

UNITAS

SEMI-ANNUAL PEER-REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL ONLINE JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH IN LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY



VYRNA HENDARTO

**Becoming *Ibu*
and the
Javanese
Tradition**

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Becoming *Ibu* and the Javanese Tradition

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Abstract

This study argues that the Javanese hierarchal tradition is not inevitable. It is still the result of a social reality based on male dominance. To overcome the insidious influence completely might be difficult, yet there is still a chance to reduce its effects. By the end of the study, the writer will show the ambivalence of the Javanese tradition in perceiving *ibu* might be considered as an alternative to empower Indonesian women. Understanding the mechanism of Javanese tradition that has curtailed Indonesian women, this study will consider the image of *ibu* as a female being and not simply as an object related to others.

Within the sphere of Indonesian literature, Indonesian female writers have won their place in terms of readership and significantly enriched the canonical works. Indonesia in fact has had quite significant female writers throughout its literary history although they are mostly Javanese: RA. Kartini (1898), Rukiyah (1940s), Toety Heraty (1950-60s), NH. Dini (1970s), and Leila S. Chudori (1980s). Today's contemporary female writers are also mushrooming with more young female writers who are considered well equipped with imaginative and creative potentialities.

Women's writing is mostly left behind by male literary critics in Indonesia, simply because it has been observed that there isn't any promising Indonesian female writers worth to analyze. When Ayu Utami's name was announced as having won the first place in a prestigious literary award, (male) critics in Indonesia questioned the authenticity of her writing, especially because she had never produced any fictional work before, and she is notoriously close to a prominent Indonesian author, Goenawan Muhammad (Dharmawan, "Ayu Utami" 68). This study shows that actually, Indonesian female writers represented by Ayu Utami and Sirikit Syah, are worth noting in terms of the ways by which they, who have firsthand experience as a woman, deal with the western ideas of feminism without letting go of the sense of being as an Indonesian woman.

Keywords

Ayu Utami, *Harga Perempuan*, *ibu*, Indonesian women writers, *Saman*, Sirikit Syah

Introduction

The Republic of Indonesia is well-acknowledged as a nation with social complexity and cultural diversity. Making a generalization on a nation that is a sprawling archipelago, a nation of thousands of islands, hundreds of languages, and many cultural groups is an obstinate attempt. A great deal of Indonesian experience also covers the modes of social interaction, cuisine, nature, music, sports, and traditional as well as modern entertainment. Nevertheless, among these hundreds of cultural groups, Javanese culture is considered the strongest sub-culture of all.

Background on Javanese Culture

Javanese culture does not constitute one homogenous unity and Javanese themselves notice their culture as a regional diversity. As Koentjaraningrat argues, "This regional diversity of culture roughly coincides with the area of the Javanese dialects, and appears clearly in food, household, rituals, folk art, and music" ("Introduction" 1-2). The culture of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java has been the court civilization of the Javanese. It has a four-centuries-old literary history and a sophisticated art of court dances and music, and is characterized by a highly syncretistic tradition consisting of the combined elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam (21).

The mainland of Javanese is Java. It is a moderate-sized island yet the most populated one, with approximately 65% of the total Indonesian population living on the island, which is in fact only 7% of the total land area of the nation. Their homeland is Java, and the Javanese "constitute half the country's population and form by far the largest single ethnic group in Southeast Asia" (Mulder, *Introduction to Inside Indonesia* xii). The Javanese,

nevertheless, occupy only the central and eastern parts of the island of Java (Koentjaraningrat, "Introduction" 21). The concentration of Javanese is in the heartland of the provinces of Central and East Java while more than one and a half million Javanese live outside the island.

Javanese distinguish among themselves two categories of social level, namely *wong cilik* and *priyayi*. *Wong cilik* refers to "the masses of peasants and low-class people in towns and cities," while *priyayi* refers to the "social level which comprises members of the civil service, administrative officials, and intellectuals (Koentjaraningrat, "Introduction" 2). Another way of perceiving Javanese society is the categories of *abangan* and *santri*. *Abangan* are those who do not live according to Islamic basic principles, while *santri* are those who follow Islamic principles seriously. The great majority of the Javanese in Central and East Java are under the category of *wong cilik* (Koentjaraningrat, "Introduction" 3), while *priyayi* population is found mostly in big cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, and Yogyakarta.

Javanese Philosophy of Life

Although Indonesia is indeed a nation of social complexity and cultural diversity, Javanese tradition as a subculture has long been considered as a national culture:

The spreading Javanese culture throughout Indonesian society is taken for granted, a historical necessity that is already adumbrated in the Mythmaking School teaching of history...with unsettling ease, [Javanese] proclaim that many Javanese things have already become accepted as Indonesian such as the Javanese costume, the gamelan orchestra, the wayang shadow play, or official ceremonial ways. Others plainly predict that the product of Javanese high culture such as refined dancing and the art of music will experience a revival and be accepted by all Indonesians, as their national heritage (Mulder, "Javanization" 31).

Niels Mulder in his analysis of Javanese philosophical life notices the hegemonic concept of 'Javanization' as the way of the conscious or unconscious imposition of Javanese patterns of thoughts and behaviour throughout Indonesia ("Javanization" 29):

In a half conscious half unconscious way this Javanist tradition serves as a referent to explain and rationalize practical behaviour ... [it] may also refer to more recent universes of meaning, such as being Indonesian ... but as soon as they refer to life close to home, to family relationship, the conduct of everyday life, the nature of understanding and knowledge between self and society, and even the meaning of being Indonesian, they tend to demonstrate the Javanese-ness and their belonging to the generalized category of Javanese culture ("A Kejawen Perspective" 2-3).

This Javanistic tendency, along with the conservative military coming to power since 1966, has put the notion of 'order' as the agenda of the New Order¹ government in the sense of political, military, and economic consolidation. Harmony becomes a crucial element in Indonesia, along with other elements of Javanese heritage: the hierarchal rigidity, authoritarianism, and arbitrariness. These are followed by feudalization, fondness for status display, and arrogance for which the word *priyayi* is overused, which implies behaving like a member of the Javanese upper class. Today, *priyayi* in Javanese society have gone beyond Geertz's definition of "someone who can trace his ancestry to kings" (Javanese Family 152).

Javanese also have their own philosophical ways of perceiving their life. Life on earth for Javanese is simply to maintain 'the unity of existence.' The unity is subject to the cosmic law, which states, "all existence has to run its fixed course and that life is an inescapable project in which all have to participate while setting limits to lot, purpose, and volition" (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 5). Life is "an ordered and coordinated whole which people must accept and to which they should adapt themselves (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 5). One should be aware of his/her place in society, paying attention to the harmony of the vertical relationship, such as between 'God' and human beings, a teacher and a student, or parents and children. One should live in tune with something greater than oneself, which is the 'order of Life,' thus achieving 'perfection' or *kasampurnaan* by developing self-knowledge in 'Life' (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 6).

The above figure portrays *manunggaling kawula lan Gusti* ('the unification of human being and God'). For the Javanese, 'God' is nowhere but

within themselves. The unity of existence finds its essence in its all-encompassing center, in 'The One', Hyang Sukma ('The All-Soul') that is Urip ('Life') from which all existence emanates and which it has to return to. The unification of body and soul, human being, and 'God' takes place in an inner being of the body. It is Life itself that animates the order of cosmos and earth that constitutes its essence and secret:

To them 'God' is in the heart, it is the "god" they feel; it is Life and their being part of it, or, in the world of a mystic, "It is in every beat of my heart that I feel 'God.' It is Life that surrounds me and me being part of Life. It is within me and outside me. It is being born, being married and dying. What is, is Life, continuity of existence, our sojourn here being a mere stop on the road 'where we pause to have a drink'...we live from the origin to destination. We come, form, and disappear; we go nowhere but fulfill the scheme of Life"...it is not a confrontation with something that is outside the self, but the affirmation that one participates in the unity of existence (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 8-9).

Javanese individual comes from, and later returns to his/her God as the ultimate achievement, a unification of kawula ('human') and Gusti ('God'). "Impulsive actions, or sacrificing oneself to one's lust and desires, giving free rein to one's passions are reprehensible because they upset personal, social and cosmic order" (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 10).

Javanese should also be aware of the notion of sangkan paran dumadi ('the origin of the existence'). Life and destiny are ordered in a great scheme that is beyond human volition. Javanese should always be nrima ('accepting'). It means one should know one's place, trust in one's fate, and be grateful to 'God' because there is satisfaction in fulfilling one's lot in the consciousness that all has been destined (Mulder, "A Kejawen Perspective" 12-13). It can be achieved by maintaining the hierarchy within the macro cosmos, in which Javanese individuals maintain vertical relationships among themselves to achieve harmony and unity as the ultimate goal of their lives.

Javanese Family and the Role of Women

As the consequence of maintaining the 'order of Life', marriage and parenting in Javanese family become an essential obligation of Javanese individuals. Marriage, particularly for Javanese women, is the ultimate goal of one's life since through marriage the continuance of the next generation is granted. This is actually the cultural task of both Javanese women and men. However, women's capacity of procreating has affected not only women's emotional lives but also the mental representations of their bodies, and concretely, their physical bodies. Thus, the burden of maintaining the hierarchy in Javanese tradition is placed on Indonesian women.

Living in this hierarchal community ultimately requires women to be sensitive to her cultural place and behave accordingly. Sexual division of labor in Javanese family becomes a physical manifestation of the great 'order of Life,' in the sense that a human being shall master his/her body and emotion while fulfilling his/her duty and following the destiny that s/he has to accept. Following the 'order of Life,' in which everyone has his/her own role to play, the binary becomes clear: man/ woman, husband/wife, parents/ children, public/private. Women have been deprived as well as idealized, as Kris Budiman in *Perempuan di Rumah Ber-(Tangga)* ("A Woman in a House with Stairs") has come up with a hierarchal division of a Javanese household (Budiman, "Perempuan" 152).

The sexual division of Javanese/Indonesian household has indeed put women as the center of a family and the core of the society. Being a mother is supposed to be the major preoccupation of Javanese adult women. This cultural mandate is enforced, like most successful societal imperatives, by idealization of *ibu* as an elevating social status on the one hand and stigmas and punishments attached to failing to be *ibu* or to fulfill the role of becoming *ibu* properly on the other.

The Notion of Ibu and Nationhood

The word *ibu* means 'mother' in Bahasa Indonesia. However, the word has a much wider range of connotations. It does not only connote a biological mother but also a social status. An Indonesian woman who does not have

any children, or even has not married, yet gains a significant or respectable position in her society, is necessarily called ibu. Included in this range are professional women, female teachers, female religious leaders, rich women, women with supernatural power, or simply elderly women, as Julian I. Suraykusuma defines ibu in “State Ibuism: The Social Construction of Womanhood in the Indonesian New Order.”

Along with the wider concept of today’s ibu, this notion also includes the concept of mothers and wives. An ibu is both a mother and a wife when she is married and has children. An ibu can also be a single woman with a good career, thus she earns respect from the society through the label ibu. In general, ibu is considered as a social status, an elevating one, a notion of respect toward women’s achievement in any aspect of life. Therefore, it is often considered as aneh (‘weird’ or ‘unusual’) or ‘unjavanese’ for Javanese/Indonesian women to refuse or show no interest to become ibu.

