality within family life.

Structural Marginalization

The structural marginalization in *Sisi Tergelap Surga* is seen through the position of women who are squeezed by two systems of oppression at once: poverty and gender. This novel shows how women experience a "double burden", where difficult economic conditions exacerbate their vulnerability to patriarchal domination. Poverty limits women's ability to negotiate roles, make decisions, or exit harmful relationships, while traditional gender norms place them in subordinate positions of being compulsory, sacrificing, and prioritizing family needs (Pillay, 2023). This finding strongly supports the framework of Structural Intersectionality, which posits that systems of oppression such as sexism and classism are interlocking, mutually constituted, and reinforcing (Crenshaw, 1991). Macro-level structural inequalities, such as structural sexism and income inequality, intersect and jointly shape an individual's life outcomes (Homan et al., 2021). These structural factors are nonadditive, meaning the negative effects are greater than the sum of their parts, thereby trapping women in a cycle of gendered poverty that is difficult to escape. In this context, structural injustice does not only come from interpersonal relationships, but from social systems that place women as the most affected by economic inequality. This condition is reinforced by the lack of women's access to education and decent work.

The novel shows that women do not have equal opportunities to develop intellectual capacity or professional skills, as these spaces have been narrowed by domestic expectations and social barriers. Low access to education hinders women from building self-reliance, while the lack of employment opportunities closes social mobility pathways that may free them from dependence on male figures. Thus, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* shows how structural marginalization works systematically: poverty weakens women's position, gender norms limit their mobility, and closed access to education and employment prolong the cycle of inequality. The novel critically reveals that women's oppression stems not only from symbolic or psychological violence, but also from socio-economic structures that lock them in vulnerable and helpless positions. The double burden of poverty and gender is encapsulated when the protagonist reflects on her constrained choices:

Aku ingin sekolah dulu, tapi siapa yang mau biayai? Dan kalau aku keluar kerja, siapa yang jaga anak? (Khrisna, 2025, p. 82).

Translated (English): I want to go to school first, but who will pay for it? And if I go out of work, who will look after the children?

This dilemma illustrates Crenshaw's structural intersectionality in action: the simultaneous pressure of economic deprivation and domestic expectation forecloses any meaningful pathway to autonomy.

The novel makes the link between poverty and male dominance explicit through a male character's rationalization:

Mau ke mana kau? Tanpa aku, kau tidak punya apa-apa. Kau tidak bisa hidup sendiri (Khrisna, 2025, p. 91).

Translated (English): Where are you going? Without me, you have nothing. You can't live alone.

Economic dependency is weaponized here as a tool of control, demonstrating how structural poverty amplifies patriarchal authority by eliminating women's exit options.

The closure of educational and professional pathways for women is articulated when the protagonist confronts her own blocked mobility:

Perempuan dari kampung seperti aku memang tidak punya tempat di kota ini. Kota ini bukan untuk kami (Khrisna, 2025, p. 104).

Translated (English): A woman from a village like me has no place in this city. This city is not for us.

This resigned observation foregrounds how urban structures, rather than offering social mobility, reproduce class and gender inequalities, trapping women in cycles of marginalization.

Feminist Interpretation of the Novel

The feminist interpretation of *Sisi Tergelap Surga* highlights how the novel not only represents the experience of women's oppression, but also presents women as subjects capable of challenging, responding, and reconstructing the patriarchal structures that limit them. Through this approach, the novel is read as a text that affirms women's capacity to build critical awareness, recover identity, and rearticulate their position in power relations (Green, 2020). Thus, this section analyses how the female characters in the novel move from subordinate positions to spaces of agency, resistance, and self-empowerment (Rekha & Manjula, 2022).

Women as Subjects, Not Victims

In *Sisi Tergelap Surga*, Brian Khrisna presents a feminist perspective that shifts the position of women from just an object of suffering to a subject who has agency, reflection, and capacity to determine the direction of her own life (Rekha & Manjula, 2022), for example:

*Masih mau kont*l nggak? Ada tiga nih (Khrisna, 2025, p.23).*

Translated (English): Still want some di*k? There are three of them.