The label ibu has been highly defined as respectable due to the role of mother/wife as the center of Javanese household. As the ‘pillars of the society,’ she is responsible for maintaining the unity and harmony of the ‘order of Life.’ She distributes the flow of money in the family since it is inappropriate for her priyayi husband to deal with it, as Madelon Djajadiningrat argues that the qualities of a ‘good’ ibu are the desire to mother, to serve, and to sacrifice for others. Ibu is also involved in the development of the nation, as the government has specifically invited Indonesian women to participate socially, economically and politically since “good ibu” should have had the innate qualities that are required to reveal. (Djajadiningrat, “Ibuism and Priyayization: Path to Power?” 44)

Norma Sullivan in “Gender and Politics in Indonesia” also perceives the role of an ibu as aimed at maintaining security and harmony in family life, which ultimately corresponds to the security and harmony of the ‘order of Life’:

The consensus model of male/female relations in Indonesia has been persuasive in both academic and government thinking. According to this model Javanese society allocates different positions to each sex, but furnishes these positions with equal status. Such positions are based on the different roles

and tasks men and women perform in the family. The major roles and tasks ascribed to women focus on household management, nurturance and socialization. Men are identified as the providers, protectors and representatives in non-familial realms and situations (74).

Sullivan argues that in practice the consensus does not guarantee Indonesian women's equal position to men. While men are drawn out of their homes into public arenas where they represent their families, "women's roles and tasks tend to confine them to the household, where they are primarily responsible for the physical and emotional needs of its members." Sullivan believes it is impossible to perceive both women and men enjoying equal social status from their different roles and position ("Gender and Politics" 74-75).

When the enforcement of motherhood connotes cultural mandate of maintaining the Javanese hierarchal traditions, Indonesian women have to reconcile contradictory expectations when the boundaries of sexual division of labor is considered vague by the tradition. Women are allowed to enter the public domain as long as their achievement is to support family needs and maintain its social status. The five basic roles of Indonesian women, namely Panca Dharma Wanita, are widely propagated in Indonesia: 1) as loyal supporter of her family; 2) as caretaker of the household; 3) as producer of future generations; 4) as the family's prime socializers; and 5) as Indonesian citizen (Sullivan, "Gender and Politics" 64).

However, in terms of historical and cultural perspective, there has been a shifting notion of defining women in Indonesia. Beginning with the pre-colonial period, as seen in the ancient Javanese literature, Javanese women were valued as mere sexual beings and for their capacity of procreation. Evidence found both in Serat Centini and the book of Pararaton, is considered as valuable classical Javanese literature which portrayed Javanese women sensually. They were sexually active yet, as married women, they were expected to be passive and obedient toward their spouse. Although Islamic teaching had brought a liberating notion of women such as the right to own property and equal opportunity in education, women remained sexual objects and were valued in terms of the female nature of procreation.

During the three hundred and fifty years of the Dutch colonial period, priyayi women were granted Dutch education. Women's formal education at that time was simply aimed at making them better wives and mothers, not at enabling them to achieve independence or public achievement. Javanese women began to learn the notion of women's emancipation through Dutch journals and magazines, and understand the injustice they had experienced. However, wong cilik women remained uneducated since Dutch schools were extremely expensive and limited only to priyayi. Nevertheless, in terms of power and being independent, these women were stronger than those priyayi women, who tended to be spoiled by inang pengasuh (maid) and were restricted to participate even in domestic affairs.

Along with the increasing demand in trade between 1920s-1930s, Indonesian women were needed to participate in the economic sector, such as selling batik, spices, and other daily needs. Their participation in the public sphere has been well appreciated ever since. Along with the increasing awareness in nationalism, they also managed to develop, although it took the label of 'emancipation' with R.A. Kartinis (1879-1903) as the role model, particularly because the term feminism was 'too western.'²

During the post-colonial period after Indonesian independence in 1945, more women were educated, particularly university level. As a result, more professional women participated in public life that used to be dominated by men. Education no longer is a privilege for a particular social class anymore. Kartini's emancipating spirit has also brought the wind of change in modernizing Indonesian women. Women's emancipation movement demanded women to gain equal opportunity in both public and private spheres. It has led to the notion of peran ganda wanita ("woman's dual roles") since 1970s. Women are allowed to participate in the public sphere as long as their public activities do not disturb their domestic obligations. This phenomenon mainly appears in the level of upper-middle class women. Lower class women have entered the public sphere earlier due to their financial problems and the demand to support their families. Nevertheless, in general, Indonesian women are expected to excel in performing their dual roles. (Djajadiningrat, "Ibuisism and Priyayization: Path to Power?" 46)

The year 1978 was considered a significant year for Indonesian women. There were two events that marked the state's knowledge of women's participation. The first one was the recognition of Indonesian women's role and social status in *Garis-garis Besar Halauan Negara* (The State National Guidelines). Secondly, for the very first time, the government began to concentrate on the intensification of women's role in the state development through the establishment of a special ministry for Indonesian women, which was *Menteri Negara urusan Peranan Wanita* (The State Minister on Women's Participation), now known as *Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan* (Ministry on Women's Empowerment). The results of this particular ministry are the emergence of PKK and the more significant role of *Dharma Wanita*, which actually existed in 1974. *PKK-Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (Family Welfare Education) run by *Departemen Dalam Negeri* (the International Affairs Department) has been well developed since then and has also propagated the state agenda of *ibuism* in terms of inviting women to participate physically and mentally as *ibu* in the development of the nation.

The evidence of the successful programs of PKK can be seen in the result of a research on the ideal portrayal of Indonesian women in a small village in Klaten, Central Java. There were 54 respondents who agreed that good women had to be able to function as *ibu*; 27 as good and obedient wife; 17 as good housewife; and 6 as financial provider. Thus, the research concludes that becoming a good housewife is not necessary, but the top priority is to become a good *ibu* (Mahorto-Tjirosubono, "Kedudukan" 198). The finding also bears the tendency of *ibu-oriented* among *wong cilik* women, those who used to be perceived as independent and self-sufficient in public affairs. With Javanese as the hegemonic culture, the notion of *ibu* is full of Javanese nuances: as the keeper of harmony and unity, the preserver and educator of the next generation, the supporter of family, and the good citizen of Indonesia. These elements connote the aspects of Javanese tradition and its hierarchy: the hierarchy shall be perpetuated through the women's capacity for procreation and the harmony and unity shall be maintained through women's loyalty and obedience toward their husbands, families, and nation.



Fig. 1. Sirikit Syah, journalist and university lecturer who authored *Harga Perempuan* ("The Woman's Price"), her collection of short stories in 1999. <https://sirikitsyah.wordpress.com/about/catatan-pribadi/hari-ulang-tahunku/>.

The Portrayal of Ibu in Indonesian Literature

Indonesian women's desire to become *ibu* becomes a reality that has been a common thematical presentation in Indonesian literature. Today's Indonesian female authors have also been trying to portray the uniqueness of Indonesian motherhood and the notion of *ibu* within the Javanese tradition as the contemporary issues of Indonesian women. One of them is Sirikit Syah (b. 1960), a journalist and a university lecturer who has been writing short stories for magazines and newspapers since the 1980s. In 1999, she published *Harga Perempuan* ("The Woman's Price"), her collection of short stories. The collection tackled women's issues such as love and betrayal (an *ibu* and the mistress of her husband, a young woman betrayed by her fiancé), career women and their dilemma, or an obedient traditional type of *ibu* and her polygamous marriage (Budidarma, "Wacana" xiv-v). Most of her short

stories are written in linear narration, some of them in the form of female characters' stream of consciousness, diary writing, and letters.

Another young female writer who pays strong attention to women's issues is Ayu Utami (1968–), a most-discussed female writer in the last three years. She is considered as the most promising young female writer after her novel *Saman* (based on one of the male characters in the novel) won first place in a literary contest held by Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Cultural Committee) in 1998. Unlike Sirikit Syah, Ayu Utami has never written any literary work before except for one or two humorous short stories.



Fig. 2. Ayu Utami, author of the award-winning novel, *Saman*. <https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/235314/ayu-utami-modal-indonesia-untuk-dunia>.

Saman is not written based on a particular problem or idea. The novel is written based on the characters' ways of narrating their own stories, problems, or concerns. The characters provide their own perspective and ideas, revealing their deepest, most bitter secrets in their own styles of language. The novel is interwoven with various issues like an intense love affair, hair-

raising mystical phenomena, female sexuality, and the degrading power of religion. None of these issues are written in chronological order. Ayu Utami often uses stream of consciousness, from which the reader is able to understand the complexity of her characters as seen from their diction and their way of thinking and perceiving things. The novel is also composed in different formats: essay, narration, poetry, letter, journal, diary, and email.

Both fictions deal with sprawling contemporary issues of Indonesian women. However, the role of ibu is indeed significant in Indonesian society that the representation of ibu and the notion of ibuism are dominantly present in the fictional works. In general, the fictional image of the ibu bears positive nuances. Nevertheless, Sirikit Syah and Ayu Utami do not fail to portray the other side of ibu: a mother who commits infanticide, an ibu who leaves her family for another man, a wife who is tired of being loyal to her husband, or a second wife who questions fairness and justice in polygamy.

This study attempts to go beyond these 'unusual' as well as the usual portrayals of ibu, analyzing particular female experiences as ibu, which is imaginatively developed by two outstanding contemporary Indonesian female authors.

Spaces for Negotiation in and Resistance to Becoming Ibu

The role of ibu is significant in maintaining the Javanese hierarchal tradition, in which women become the center of the society, and even a nation. Nevertheless, women's experience has shown that not all women are being supportive of the notion of ibu since they are expected to reproduce and perpetuate the notion of becoming ibu.

There are two possible main spaces for negotiation and resistance to become ibu. The first one is the fact that ibu as an ultimate female identity as well as an elevating status for a woman has in fact given her nothing except household and cultural burdens. When an ibu still asks the question 'who am I?' the emergence of negotiation or resistance takes place as the result of female 'confusion' and dilemma. Secondly, the ambivalence of Javanese tradition in perceiving woman's place as either public or private also leads to negotiation and resistance. Javanese believes that their mission in life is to maintain the

'order of Life' that everyone has his/her own role to play in the hierarchy. As a result, relationship among Javanese individuals is always vertical, which leads to an unequal position of men and women as well as different roles to play by each sex. However, the borderline between men-public/women-private is considered vague by the tradition when a woman is needed to leave the private sphere in order to maintain the family needs of her husband's social status. With the cultural mandate of maintaining the 'order of Life' to achieve unity and harmony, an ibu is often forced to play double roles, both in private and public, with the burden for perpetuating the harmony of her family as an ultimate accomplishment. When a woman learns to perceive ibu status as an unbearable burden, negotiation in lessening the burden and even the resistance to becoming ibu take place.

The hegemonic Javanese hierarchal tradition has been obviously reproducing ibu as an ultimate female identity. This study attempts to show the perpetuation to become an ibu as illustrated by the female protagonists in the fiction of Sirikit Syah and Ayu Utami. Becoming ibu has been considered as an elevating status as well as an ultimate female identity in Indonesia. Thus, this study focuses more on the experience of becoming ibu, revealing the experience of a woman who wants to be an ibu. However, the perpetuation to become ibu also entails struggles, and is somewhat difficult to fulfill, leaving the female protagonists in *Harga Perempuan* and *Saman* to question whether or not becoming ibu is what they really want as a woman. This study argues that the reproduction to become ibu by the Javanese hierarchal tradition not only requires perpetuation, but also opens up the emergence of negotiation and resistance to become ibu as an ultimate female identity. The study shows that the attempt to answer the questions and solve the enigma has led these fictional women to negotiate and even to resist becoming ibu.

The Notion of Ibu and Female Writers Interpretation

The study argues that the Javanese hierarchal tradition is not inevitable. It is still the result of a social reality based on male dominance. To overcome the insidious influence completely might be difficult, yet there is still a chance to reduce its effects. By the end of the study, the writer will show the

ambivalence of the Javanese tradition in perceiving ibu might be considered as an alternative to empower Indonesian women. Understanding the mechanism of Javanese tradition that has curtailed Indonesian women, this study will consider the image of ibu as a female being and not simply as an object related to others.

For the non-Indonesian readers, this study could be interesting in terms of understanding the uniqueness of the Indonesian woman in adopting western values while at the same time still clutching to the idea of “ideal (Javanese) Indonesian ibu.” The presentation of Indonesian culture as a nation with various ethnics and religions has made Indonesia culturally rich as well as complex, seen in the similarities and differences of how the female characters from different backgrounds deal with one single issue: the hegemony of the Javanese. As seen from the various portrayal of fictional women in contemporary Indonesian literature, regardless the different backgrounds, cultures, ages and perspectives, these female characters are presented either fitted to the ideal notion of “Javanese ibu” or becoming an antagonist when they fail to meet the ideal portrayal of a “Javanese ibu.”

Within the sphere of Indonesian literature, Indonesian female writers have actually won their place in terms of readership and significantly enriched the canonical works. Indonesia in fact has had quite significant female writers throughout its literary history although they are mostly Javanese: RA. Kartini (1898), Rukiyah (1940s), Toety Heraty (1950-60s), NH. Dini (1970s), and Leila S. Chudori (1980s). Today’s contemporary female writers are also mushrooming with more young female writers who are considered well equipped with imaginative and creative potentialities.

Nevertheless, it shall be admitted that the main problem in Indonesian literature is the lack of books on literary criticism on women’s writing. Soenarjati Djajanegara’s book of feminist literary criticism, *Kritik Sastra Feminis: Sebuah Pengantar* (Feminist Literary Criticism: An Introduction), published in February 2000, is (as the book’s cover claims) the first book ever written in Bahasa Indonesia, and by an Indonesian writer with feminism as her agenda. With the mushrooming of a new generation of female writers, literary criticism on women’s writing should have been regularly produced.

Therefore, this study would hopefully enrich its readers' literary perspective of Indonesian literature by women, particularly in the case of Sirikit Syah and her financial works since this study is going to be the first ever that discusses *Harga Perempuan* as a thesis in the academic level.

Women's writing is mostly left behind by male literary critics in Indonesia, simply because 'there isn't any promising Indonesian female writers' worth to analyze.' When Ayu Utami's name was announced as having won the first place in a prestigious literary award, (male) critics in Indonesia questioned the authenticity of her writing, especially because she had never produced any fictional work before, and she is notoriously close to a prominent Indonesian author, Goenawan Muhammad (Dharmawan, "Ayu Utami" 68). This study shows that actually, Indonesian female writers represented by Ayu Utami and Sirikit Syah, are worth noting in terms of the ways, by which they, who have firsthand experience as a woman, deal with the western ideas of feminism without letting go of the sense of being as an Indonesian woman.

Toward a Theory of "Ibuisism"

Chodorow's theory on the reproduction of mothering, the concept of *ibuism* and *priyayi* from Madelon Djajadiningrat, and Julia I. Suryakuma's "state *ibuism*" share the same interest in the reproduction and perpetuation of motherhood/*ibu*, although each of them perceives the issue through different disciplines: psychoanalysis (Chodorow), cultural study (Djajadiningrat), and politics (Suryakuma). However, they are considered as corresponding to each other in terms of economic, political, and cultural spheres that influence the reproduction of *ibu* within the notion of the Javanese hierarchical tradition. Each theorist also perceives the possibility for negotiation and resistance in terms of psychological, cultural, and political perspectives.

Nancy Chodorow and *The Reproduction of Mothering*

One of the most influential theorists interested in the issue of motherhood is Nancy Chodorow. Her analysis on motherhood in *The Reproduction of Mothering* attempts to explain why women do most of the childcare and

nurturing in most societies. She perceives that the reproduction of motherhood is a central and a constituting element in the social organization of gender. She questions the fact that it is always the women who mother: they do not only give birth to the infant but are also dominantly responsible for the development of the infants and their socialization (61).

Chodorow proposes that the crucial events underlying the development of gender identity and subsequent gender differences in nurturing occur in the first two years of an infant's life. Using a psychoanalytical approach, she focuses on the pre-oedipal relationship between the mother as the primary caretaker and the infant in the first year of life. The infant has no "self." It cannot distinguish between itself and its caretaker. Since the infant is completely helpless and dependent, it is psychologically merged with the mother, the maternal object, as she meets its every need. The infant has to go through a gradual process of differentiation in order to establish a sense of "me", the infant needs to separate 'me' from 'not me.' This primary process of self-formation is enacted through a series of formative relations with objects around the infant, such as people or parts of the body, or internalized representations of these. In her article "The Significance of Women's Mothering for Gender Personality and Gender Relations," Nancy Chodorow further develops the concept of mediator between a mother and her child during the mothering experience, particularly in the mother-daughter relationship:

In addition, the people surrounding a mother while a child is growing up become mediators between mother and daughter, by providing a daughter with alternative models for personal identification and objects of attachment, which contribute to her differentiation from her mother. Finally, a daughter's identification with her mother in this kind of setting is with a strong woman with clear control over important spheres of life, whose sense of self-esteem can reflect this (62).

The sense of satisfied feeling toward her role as a mother and a mother's relationship to her child leads to a maternal self-esteem, and the nature of the mothering experience tends to reproduce the maternal self-esteem particularly to her daughter. The mediators around the daughter also contribute to her self-formation.

Chodorow also positively perceives the possibilities of the daughter to adopt the fact that her mother plays a crucial role in her family. The following quotation reveals Chodorow's analysis on the significant role of mothers in Java and Aceh as the financial contributors of their family:

Women's kin role, and in particular the mother role, is central and positively valued in Atjeh, Java and East London. Women gain status and prestige as they get older; their major role is not fulfilled in early motherhood. At the same time, women may be important contributors to the family's economic support, as in Java and East London, and all in three societies they have real control over real economic resources. All these factors give women a sense of self-esteem independent of their relationship to their children ("The Significance of Women's Mothering" 62).

It is indeed true that the positive image of the mothers in the family might strongly influence the daughters to perpetuate and reproduce motherhood. However, Javanese women's participation as the family's economic supporter is mainly found in wong cilik household, while upper-middle class women tend to be more dependent on their husbands since the husbands are able to fulfil the family's need sufficiently.

When the mother as maternal object is already psychologically and socially constructed as conveying feminine traits, her femininity inevitably informs her relationship with the infant. She produces a different attitude in the relationships established between the mother and male or female infant (Chodorow, "Early Psychological" 67-69). Chodorow further discusses the possible implication of the mother's different attitude between her male and female infant on the development of "bisexual identification" experienced by the daughter:

Several theorists have argued that all people within a culture contain within themselves both what are considered (and tend to be) masculine and what are considered feminine characteristics in that culture. However, such bisexual identification is asymmetrical. In most cultures, the earliest identity for all children is feminine, because women are around them and provide (and do not provide) them with the necessities of life. Moreover, such identification is more threatening to the boy, because more basic, that the element of masculine identification that a little girl later acquires it.

Girls can be tomboys, wear jeans and other masculine clothing, fight, climb trees, play sports and ride bikes. This behaviour will not be the cause for great alarm, nor will it be forbidden or cruelly ridiculed. The training and subsequent behaviour of boys is not so flexible. It would be unheard of for boys to wear dresses, and if they want to cook or play with dolls, do not like sports, or are afraid to fight, this is cause for panic by parents, educators, and psychologists (“The Significance of Women’s Mothering” 36-37).

Chodorow seems to argue that the bisexual identification is more likely to happen to girls since the mothers tend to be permissive towards their attempt to cross-sex choices, while boys have been taught to despise anything feminine. One of the reasons is the fact that society in general perceives male roles and male activities as more prestigious and privileged than female roles and female activities, which has become the implication of boys’ refusal toward anything feminine. However, she also suggests that the extreme willingness of boys to make cross-sex choices indicates that “they have been taught very early, and have accepted more or less completely, that it is right for them to prefer masculine things” (Chodorow, “The Significance of Women’s Mothering for Gender Personality and Gender Relations” 37). Thus, a mother might unconsciously reproduce her daughter with uncertainty towards her sexuality as the extreme result of her permissiveness toward the daughter’s cross-sex choice since she was a child.

How is the perpetuation of motherhood actually constituted? How do women develop the skills and the desire to become mothers? Chodorow argues that the social organization of labor has designated mothering as fundamentally women’s work:

In industrial capitalist societies, women’s mothering is central to the links between the organization of gender—in particular the family system—and economic organizations. Sexual inequality is itself embedded in and perpetuated by the organization of these institutions, and it is not reproduced according to or solely because of the will of individual actors” (“Why Women Mother” 34).

She believes that the family system as the prime social institution has structurally been transmitted to the formation of the children’s personalities,

producing them as gendered individuals in society with gendered psychic characteristics. In Javanese families, for example, a baby soon realizes that he/she at least has three important figures in his/her early life: the mother, the mother's mother, and embok emban, or a female servant. The two most important figures are the mother and the grandmother. The baby spends most of his/her time in their arms. The baby is carried around in a seldang or a sling, securely fastened to the carrier's body. Because mothers are the first objects of love, and because fathers are likely to be less available and emotionally involved with their infants, Chodorow notices that boys have a more precarious gender identity, an identity based on defining themselves in opposition to all that is feminine. Boys will perceive femininity as negative and masculinity as positive. Conceptualizing Chodorow's theory on gendered individuals and the formation of children's personalities, a baby boy in Javanese family, for example, will soon be aware that these people (his mother, his grandmother, and embok emban) around him in his early year are mainly women. Thus, he learns to define himself in opposition to their femininity. On the other hand, girls do not perceive themselves as separate and independent from others in a way that boys do. They even tend to define themselves in terms of relationships with others and to feel a need for human connectedness. Their greater relational needs might not be entirely satisfied by a man, so women have babies to satisfy their need for connectedness in mother-infant relationships (Chodorow, "The Relation to the Mother" 89-90).

Chodorow does provide a keen insight into the reproduction of motherhood and she admits the fact that mothering has relegated women into subordination, particularly in the Western context. Masculine or feminine identity and gendered role are not biologically determined but are reproduced in every generation by social arrangements. However, her theory does not devalue the act of mothering itself, but perceive it as a positive goal for women, which satisfies important relational needs. Her positive approach on mothering is significant in the analysis of mothering in Java, which conveys a strong cultural mandate and an elevating status. Becoming ibu is a respectable position. Quoting Geertz and Jay on Javanese mothers, Chodorow

believes that Javanese society might in fact provide an open space for its women to perform a significant role.