Although female characters experience various forms of oppression both patriarchal, emotional, and structural the novel does not allow them to stop at the position of passive victim. On the contrary, the traumatic experiences they go through are actually the starting point for the development of stronger, critical, and aware of the injustices that restrain them. This transformation shows that women in the novel are not only defined by external situations, but also by their ability to build a new understanding of their self-worth and rights. Thus, the novel articulates the idea that women have the capacity to act, change situations, and renegotiate oppressive power relations. This approach affirms a feminist reading that sees

women not as weak entities waiting to be rescued, but as autonomous subjects who can create a way out of the structures that limit them.

The protagonist's shift from silent endurance to critical self-awareness is captured in a pivotal interior moment:

Aku lelah menjadi perempuan yang selalu mengalah. Ada sesuatu dalam diriku yang mulai memberontak (Khrisna, 2025, p. 118).

Translated (English): I'm tired of being the woman who always gives in. Something inside me started to rebel.

This awakening represents the emergence of what Beauvoir identifies as women's capacity for self-determination: the refusal to remain defined by others' expectations.

The protagonist's assertion of her right to self-determination marks a decisive turning point in her characterization:

Hidupku bukan milik siapa-siapa. Aku berhak memilih. Aku berhak untuk tidak setuju (Khrisna, 2025, p. 127).

Translated (English): My life belongs to no one. I have the right to choose. I have the right to disagree.

This declarative statement positions the female subject as an agent who claims ownership of her own narrative, disrupting the patriarchal logic that had previously defined her in relation to others

Critique of Patriarchal Urban Reality

The novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* articulates a sharp critique of patriarchal urban reality by showing how poverty and patriarchy work as two systems that reinforce each other and produce a layered form of oppression against women. In a harsh and competitive urban landscape, women are the most vulnerable because their access to education, employment, and safe space is limited by gender norms that place men at the centre of power (Zulia & Rahman, 2024). This is apparent, for example, when one of the female characters feels that her life is confined by economic conditions as well as social rules:

Jaga mulut kau! Sudah untung kau kukawini. Perempuan mandul kaya kau memang tak berguna (Khrisna, 2025, p.46).

Translated (English): Watch your mouth! It's a good thing I married you. A barren woman like you is useless.

The sentence describes how women experience double invisibility in urban spaces economically marginalized and socially neglected.

The link between poverty and patriarchy is also seen through the description of the control mechanisms conducted by men in a limited economic situation. One male figure, for example, said,

Jaga mulut kau! Sudah untung kau kukawini. Perempuan mandul kaya kau memang tak berguna (Khrisna, 2025, p.46).

Translated (English): Watch your mouth! It's a good thing I married you. A barren woman like you is useless.

This part shows how economic conditions are used as legitimacy to silence women. Poverty here is not just a social setting, but a tool to reinforce male authority and rationalize restraints against women. The novel also shows that these power relations are not only present in the domestic sphere, but are also inherent in urban structures that marginalize women from social mobility opportunities. In one scene, the female character reflects on her limitations by saying,

Namun, begitulah hidup. Kumpulan dari rencana-rencana yang gagal. Kota ini keras (Khrisna, 2025, p.50).

Translated (English): But that's life. A collection of failed plans. This city is tough.

Through this representation, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* affirms that patriarchal urban reality creates a multi-layered cycle of oppression, where poverty reinforces male dominance, and patriarchy narrows women's opportunities to get out of poverty. The novel thus serves as a social critique of how cities which are supposed to offer mobility become spaces that deepen gender injustice.

Empowerment through Narrative Visibility

The representation of women in *Sisi Tergelap Surga* marks a form of symbolic resistance to the patriarchal structure that has kept women's experiences on the periphery. This emphasis on Narrative Visibility is a classic example of creating a counter-narrative, which is an oppositional story that challenges and disrupts hegemonic framings of social realities (Bamberg & Wipff, 2020). The mere presence of these counter-stories "shines a light" on the dominant, often invisible, master narrative, exposing the ideological mechanisms of privilege and oppression.