Hildred Geertz and Jay describe Javanese nuclear families in which women are often the more powerful spouse and have primary influence upon how kin relations are expressed and to whom (although these families are formally centered upon a highly valued conjugal relationship based on equality of spouses). Financial and decision-making control in the family often rests largely in the hands of its women. Jay and Geertz both emphasize continuing closeness of the mother-daughter relationship as a daughter is growing up and throughout her married life (“The Relation to the Mother” 60-61).

Due to the emphasis of perpetuating the hierarchal tradition, the role of the mothers becomes significant in Java. For example, becoming a mother of many children is a blessing for a Javanese ibu since it means she is able to maintain the chain of hierarchy within her family. Thus, having children is important in Javanese family. Although the notion of ibu is wider than the Western concept of motherhood, the implied connotation that a good ibu should mother is still a part of its attributes.

Nevertheless, her assumptions that all children are brought up in nuclear families has been limiting her analysis. For example, the role of the grandmother in a Javanese family during the infant’s early years is so significant that the baby will soon sense the vertical relationship between the mother and the grandmother, and also the member with embok emban, who is definitely a lower in social status. Javanese society with polygamous marriages and extended families might also significantly affect the basic process of forming a child’s self. With the notion of the reproduction of mothering by women themselves, the chain of mothering from the first wife to the consecutive ones, for example, and down to the children, is obviously complex in terms of its influence upon the construction of one’s sense of self and the sense of vertical relation. It can be considered as an early understanding of the existence of the Javanese hierarchal tradition.

Chodorow’s analysis in her *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989) has also included the notion of sexual orientation during the process of one’s

gender personality. It is obvious that not all women are heterosexual. The mother in fact might unconsciously shape her daughter to acquire “bisexual identification” as it has been discussed before. Chodorow also includes the possibility that when women experience a less satisfying relationship with men, they tend to turn toward each other for friendship, connectedness, and even sexual/affectional companionship since she herself has claimed that women have greater relational needs than men. The female tendency of seeking a ‘substitute’ to compensate for the desire to relate with others through the act of mothering for Chodorow is a positive space to develop a woman’s sense of self as a mother (“The Significance of Women’s Mothering for Gender Personality and Gender Relations” 39).

Another way of compensating for female desire to relate with others due to the failure in male-female relationship is through female-female relationship. Female bonding among young women mostly produces *ibu*, yet when one of these women has experienced a less-satisfying relationship with men, she might share her doubt on the notion of *ibu*. She will continuously question the perpetuation to become *ibu*. This is when negotiation comes up, followed by refusal when she fails to negotiate.

Applied to Indonesian women, Chodorow’s theory might be somewhat ethnocentric as women experience a different social, historical, and cultural life. Unlike Chodorow’s argument that the capitalist’s social organization of labor has constructed gendered individuals in society with gendered psychic characteristics, the Javanese sexual division of labor in Javanese society is more cultural than economic, which is aimed at keeping the unity and harmony in a Javanese family. It is Sullivan’s argument in her “Gender and Politics in Indonesia” that women as the center of the family, the ‘nature’ nurturers, shall be protected by the ‘nature’ protectors, men, from the ‘dangers’ of the public sphere (63). For the Javanese society, women are indeed the objects, yet they are also the objects who care and love. Their dedication and sacrifice are highly appreciated and those who have decided to mother and are blessed with children are considered as ‘complete *ibu*.’

Madelon Djajadiningrat and "Ibuism"

The perpetuation of unity and harmony is the basic Javanese philosophy of life, and a Javanese family with its clear division of labor is the portrayal of the order of Life. However, women's activities are not restricted to the private sphere as long as the activities are aimed at maintaining the family's status and prosperity. This is the moment when the boundaries between public and private become vague in Javanese society, and it is precisely here women might have access to power, as Madelon Djajadiningrat in "Ibuism and Priyayization: Path to Power?" argues (43).

Her article introduces a new concept of Indonesian mother or ibu. She notices that the shift of meaning in terms of priyayi also produces the notion of post-colonial ibu. The role of the ibu or mother in Indonesia is not similar to the Western concept of mother. The main role of women in Javanese society is to maintain the notion of priyayi, although it is no longer self-evident. The role of ibu is more than feeding and looking after her children. The New Order government also constructed the new Indonesian society with the notion of "kaum ibu" (a group of ibu) by putting on women's shoulders the task of building a new national state, and more than the Indonesian men, they are expected to do it disinterestedly. The honor they can gain is the notion of being a good ibu because power and prestige remain the privilege of men. Thus, an ideology has been developed regarding "Ibuism":

... an ideology developed in which the late 19th and early 20th century Dutch values and traditional Javanese ones were linked to the 'mother' concept. This ideology, which sanctions any action provided it is taken as a mother who is looking after her family, a group, a class, a company or the state, without demanding power or prestige in return, I shall call Ibuism (Djajadiningrat, "Ibuism and Priyayization" 43-44).

The 'authority' of ibu is reflected in the honorary title of ibubangsa (mother of the nation), as it is bestowed to R.A. Kartini, the state-approved national figure of Indonesian women's emancipation. Nowadays, ibuism is considered as an ideology that does not only sanction but also defines women in that capacity.

In general, Javanese individuals are unable to control their lives since they have been subjected to particular roles in a highly structured Javanese culture since they were born. The projection of one's desire, an understanding of one's self, and one's role in his/her society area only aimed to support the "unity of existence." When Chodorow's notion on the reproduction of motherhood is as a central and constituting element in the social organization of gender, Djajadiningrat tends to perceive Javanese parenting/mothering as more of a cultural mandate than social construction because marriage and parenting in Javanese family become an essential obligation for both male and female Javanese individuals as the implication of upholding the 'order of Life.'

When marriage and reproduction become the ultimate goal of one's life, the notion of motherhood in Indonesia happens to be significant. Scrutinizing the beginning of perpetuating motherhood in Javanese society, Madelon Djajadiningrat argues that during the colonial period under the Dutch, Indonesian women were brought up on a mixture of Javanese and Western values. Their parents made sure that they received a reasonable Western education so that they could better fulfill the role of a sensible wife in supporting their husbands and the role of a mother in stimulating the development of their children (Djajadiningrat, "Ibuisism and Priyayization" 43). Nevertheless, Djajadiningrat notices that these native girls had already experienced the desire to approach marriage as today's Javanese women do.

The cultural mandate for becoming mother, according to Djajadiningrat, is closely related to the perpetuation of Javanese "priyayization." This term refers to the process by which one strives to adopt the conduct, norms, and values inherent in the priyayi concept. Quoting Benedict Anderson's "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture" and Koentjaraningrat's notion on priyayi, Djajadiningrat questions the ambivalence of the essence of priyayi, which actually does not include the female element, except as an ornament, yet a man can be a priyayi only if his wife enables him to be one (46).

It is important to note that the constitution of becoming a priyayi is not necessarily in terms of bloodlines, but mainly of a cluster of attributes. Cultural rules determine the limits on the road to power, and power is one

of the essential attributes for becoming a priyayi. Javanese power is more on charisma rather than a Western concept of power with its heterogeneous sources such as wealth, status, and profession. It is not a matter of wielding it but the acquiring of it, which is through asceticism.

One of the elements of Javanese power is one's spiritual ability to achieve *kasampurnaan*, or 'perfection' in life. The Javanese believe that the way to achieve perfection is through an ultimate unity between a mystical servant/human being and his/her 'Master'/'God' (*manunggaling kawula lan Gusti*). The Javanese believe that 'God' is nowhere but within their selves. The following is taken from Mulder's "A Kejawen Perspective on the Relationship between Man, World, and Cosmos" in which he shares his conversation with his friends about Javanese concept of 'God':

"Does 'God' exist? 'Is, is not' (*ana tan ana*) is the way we express it. As long as we can think, when we are anxious, dying, or at the end of our wits, 'God' is. After all, from where do we come? We must have an origin, a purpose, a direction. Our origin and destination (*sangkan-paran*), that is 'God'; it is the force of life that is all around us... [I]t is people themselves who can achieve perfection (*kasampuraan*) by developing their self-knowledge and their understanding of the nature of life" (7-8).

Thus, in order to get in touch with the 'Master'/'God' within one's self, he/she shall be 'empty' in the sense of losing contact with the outer life since he/she is mentally meditating within his/her self. Usually as an attempt to overcome the fetter of worldly affairs, a Javanese individual needs to find himself in a *suwung*, the moment when he has total control upon his own body. While being united with his 'God,' he himself can achieve perfection (*kasampuraan*) "by developing his self-knowledge and his understanding of the nature of life" (Mulder, "Individual and Society in Java" 8-9).

Another element of Javanese power is wealth. Although money should never be the object of ambition of a power holder, the fact that he is willing to distribute money for those who need it might be considered as a positive attribution for him as a power holder. Usually money/wealth should come naturally to those who have power. This is when the role of *ibu* plays a crucial part: a good *ibu* is able to manage the distribution of money, some-

thing that is not appropriate for her priyayi husband to handle (Mulder, “A Kejawan Perspective” 46-47).

As a good ibu, Indonesian women not only have to manage the distribution of money but also to ensure that their husband’s priyayi is perpetuated. Since a good ibu is sanctioned to do whatever is necessary for the family’s daily existence and social status, she is mostly allowed to break the barrier of the domestic sphere, entering the public sphere to supply capital for the benefit of her husband’s priyayi status. Thus, there is an ambivalence in terms of attributing Javanese household. Djajadiningrat’s cultural approach in terms of the constitution of priyayization that takes social and class status and Javanese concept of power has embodied a historical significance of ibuism, which is further developed by Suryakusuma in “State Ibuism.”

Julia I. Suryakusuma and “State Ibuism”

Marxist feminists believe that patriarchal ideology has contributed to the shaping of false female consciousness, which only contributes to the advantages of the power holder. Julia I. Suryakusuma in her thesis, “State Ibuism: the Social Construction of Womanhood in the Indonesian New Order” (1987) uncovers the New Order political perpetuation of motherhood, within the notion of the family as the state’s integral component, in the state ideology namely “state ibuism.” Departing from Djajadiningrat’s definition of ibuism, Suryakusuma perceives that the word ibu or mother in Bahasa Indonesia has an elevating connotation and with much wider range. It does not only connote a biological mother, but also a social status:

An Indonesian woman who does not have any children, or even has not married, yet she gains a significant or respectable position in her society, is necessarily called ibu, such as professional women, rich women, women with spiritual or healing power, foreign women, or simply elderly women (5)

The label ibu has been defined as respectable due to the role of mother/wife as the center of Javanese households, which has been perpetuated to maintain the ‘order of Life.’

The elevating status of being an *ibu* is the product of social construction as well as the state ideology embedded with Javanese tradition, as Suryakusuma notes how upper-middle class women have been reproducing the notion to become *ibu* to the female villagers, both Javanese and non-Javanese, through the overvaluing of their domestic role. The state then provides the structure for the development of a specific gender ideology that produces the official definition of how Indonesian women should be. Through the two women's state-legitimated-organizations namely the Applied Family Welfare Program (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga – PKK), a women's organization dealing with women's issues as domestic providers, and Dharma Wanita, an organization exclusively for the wives of Indonesian government officers, "state *ibuism*" is introduced and reproduced:

The state propagates a kind of State *Ibuism* whereby it provides the structure, presides over the accumulation process and defines a gender ideology designed to serve its interests. This gender ideology which is the combination of elements of "housewifization" and "*Ibuism*" leads to the process of "domestication" (Suryakusuma, "State *Ibuism*" 12-13).

PKK and Dharma Wanita have been strongly embedded by the "state *ibuism*" ideology, which only gives Indonesian women the illusion of women's emancipation. The New Order government found that these organizations are the most convenient means to define women in the primary category of wives. The government created the notion of *ikut suami* ('follow the husband'). Thus, a hierarchy of gender is imposed on the hierarchy of bureaucratic state power. In the national level, the state controls its male civil servants, who in turn control their wives, who in turn control their 'junior sister,' women from the lower urban and rural classes. In the domestic level, a husband controls his wives, (who in turn control their husband's junior wives in polygamy) and then the wives control their children. Thus, the control and propagation of the Javanese hierarchal tradition are insured by the state.

Suryakusuma's argument on how the concept of *ibu* has been used by the New Order government to maintain Javanese tradition of unity and

harmony by marginalizing women is spelled out in the concept of ideological manipulation. There is an idolatry of keibuan (motherly) qualities, based on the traditional role of women as “the pillar of the nation.” In the context of the national development, everybody, including women, is expected to participate.

The state’s propaganda in terms of including women in the state national development program also constantly reminds women to never forget their kodrat (‘true nature’) as Indonesian women, which is to become ibu, both as wives and mothers. Suryakusuma perceives it as “a very clever manipulation of two different models of womanhood”:

There is the propagation of the nuclear family norm, the segregation of women into gender specific programs, as well as the increasingly middle-class images of women in media. There is the state creation of compulsory organization for wives which mirrors the hierarchy of the husbands, reflecting the notion that women are defined in their capacity for serving their husbands, their family, and the state. Elite women are entrusted without compensation with running programs for women from the lower urban and rural classes” (“State Ibuism” 14).

Suryakusuma indeed perceives the reproduction to become ibu in political sense, in which the New Order government perpetuated ibuism to control Indonesian women, who are expected to be able to sustain their husbands’ career and family. Her criticism on the role of PKK and Dharma Wanita as the government’s tool to propagate ibuism is essential for the study in terms of perceiving the influence of “state ibuism” on the perpetuation of becoming ibu in the analysis of the fictional works.

The elevating status of becoming ibu is the product of social construction as well as the state ideology embedded in Javanese tradition. Suryakusuma notes how women from the upper class to the female villagers, Javanese and non-Javanese, have been induced to overvalue their domestic role. “State Ibuism” only gives Indonesian women the illusion of women’s emancipation while they are faithfully, and proudly, ushering themselves and other women to their kitchens and bedrooms.

Through PKK and Dharma Wanita, the government has been reproducing more and more Javanese ibu not only in the cultural sense. They are indoctrinated in terms of the idealization of becoming ibu as the “pillars of the nation,” the producers of the future generation, and the family’s prime socializers. The idolatry of motherly qualities of giving, caring, and willing to sacrifice become an extraordinary achievement for those who are able to adopt, yet those who fail are considered a ‘failing’ ibu.

In a political sense, these women’s organizations have been supporting the New Order government’s keyword in perpetuating the harmony of unity in Indonesia for 32 years: *ketertiban* (order and control), *pembinaan* (guidance, yet it implies more on indoctrination, construction, and management), *stabilitas* (stability), and *dwifungsi* (double functions) that legitimates the involvement of the military in non-military affairs and their dominance as a state apparatus (Suryakusuma, “State Ibuism” 8-9). In PKK and Dharma Wanita, women are ‘guided and indoctrinated’ to become ibu to be able to sustain ‘stability’ in the family. The notion of ‘order and control’ is implemented in the binary public/private where ibu’s private obligation is to maintain the order and control in the private sphere. The ‘dual functions’ might be perceived as the dual roles of ibu in both public (the male world, the military) and private (the female world/non-military) as long as their achievement is oriented only to their husbands and family. This is how ibu is defined as well as manipulated in Indonesia.

Criticism towards Dharma Wanita’s programs that are most irrelevant to the need of Indonesian women in general, particularly to the lower urban and rural women, has been launched to the government by women awareness organizations. Lower class women who used to be independent and have enough freedom to cross the border between domestic and public sphere nowadays tend to prefer becoming ibu due to its notion of elevating women’s social status and women’s participation in national development, something which Suryakusuma strongly criticizes as the implication of the state’s “manipulating ideology.” Becoming ibu as the ideal portrayal of Indonesian women is truly embedded within the conscious of all Indonesian women from all social classes. The notion of becoming ibu that used to be

found mostly among upper-middle class women, nowadays has become a national phenomenon. Female villagers begin to be aware of their true nature as (Indonesian) women, which is to become ibu. The research conducted in Klaten, Central Java is strong evidence that the tradition to become ibu in Indonesia has been well propagated.

The study begins with the assumption that the reproduction and perpetuation to become ibu does not only involve mothers in terms of maternity but also of cultural and political sanctions in becoming ibu. In Indonesia, mothering or becoming ibu is legitimated and perpetuated as a state ideology. Working on the perpetuation to become ibu, the fact that a mother as maternal object has already been psychically and socially constructed by conveying feminine traits will obviously reproduce the femininity of the mother in her female infant.

During the mothering experience, the female infant has been experiencing her mother as her first object of love. The female infant has also been aware of the existence of the hierarchal tradition during the early years of her development. Since the figure of the father is likely to be less available, the female infant develops closer to her mother with mutual great relational needs and human connectedness. However, the figure of the father remains somewhat 'fearful' for the children, both for his sons and his daughters: In the first place is of course his mother, who is everything in his early years of life. A little child always seeks his mother when he is frightened of something or when he hurts himself. There is a small but interesting fact in Javanese language: when a Javanese individual gets hurt and feels a sudden pain he will shout: "aduh biyung" (—ouch, mother).

The child has a different relationship with his father. The little child sees his father mainly in the afternoon when the father has time to play with him. The habit of playing with the baby, "ngudang" (cooing), stops when the child begins to talk. The father chides or punishes the child less often than the mother, yet the child has great respect for the father's authority. As soon as the child begins to speak he is taught to develop a formal attitude towards his father (Koentjaraningrat, "Infancy" 29).

Although the role and the influence of maternal ibu is more significant than the father's, the authority and the power holder in the house remain in the hands of the father. The children are also aware of the subordination of the mother to the father, and soon they will imitate their mother, placing the father as the highest among them all.

However, fictional evidence in the texts reveals an interesting fact that due to the continuous absence of the father, the negotiation in and the resistance to become ibu happen. It has forced ibu to play double roles, yet the ibu character also strongly experiences the need to relate with others, particularly with her husband. It has made women begin to question the need to become ibu, to the absence of the object to whom they should relate, leading to negotiation in, and sometimes resistance to become ibu.

Women in Indonesian Literature

The portrayal of emancipating Indonesian women can easily be found in the history of Indonesian literature as early as 1920s. Budidarma in "Women in Indonesian Literature: Past and Future" notices the Javanese tradition embedded in Indonesian literature and the way female characters are described as highly concerned with fulfilling their traditional aspirations. It is interesting to see how Indonesian male authors are more articulate in portraying the psychological conflicts of their female characters than female authors who tend to portray male/female characters as a dichotomy between culture/nature, city/country, and women as the victims of male self-centeredness, as Budidarma indicated in "Women in Indonesian Literature" (171). Furthermore, the notion of traditional orientations has not changed:

...*'Women's Price (Harga Perempuan)* by Sirikit Syah, a female writer... expose[s] similar problems: women tried to be independent, but at the precise moment independence was at hand, they realized that they could not betray their nature as women. They wanted to be the woman in the family, to be loved and protected by their husbands, and take care of their husbands and children (Budidarma, "Women in Indonesian Literature" 179).

On the other hand, Ayu Utami's *Saman* has received literary criticism after it won a prestigious Indonesian literary award in 1998. Most of the

critics admire her fluidity in Bahasa Indonesia as Lie Charlie perceives the language in the hand of Ayu Utami become an “orgasmic language,” revealing its sensuality without being vulgar in terms of diction, symbols, and metaphor (Charlie, “Bahasa Orgasme Ayu Utami” 9). Y.B Mangunwijaya highly praises Ayu Utami in terms of the richly thematic elements which are mostly sensitive to the New Order at that time. Being global yet still promoting local problems, *Saman* is strong in terms of a social-anthropological perspective regarding the notion of Javanese culture as the center (Mangunwijaya, “Welcoming *Saman*” 8).

As scholars have noticed the strong Javanese tradition within Indonesian literature, it would be significant to perceive its influence, particularly in terms of vertical relations between men and women as a result of the hierarchy in Javanese culture. A Teeuw in “Javanistic Tendencies in Recent Indonesian Literature” also agrees that Javanese hierarchal tradition has been nurtured through Indonesian literature throughout its long literary history from the late 19th century. Although he perceives it positively in terms of “creative imagination to ... show ways of understanding Javanese men and women; open up vistas of men and women in search of balance and harmony.” (Teeuw, “Javanistic Tendencies in Recent Indonesian Literature” 84), this study would perceive it as an act of perpetuation, which in the end curtails Indonesian women and leaves them confused and ambivalent, even in perceiving their clearly destined role.

The Reproduction and the Perpetuation of Becoming Ibu as the Result of the Javanese Hierarchal Tradition in Indonesia

The reproduction and perpetuation to become ibu in Indonesia are quite hidden yet self-evident in political and social aspects of people’s lives. This gender stereotype of Indonesian women as an ibu is socially self-evident in the Indonesian educational system, and literature. In the last two decades, Indonesian feminists have begun to question the ibu phenomenon, leading to a conclusion that the government has been participating in curtailing the roles of Indonesian women in the guise of national developing program for women.

The Reproduction and Perpetuation to Become Ibu: Gender and Politics

This section describes the relationship between gender and politics in Indonesia as seen in the role of women in politics and government through the national 'non-political' women's movement. The state ideology implies that it takes the participation of Indonesian men and women to develop the nation, yet obviously the state assigns them different roles to play in different social spheres while labelling the roles as 'complementary and equal.' Actually, Indonesia has had a fairly long history of formal women's organization since the 1920s of the modern nationalist movement against the Dutch colonization. A few women's journals and newspapers that published the letters of the earliest Indonesian women emancipator, R.A Kartini, had existed as early as the 1900s, such as *Poetri Hindia* ("Daughter of the Indies", 1909), *Wanita Sworo* ("Voice of Women", 1913), *Soenting Melajoe* (1912), and *Poetri Mardika* ("Daughter of Independence," 1914) (Faruk HT, "Pendekar Wanita" 33).

The Reproduction and Perpetuation to Become Ibu: Gender, Literature, and Education

There are two social aspects that are about to be discussed in this section. They are literature and education. Among so many social elements that have contributed to the reproduction and perpetuation of ibu images, such as mass media or art works, this study particularly discusses literature and education since these two media are the most obvious and effective in propagating the image of Indonesian women, including the notion of Javanese hierarchal tradition and its norms and rules. Indonesian literature with Javanese tendencies has helped promote the Javanese values, while the Indonesian educational system, particularly social science subjects, has heavily been overburdened with the concepts of social hierarchy which is the core of Javanese philosophy of life.