By providing extensive narrative space for women's perspectives and voices, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* repositions female characters from passive objects of suffering into active subjects who possess the capacity to observe, evaluate, and resist oppressive circumstances. The novel centers the inner experiences of women, allowing their emotions, reflections, and struggles to become the foundation of the narrative itself. Through this approach, the text opens possibilities for interpreting women not merely as victims of patriarchal structures, but as active social agents engaged in processes of healing, identity negotiation, and the reconstruction of meaning in their lives. In this sense, the novel transforms women's personal experiences into a form of social and political discourse that challenges patriarchal silencing (Zulia & Rahman, 2024).

The novel explicitly emphasizes that women's visibility constitutes an act of resistance. This idea is reflected in the protagonist's statement,

Ya Tuhan, aku miskin sampai mati pun tidak apa-apa, tapi tolong jangan sampai anak-anak cantikku merasakan hal yang sama (Khrisna, 2025, p. 193).

Translated (English): Oh my God, it's okay if I'm poor until I die, but please don't let my beautiful children feel the same way.

The quotation reveals not only the protagonist's suffering, but also her consciousness and determination to break the cycle of oppression for the next generation. Her voice transcends individual pain and becomes a broader critique of the social structures that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and gendered suffering (Yuan & Wang, 2025). Through moments such as this, the novel demonstrates that storytelling functions as a medium of empowerment in which women reclaim agency through articulation and testimony (Agu, 2024). Women's visibility within the narrative therefore operates not merely as representation, but as a political act that expands the legitimacy of their existence both within and beyond patriarchal frameworks.

Moreover, the protagonist's decision to narrate her own experiences becomes an explicit assertion of survival and self-presence. This is powerfully articulated in the statement,

Kalau aku tidak ceritakan ini, siapa yang akan tahu? Suara perempuan seperti aku mudah sekali hilang (Khrisna, 2025, p. 202).

Translated (English): If I don't tell you this, who will know? The voice of a woman like me is easily lost.

Here, the act of storytelling itself becomes a form of resistance against erasure and marginalization. By voicing experiences that are often silenced or ignored, the protagonist reclaims authority over her own narrative and rejects the invisibility imposed upon women in patriarchal societies. This meta-narrative dimension strongly aligns with Elaine Showalter's (1993) concept of gynocriticism, which emphasizes the importance of women writing and articulating their experiences from within their own perspectives. In this context, narration becomes a feminist intervention that challenges dominant patriarchal discourses and restores women's authority over their identities and histories (Zulia & Rahman, 2024).

The novel ultimately concludes with a powerful affirmation of endurance, voice, and agency. The protagonist declares,

"Aku masih di sini. Aku masih bernafas. Dan selama aku masih bisa bicara, aku tidak akan berhenti" (Khrisna, 2025, p. 218).

Translated (English): I'm still here. I'm still breathing. And as long as I can still talk, I won't stop."

This statement serves as the novel's culminating feminist assertion, emphasizing that survival itself is an act of resistance when accompanied by the courage to speak and testify. The protagonist's continued existence and refusal to remain silent symbolize the reclaiming of agency within a social structure designed to suppress women's voices. Through this ending, *Sisi Tergelap Surga* asserts that narrative visibility is foundational to empowerment: to speak,

to be heard, and to remain visible are forms of power that challenge patriarchal domination and affirm women's humanity (Zulia & Rahman, 2024).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Sisi Tergelap Surga* systematically represents the multilayered nature of patriarchal oppression experienced by its female characters. The novel reveals how domination within family structures, emotional and psychological violence, and gendered economic marginalization operate collectively to restrict women's autonomy and reinforce their subordinate social positioning. These findings, specifically through the lens of Structural Intersectionality, affirm that patriarchy in the text functions not merely as cultural practice but as an embedded structural system shaping women's lived realities. At the same time, the narrative constructs a Counter-Narrative that centers women as active subjects capable of critical self-reflection and resistance. Through narrative visibility, the novel restores agency to female characters, illustrating their gradual movement from silence to articulation. This narrative shift signifies an intentional disruption of patriarchal norms and underscores the role of storytelling as a site of symbolic empowerment.

Taken as a whole, the study concludes that *Sisi Tergelap Surga* operates as both a critique of patriarchal mechanisms and a feminist project of reclamation. By foregrounding women's experiences and charting their processes of resilience, the novel contributes to broader feminist literary conversations on agency, voice, and the reconfiguration of gendered social structure

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