The model of an ideal Javanese family implicitly supports Indonesian social construction and the students are aware of it from school. The ideal family is the hierarchal one in which the parents are morally superior to their children; their small children are fully dependent upon them. Thus,

inequality comes naturally in the Indonesian family. Therefore, the sexual division of labor has lasted for quite some time regardless of the coming of women's emancipation era.

In general, social science and history in Indonesian schools have shown the Javanese tendencies. The notion of society is simply a community, a harmonious one. The inability to deal with society's most natural condition, namely 'conflicts of interest,' is culturally reinforced by the Javanese tendency of avoiding conflict. Harmony is maintained because the Javanese tradition cannot bear any conflicts. The only way to avoid conflicts is to keep society in harmony. Social problems are also reduced to individual deviance. This is not very helpful in learning to think about social life, especially in the wider realm surrounding immediate experience. In terms of history, historical facts are only to remember. It is purposeful in its relation to the destiny of the nation. However, there is a strong tendency that it becomes simply a creed in which the practicality of the present dictates the past.

Shaping historical facts to suit present conditions is currently found in the idealization of Kartini as the emancipating figure of Indonesian women. What most Indonesian students know about her is simply her aspiration to promote education for girls. In fact, she is worthy of being commemorated beyond that. Raden Adjeng Kartini was born in 1879. She was a daughter of a high Javanese civil servant in the Dutch colonial government. She was lucky since she was granted by her father the unusual privilege of attending a colonial elementary school until she was 12. Nevertheless, her next four years were spent in seclusion at home in accordance with the Javanese custom. During these years and up until her untimely death, Kartini maintained and broadened her contact with Dutch intellectual life through intensive reading and voluminous correspondence with numerous Dutch friends. Her weapons were paper and pen because her criticism was mainly in the shape of her correspondence with her Dutch friends who kept on encouraging her dreams. Unfortunately, she died in childbirth at the tragically early age of 24. Yet, her letters were compiled and published in 1951 under the title *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang (After Darkness Comes the Light)* (Geertz, "Letters of A Javanese Princess" 12-23).

The figure of Kartini has also been in focus due to the fact that she was a Javanese princess as seen in the title Raden Adjeng. Students have learnt her image in history or social science subjects yet reading her letters and understanding her struggles as a Javanese woman living under the Dutch colonization are left unexamined. She was declared as a national hero in 1964 (Faruk HT, "Pendekar Wanita" 33), and since then students from elementary to university levels must attend a special annual ceremony in honoring her dedication and aspiration every April 21, the Kartini's Day in Indonesia. After the ceremony, students usually participate in several competitions such as cooking, national custom beauty pageant, poetry reading, or singing. Some schools even require the students, particularly female students, to wear traditional costume, usually Javanese ones, in celebrating Kartini's Day. However, it is quite strange that the way students celebrate the emancipating day is still under the nuances of 'female domestication' like cooking competitions and beauty pageant. Thus, the real image of Kartini and the main purpose of celebrating Kartini's Day remain unclear.

Kartini had lived in the years when "Java was on the verge of undergoing its most intimate contact with modern Western civilization (Geertz, "An Introduction" 7). Her letters have been a genuine historical record of the inner and outer conflicts of a sensitive young Javanese girl who encountered the peculiar disturbing ideals of the West. She learned enough of Western culture to criticize it. She eventually found it inadequate as a guide for solving the many 'local' problems her new ideals themselves had created.

By nature, Kartini was one of those restless natives who had not found themselves contentedly drifting with the current of their culture. She refused to surrender herself to the role that society had set for her as a woman, as she wrote to Stella Zeehandelaar:

And the woman whose spirit has been awakened, whose outlook has been broadened might not be able to live again in the world of her ancestors. She will have been taught what freedom means, and then shut up in a dungeon; taught to fly and then imprisoned in a cage. No, no the truly enlightened woman could not possibly feel happy in our native environment, not as long as it remains as it is. There is only one road in life open for the native girl, and that is 'marriage.' (Geertz, "To Stella Zeehandelaar" 87).

Kartini might have experienced a kind of 'abridged foretaste' of what was to happen in the twentieth century not only to the Javanese but to other colonial people as well. She was among the first Javanese to acquire some Western education and was forced to the conclusion that some basic changes had to be made in Javanese society in order to bring it into accord with the ideals of social equality and progress. However, the more she understood Western culture, the more she became convinced that her own ancient Javanese civilization somewhat promotes the highest value and should not be simply abandoned for a shallow modernity (Geertz, "An Introduction" 9).

Noting the value of her own culture, Kartini began to acknowledge its high value and the purposes of her tradition. She began to perceive polygamy as a reality that she had to face as a Javanese woman living in at the end of nineteenth century:

It is always said of the girls here that, "they are well provided for, and comfortable taken care of." Have they a right to complain? Well means well-being, happiness, and the opposite of misery; and misery is what the women feel, and yet they have no right to complain ... I once copied something from a speech by Prof. Max Muller, the greatest German scholar who was so learned in Eastern tongues. It was almost as follows: "Polygamy, as it is practiced by the Eastern people, is of benefit to women and girls, who could not live in their environment without a man to take care of them and to protect them." Max Muller is dead; we cannot call him here to show him the benefits of that custom (Geertz, "To Mevrouw Abendanon-Mandri" 163).

Unfortunately, her dilemma and the long process of self-identity as a Javanese are not quite well-introduced to today's students. The fact that she had to face her own conscience "that among the Javanese it is a great misfortune for a woman to remain unmarried. It is a disgrace as well" (Geertz, "To Mevrouw" 154) was not without much inner conflict considering Kartini is an educated young woman. When she decided to live in polygamy, her decision has been considered as the bravest and the wisest choice a woman has made in order to return to her nature as a woman and perpetuate the tradition. Her dilemma has been curtailed as simply a clash between the nature of a woman and a woman's desire for freedom, leaving behind her

critical thinking in criticizing Western teaching and her continuous attempt to educate native girls.

As early as 1911 a society of young Indonesian nationalist students in Dutch universities took up Kartini's words as guides in their own thinking about themselves and the future of their country. The next nationalist movement gained forces, and Kartini's specific social ideas were increasingly viewed as reactionary and out-of-date. Nevertheless, she has remained a popular symbol as one of the earliest fighters for freedom. Today her picture is on many schoolroom walls, and her birthday is a national holiday (Geertz, "An Introduction" 24).

Geertz's commentary on the notion of Kartini's resistance toward Dutch imperialism through education is remarkable, something that most Indonesians seem to fail to understand:

The political aspects of her fight for human dignity are radically different since the achievement of Indonesian independence, yet every thoughtful Indonesian still faces, and must reconcile, the contradictions between the Western view of life and his own. This dilemma is urgent and has deep personal implications along with its public, ideological or philosophical implications...her letters to provide—for modern Javanese, Indonesian, non-Westerners and Westerners alike—a moving human account of one person's courageous search for her self, for a viable, purposeful life (Geertz, "An Introduction" 25-26).

Kartini's struggles in facing her dilemma should have been a worthy legacy for contemporary Indonesian students, particularly female students. Unfortunately, celebrating her image and understanding her role in Indonesian history have been curtailed only to suit the ideal portrayal of Indonesian women who are free to do whatever they want as long as they have fulfilled their nature as women, which is to become *ibu*.

Through mass media and women's organizations, global ideological trends such as feminism, egalitarianism, or rationalizations are indirectly influencing their lives and attitudes of Indonesian women. Feminist egalitarianism and women's autonomy still find difficulty in having their place in Javanese culture, where the idea of hierarchy is paramount. Formal educa-

tion is immensely important for girls at the end of the twentieth century. To a large extent it determines their prospects in adult life. During the past decades, Indonesia has made great advancements in the literacy of its population. New schools were built all over the country with the help of special funds. The gender gaps in terms of literacy rates narrowed during the period of 1986-99. Nevertheless, when the curriculum is fully decked with Javanese nuances, its harmony and hierarchal tradition have been well-induced in the realm of the students.

The reproduction and perpetuation to become ibu have centered on the notion of Javanese hierarchal tradition. Maintaining hierarchy in society means perpetuating harmony. Politically and socially, Indonesian women are considered as the pillars to promote the harmony, so the hierarchy and the 'order of Life' will be granted. Becoming ibu in both the maternal and cultural senses, thus, becomes an ultimate sense of womanhood.

The Perpetuation of Becoming an Ibu as Illustrated in Sirikit Syah's *Harga Perempuan* ("The Woman's Price") and Ayu Utami's *Saman*

One's marital status can be a great concern in a society, particularly a society that overvalues marriage, and yet despise those who are single. As if convincing individuals into believing that being married is the only way to achieve happiness, Javanese society with its hierarchal tradition has been constructing the notion that being single is just not normal. Thus, it has been a common phenomenon in Indonesian everyday life that people tend to look down on those, particularly women, who choose to be single, or whose circumstances force them to remain single.

In general, it seems inappropriate for an Indonesian woman to remain single. Being single is considered not the nature of a woman. It is an irrational fact, especially within the notion of Javanese hierarchal tradition, which basically determines women to get married, get pregnant, and so preserve the continuity of the social hierarchy. Along with the strong impact of the hierarchal tradition, the burden of Indonesian women to become an ibu has been unbearable.

This chapter reveals the way the notion of an ibu as an ultimate female identity has been adopted and perpetuated by the female characters. “To perpetuate” is to make perpetual, or to cause to endure or to continue indefinitely, or to extend without intermission. Thus, the perpetuation to become ibu is the action of making perpetual in order to preserve the significant role of an ibu supporting the Javanese hierarchal tradition. The perpetuation can be seen in a way some female characters mentally strive to become an ibu, following the ibu role models that they have found in the society. The others show a strong urge to satisfy the sense of incompleteness due to the fact that they have not married or had any children. These are considered as ‘female nature’ that requires completion since single women or childless mothers is considered as a failure of a woman to achieve the ultimate sense of womanhood. In terms of social expectation, women should become an ibu due to its significant role to maintain the hierarchal tradition. Thus, the female characters who have become an ibu will keep on striving to keep their social status as an ibu since they are aware that as soon as they give up striving to an ibu, they are ‘nobody.’

*Herlina, Tia, Diani, and Wati as Marriage-Oriented Women
in “Gadis-gadis Pekerja” (“Working Girls”)*

The story is about four young women who have been good friends since they were students in the same university. Each of them has her career and different styles to pursue. However, all of them gave the same unfulfilled desire: to get married as soon as possible, thus they will be a complete ibu.

Herlina works as a secretary of a foreign banking consultant, Peter Lewis. She has been admiring her employer whom she considers as “handsome, well-built, smart, and full of charisma” (61). Peter has also won Herlina’s heart because he always treats her with respect:

Setelah bekerja lima belas bulan, baru kemarin Peter mengajak makan siang bersama di ruang kerjanya. Memang bukan suatu acara makan yang romantic, namun kesannya tak terlupakan hingga sekarang. Mereka cuma memesan Kentucky Fried Chicken dan meluangkan dua puluh menit di sela kesibukan mereka untuk makan siang bersama (61).

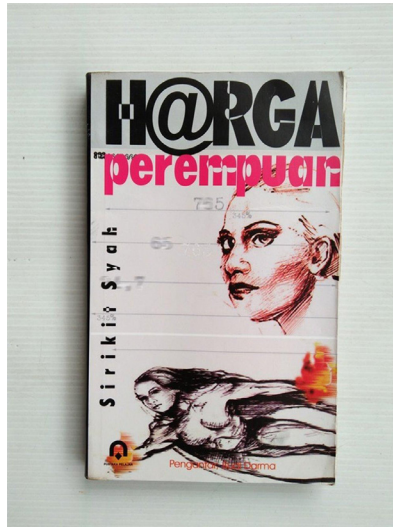


Fig. 3. Sirikit Syah's *Harga Perempuan*, where the following short stories are collected. <https://www.bukalapak.com/p/hobi-koleksi/buku/sosial/27vs1zb-jual-harga-perempuan-by-sirikit-syah>.

[After working for about fifteen months, Peter invited her for lunch in his office. It was not a romantic lunch, nothing at all, yet it left an unforgettable impression. They just ordered Kentucky Fried Chicken and spared twenty minutes of their busy schedule for lunch] (61).³

Peter always treats Herlina with respect, unlike the attitudes of other foreign employers towards their native employees. Peter's attitude towards Herlina has made her develop a great sense of respect toward her superior. It has been an honor to have lunch with him. Upon knowing that the purpose of their lunch appointment is to announce her new position as Peter's assistant, Herlina finds herself deeper and deeper in love with him, as she whispers in her heart: "If I fall in love, it will be with you, Peter" (62).

Herlina hopes that there will be a wider chance for them to be together and to know each other better after she is promoted as Peter's assistant. Unfortunately, Peter does not seem to be interested to go beyond a professional relationship with Herlina. Nevertheless, before the story shifts to

another character, Herlina is portrayed as a satisfied young woman who cannot wait to celebrate her promotion with her best friends.

Meanwhile, Tia, another successful young woman in the story, is experiencing the highlight of her day. She is holding a press conference, which is going pretty well indeed, to introduce the elite club in where she works as a public relation manager. Tia is a typical successful, urban, young woman. She is well paid, and remains single. Thus, she can lavishly spend all her salary for herself. She brought her own car. She can afford a chauffeur to drive her around. She is clad in Etienne Aigner and matching Christian Dior shoes and bag: “She was 29 years old, still single, her salary had been around two million rupiah, obviously she had enough to spend on her appearance...” (62-63), particularly for a young woman who works in a place that sells prestige.

As she represents Heritage Club Surabaya in the press conference, which she claims is mainly selling prestige and comfort, she is portrayed as a confident key figure. Responding to the journalists’ questions, Tia confidently explains that the members of the club will have access only to first class services, such as fancy restaurants, elegant penthouse, fitness center with sauna, and swimming pool. She is also confident that the club is able to accommodate plenty well-known members. At the end of the press conference, Tia believes that she will successfully complete her duty. She seems satisfied with her life and her job. However, her characterization as being self-confident and independent does not linger anymore at the end of the story.

Like Herlina, Tia seems secure with herself and her job. Her plans for the day are going well, especially the press conference. She is portrayed as a young woman who is able to control her job well. Before the third woman is introduced in the story, Tia is shown calling her chauffeur to take her to meet her friends.

Diani, another female character of the story, might be considered as the most successful one. She is a young entrepreneur. She has begun her business since she was in high school. In the beginning she just gave private English tutorial lessons and translation services. Now she has expanded her

business into a translation bureau, language course, and typing service. She began from nothing, and her family is not well off. She only has a spirit and willingness to work hard. Now she can enjoy what she has done in the past few years. She is so busy with her business. She even manages her business from her bedroom and bathroom. Thus, she does not seem to have time for herself.

As a student, Diani is exceptional. She is smart and very active in student's organization in her campus. Her friends perceive her as a multitalented girl: "Instead of being smart, she was also active in organizations, easy going, talented, and friendly. She was good in delivering speech, singing, and she was a great comedian" (66). Diani is indeed popular among her friends.

After she graduates from the university, the rector, who has been a great friend of her from time to time, calls her for a meeting. He believes as a good friend of Diani he had to tell her the bitter truth: that actually she is chosen as the best graduate of the batch until her teachers in the English Department vetoed her. Although she is well liked among her friends, she is not popular among her teachers: "She was considered too outspoken, rebellious, too critical toward her teachers that would bring unpleasant image for them ..." (66). The rector believes it is for the sake of Diani that she needs to know the truth: "I know you are disappointed, yet don't blame those who have vetoed you, find your own mistakes. You need to learn how to adapt to your community in order to be accepted..." (67)

The rector thinks it is important for Diani to realize that being smart, active, and multitalented area not enough to win the title of the best student. She should be well liked and well accepted by the people around her, particularly those who are superior in terms of social status, such as her teachers. Being accepted in a community means one should obey the social norms and rules. Diani's criticism of her teachers has made the uneasy, thus creating the impression of disobedience and rebellion in her. In this case, she has failed to maintain the harmony in the vertical relationship between a student and her teacher. Thus, the rector advises her need to acquire the ways to 'adapt' to her environment in order to be accepted.

In Javanese hierarchal tradition, knowing one's place in a society is important indeed. Although Diani is described as a Chinese Indonesian, she is expected to honor the tradition where she belongs. It is necessary for her to perpetuate the Javanese tradition of keeping the unity and harmony in her society. She might have been brought up in a liberal family that permits her to criticize her parents or her older siblings. However, the rector reminds her that she needs to adapt herself to the social expectation that requires honor and respect toward older people, regardless of whether she is Javanese or not.

Another way of perceiving Diani's failure due to her inability to understand the norms and social expectation is how the society, represented by her teachers and the rector, is not well prepared to accept someone like Diani, a girl who is smart and witty, yet too outspoken and critical toward her surroundings and her superiors. Her attitude is considered as a threat toward the harmony of vertical relation. The way the rector asks her to 'find her own mistakes and not to blame others' obviously portrays the reluctance of the society to accept the new image of women who are independent and not only in terms of public opportunity, but also in revealing their minds freely.

Diani is deeply disappointed upon knowing that her chance to be elected as the best student in the university was vetoed by her own teachers, simply because she was 'too critical' to win their hearts. In Javanese tradition, maintaining harmony and unity requires obedience and one's understanding on his/her place in a society. When someone begins to act as an individual, pursuing his/her personal desire, he/she will threaten the harmony. Thus, in order to fulfill personal needs, one shall strive to maintain the balance between private and social life to preserve harmony. The exercise of rights and duties has to be in accordance with the Javanese formulation of *serasi, seimbang, dan selaras* ('harmonious, balanced, and well-adjusted'). Diani is expected to understand 'self-restraint,' which is considered as good manners in Javanese society. As the member of a society Diani must adapt herself to the prevailing social norms, she must restrain herself from uttering blatant or open criticism of her teachers. Diani definitely has the right to do as she pleases, yet she must observe the prevailing norms: that

her teachers have higher social status than she does. She must be aware of her lower social position.

Thus, who is the 'role model' of the story? Wati might be considered as the ideal female protagonist of the story, and the foil character for the three women. She is introduced as the last female character. She is a simple young woman both in life and attitudes. Arriving at the meeting point to see her friends, she portrayed leaving bemo, a mini station public transportation. Unlike Tia and Diani, she does not have her own car. Judging from her "KORPRI"⁴ uniform and badge, Wati is a government officer. She teaches English in a government owned high school. Nevertheless, she seems to enjoy her occupation as a high school teacher with simple salary.

Wati can be considered as more ambitious than the others. When she was a student, she was the only one who learned English and American literature. Thus, the university offered her a teaching position in the English Department since such expertise in American Literature was deeply needed. However, Wati prefers teaching high school to university students: "She had seen several university lecturers who were trapped, who failed to develop themselves. Being a teacher was not necessarily required to develop personally. The teacher's progress was mainly measured through the development of his/her students. She was grateful for her own professional choice..." (70).

Wati seems so undemanding in perceiving her life, and even the value of her profession. She does not care about her own personal development as a teacher. What matters most for her is her students' development. Wati shadows Djajadinigrat's notion of ibu who is willing to give in, sacrifice, and provide the needs of her family without expecting anything in return or personal development. She is mainly interested in the development of her students, without demanding personal achievement. She feels like she does not need to experience self-improvement as the attributes of 'good' ibu guru ('female teacher') are seen from the progress of her 'children', her dear students. That is what Wati thinks society simply expects from a Javanese woman like her. Her simplicity in thoughts and aspiration bear the image of ibu, a figure full of loyalty, dedication, and willingness to sacrifice for the

sake of the others. These are the elements of 'good' ibu that the Javanese society seeks from ibu figure.

In terms of financial achievement, Wati can be considered as the simplest among the four of them. Tia even jokingly announces that her elite club is not for anyone from Wati's class (71). Nevertheless, Wati is quite satisfied with herself since "her friends have not changed their attitude toward her" (70). They have decided to meet once every month to learn each other's latest news:

...Sekarang ada berita baik mengenai masa depan?" Semua terdiam. Masa depan yang dimaksud Wati adalah perkawinan. Keempat gadis itu sama-sama mengejar karir dan menikmati pekerjaan mereka, dalam bidang yang berbeda-beda. Namun ada kesamaan lain yang seolah mengikat mereka. Mereka bukan jenis gadis yang hanya hidup untuk karir. Cita-cita mereka yang mungkin sulit dipercaya orang-orang yang memandang kesuksesan mereka dari kejauhan, adalah berumah tangga. Lima tahun setelah lulus sekolah belum terdengar juga kabar baik itu (71-72).

[...Now, any good news regarding 'the future?' everybody remained silent. What Wati meant by 'the future' was marriage. These four girls had strived for their career and enjoyed what they were doing in their own fields. Nevertheless, there was another similarity that had somewhat bound them. They were not the typical girls who lived only for their career. Their dream, which was probably difficult to believe by those who could only see them and judge their success from a far, was getting married and having a family. It had been five years after they graduate from the university, but the good news had not been heard yet] (71-72).

Before the presentation of the above paragraph, the reader of this story might have perceived these four young women as modern independent women who are busy striving to pursue their career. They might be considered as the contemporary portrayal of Indonesian women who are satisfied with their lives. They have fulfilled their dreams. Yet, it turns out they still feel incomplete. Actually, they have not forgotten their existence as a woman with an ultimate desire to settle down in terms of marriage and having children of their own:

“Kalau begitu, akulah pembawa kabar baik itu,” ujar Wati.
“Kamu?” ketiga sahabatnya serempak melotot kepadanya.
“Pak Latif, guru Bahasa Indonesia, kermain milamarku.”
“Guru? Kamu akan kawin dengan seorang guru?”
“Mengapa tidak? Itu can duniaku?”
“Kau terima lamarannya?”
Wati menggeleng.
“Belum, dia kuberi waktu tiga bulan lagi, tapi enam pulu persen aku cenderung mengiyakan lamarannya” (72-73).

[“Then I guess I’m the one who brings the good news,” Wati said.
“You?” her three friends shouted in unison, and stared at her.
“Latif, a Bahasa Indonesian teacher, proposed to me yesterday.”
“A teacher? You’re about to marry a teacher?”
“Why not? Isn’t it my life?”
“Did you accept his proposal?”
Wati shook his head.
“Not yet, I gave him three months to consider it, yet the chance to accept his proposal is already sixty percent”] (72-73).

It is a surprising ending for the reader to see their reaction after they learn that Wati is about to get married soon. Obviously, Wati is going to be the first among them all to be someone’s wife. Latief has proposed her, and it is good news indeed, particularly for a woman of almost 30 years old. To be an ibu is greatly appreciated by the society, which also makes the other young women begin to question what had gone wrong with each of them. Wati has already been chosen, yet they have not. Thus, they believe that something must be wrong with them:

Mereka terdiam. Ketiga gadis lainnya mulai menyadari bahwa itulah problem mereka. Terlalu memilih, terlalu muluk-muluk. Lihat Wati, dia tampak bahagia. Yah, meskipun belum tentu dia mencintai calon suaminya, tapi dengan datangnya seorang laki-laki melamarnya sudah cukup membuatnya Bahagia (73).

[They were all quiet. The other girls began to realize what their problem was. They were too choosy, asking too much. Look at Wati, she seemed happy. Well, although it is not really necessary for her to love her future

husband, but at least there was already a man coming into her life to propose to her, and it was enough to make her happy] (73).

Before Wati tells them that Latief has proposed, her three best friends seem to enjoy their lives. They are described as happy and satisfied young women with their careers and lives. The fact that Wati has been proposed to suddenly makes them realize that they also want to settle down. They begin to believe that the problem has come from them. They blame themselves. Diani, Tia, and Herlina perceive each of them as individuals who are choosy and demanding too much. Herlina is too preoccupied with her cool boss, while an artist is actually attracted to Diani, yet she insists that her future husband should be a conglomerate (71). She cannot live with an artist. Thus, they conclude that their own attitudes have hampered their chances to get married. There is a sudden urge to despise their criteria of choosing the most suitable person to be their husbands, as the story ends with: "... Tia had actively begun to spread her attention to some men around her..." (73). There is a sudden drive that does not really care about men they are about to get married to. They simply wanted to get married with any available men around them.

Thus, the perpetuation to become *ibu* in this story is the action of making perpetual through marriage in order to preserve the significant role of *ibu* in supporting the Javanese hierarchal tradition. Its insidious implication is so intense that it is able to make the three independent, well-employed women abruptly feel disappointed with their lives as singles. The perpetual attempt can be seen in the way these female characters struggle to place themselves in an institution called 'marriage'. Along with the social expectation that a woman should marry and have children, and the cultural mandate of resuming the hierarchal tradition, women consciously believe that their utmost completion as a woman is through marriage, to which the presence of children is granted.

The perpetuation to become *ibu* is obvious in the way Herlina, Tia, Diani, and Wati mentally strive to be an *ibu*, perhaps following the *ibu* role models that they have found in society. They reveal strong urge to satisfy

the sense of incompleteness due to the fact that they have not yet married or had any children. They even define marriage plan as “good news” and their “future” as if without it there is nothing left to be grateful about. Becoming someone’s wife is considered as ‘female nature’ that requires completion since single woman or single (female) parent is considered as a ‘failure’ of a woman to achieve the ultimate sense of womanhood. Thus, in terms of cultural mandate, women should become ibu due to its significant role to maintain the hierarchal tradition. Thus, it is understandable to note Herlina, Tia, and Diani’s confusion and dilemma concerning their desire to become ibu.

Rini and Han’s Mother as the Supporters of Harmony and Unity in “Tanggungjawab” (“Responsibility”)

The main character is Rini. She can be assumed as a student in her senior year since the story describes she has done with her KKN.⁵ The story begins in rini’s journey to meet her future-in-laws only to find out later that her fiancé, Handoko or Han, has left her for another woman. The two of the lost contact for about three months: “It has been three months Mas⁶ Handoko did not reply to my letters, while in fact I used to receive his letters twice a week” (36). She has been questioning why she does not hear something from him. When she finally receives a letter from Han’s father telling her that Han has had an accident, without further questions she goes to visit him to Pacitan, a mall province several hours from Surabaya, the capital of the province of East Java. However, it turns out her sudden visit to Pacitan is not really expected by Han’s family: “I walked in and met Ida who looked surprised to see me. “Oh, Mbak⁷ Rini,” she reacted, and soon went inside the house. She does not used to be like that. Ari, Ida’s sister, quickly took my bag and placed it inside the bedroom where I used to stay whenever I visit them. She looked as if she were avoiding my eyes...” (38).

It is obvious that the family is not well prepared to meet Rini. There is no clear explanation in this story why Han’s father has created such a lie to Rini. Perhaps he doesn’t want to upset Rini by telling her the bitter truth through a letter. Perhaps he just does not know what to say. It must have

been a bitter realization for Han's father. He will have to admit that his only son has failed to pay respect and bring honor to the family, something that is expected from a Javanese child. Instead, Han has brought shame and sadness to his family and Rini. The father might also be experiencing a sense of big regret since he was the one who introduced the two of them, telling Rini, "He can't be a *camat* if he remains single." When he introduced Rini to his son, they soon became close:

Agaknya bapak tidak perlu repot-repot lagi mempromosikan kami, kami langsung saling tertarik. Bila dihubung-hubungkan dengan cita-citaku menjadi guru di daerah, rasanya klop juga.

"Saya nanti akan jadi Bu Guru, Bu *Camat*, sekaligus Ibu Ketua PKK di sini," kata saya waktu itu pada teman-teman. Oh, tentu saja mereka iri padaku. Namun mereka cukup fair dan mensyukuri keberuntunganku. Lagipula, kata mereka, kita sangat serasi (37-38).

[It is not difficult for father to promote each of us; we were practically attracted to one another. Considering my dream to be a rural teacher, it felt so right.

"I'm going to be Bu Guru,⁸ Bu *Camat*,⁹ as well as the head of PKK in here," I used to tell my friends that way. Oh yes, they envied me indeed. Yet, they were quite fair and glad to know how lucky I was. Furthermore, they said that we were just the right couple] (37-38).

Rini bears the stereotypes of a Javanese woman. First of all, she is a simple woman indeed. Like Wati in "Gadis-gadis Pekerja" ("Working Girls"), her dream is simply to become a teacher in a rural area, far from the city life where she has been accustomed. Upon knowing that Han is a *mantra polisi* ('police district inspector') who is about to be a *camat* ('chief of district'), Rini is even more sure about her dream of dedicating herself to a rural area like Pacitan. Thus, nothing Rini's aspiration and her willingness to employ her knowledge for rural people, Han's father realizes that it will be painful for Rini to know that Han has married another woman and left Pacitan:

...Terbayang olehku betapa dia, dengan mobil kecemasan berwarna oranye, dengan bangga membawaku berkeliling. Diperkenalkannya aku pada beberapa pejabatnya, pejabat kabupaten, *camat*, dokter, dan semua tokoh

masyarakat, sebagai calon istrinya. Kami senantiasa berpenampilan prima, berpakaian batik, rapi, bertindak tanduk tak tercela. Bahkan masyarakat sudah menjuluki kami, “pasangan ideal di masa depan.” Bagaimana tidak? Yang lelaki camat, yang wanita lulusan institute keguruan (41).

[...I still remembered the way he proudly used to take me around with his orange camat car. He introduced me as his future wife to some of his superiors, kabupaten officers, camat, doctors, and all community leaders. We always maintained appropriate attitudes; we wore batik, neat clothes, and performed proper behaviour. People had been calling us “the future ideal couple.” Well, why not? The man was a camat, while the woman was about to graduate from the education institute] (41).

The people in Pacitan have warmly welcomed her, as well as Han’s family. Everybody has assumed that Rini will soon become a part of Pacitan community. The family treats her as if she is already a member of the family. Rini has already called Han’s parents with the terms bapak (‘father’) and ibu (‘mother’). The closeness and warmth of the family has also become one of the reasons why Rini is so loyal to Han: “...it had been one of the reasons to strengthen my loyalty to Mas Han ... being separated for a year, there were several men in the city trying to attract me. This family had been encouraging me to return to Pacitan as soon as I graduated...” (38).

Despite her closeness to Han’s family, nevertheless Rini does not dare to ask about Han and the accident. She comes to Pacitan early in the morning because of the letter, which informs Han’s accident. Yet, no one dares to bring up the topic although Rini and the family have spent the whole day talking to each other. Rini is afraid that the family is hiding something from her. She personally feels she does not have the right to ask the question. Rini knows very well her lower position: she is the guest of the house and a future daughter-in-law. Thus, she is kept busy by her own mind, thinking of all the possibilities that she might have to face:

Tapi mengapa aku harus bertanya? Bukankah mereka yang harus segera mengatakah apa yang sebenarnya terjadi, tidak diam saja seperti ini? Atau, adakah sesuatu yang mereka rahsiakan terhadapku? ... Dengan hati-hati kutanyai diriku sendiri, bagaimana kalau Mas Han luka parah dan cacat?

“Oh, itu bukan persoalan bagiku,” jerit hati kecilku. “Aku mencintainya, aku tak mau kehilangan dia.” Tapi bagaimana bila dia gegar otak dan cacat jiwa, bapak bilang luka-lukanya tidak parah, tapi mungkin fatal? Mungkin otaknya terganggu? Aku berpikir lebih keras. “Aku mampu bersetia satu tahun. Ternyata itu indah. Mungkin lebih lama menunjukkan kesetiaan lebih indah. Aku siap menerima,” bisik hatiku. Batinku terharu menyadari kesungguh-sungguhanku.

Sore harinya mereka tetap tak bicara apa-apa ... (39).

[But why should I? Weren't they supposed to tell me what had happened, not to remain silent like this? Or, were they keeping something from me? ... I asked myself carefully, what if Han had been badly injured and physically defected? “Oh, it's not a problem for me,” my conscience screamed. “I love him and I don't want to lose him.” But what if he got brain damaged and mentally injured. Father told me that he was not terribly injured, but maybe the injuries were quite fatal? Maybe his brain was damaged? I was thinking harder. “I'm able to be loyal for a year. It feels so wonderful. Perhaps showing my loyalty in a much longer time will be more wonderful. I am ready to accept it,” my heart whispered. I felt like crying noticing my dedication.

Until late in the afternoon, they had not said anything...] (39).

It might sound unusual and strange, but the family has left Rini confused and uneasy the whole day with all her feelings and worries about her fiancé. While the family has not yet been ready to tell Rini the truth, Rini, despite her intense curiosity, ironically does not have the courage to ask the question, not until she asks Ida, Han's sister. When it seemed like she can't handle her curiosity anymore, she asks Ida, who, in terms of Javanese social hierarchy, is lower than Rini, as seen in the way Ida previously addresses Rini with *mbak*. However, Ida as the daughter of the family seems aware of her own position. She does not have the right to speak about the problem in her family. Thus, Ida simply replies with mumbling words, “I...I don't know, *Mbak*. Kindly ask *Ibu*, okay?” (39).

It is finally Han's mother who tells Rini everything. Rini's loyalty and dedication toward Han are shattered when she learns the truth from Han's mother. Hans has run away with another woman from another city. He has left his family, his job, and his future since the woman is pregnant: “We declared that he did not have the nerve to face his family and ... me” (40). The

news breaks Rini's heart and destroys her hopes and dreams. Nevertheless, Han's mother is trying to mend the chaotic situations: "I was dumbfounded. I lost my mind. I saw ibu, Ida, and Ari were crying. Father was wiping his face several times. I kept on trying to listen to the whole story from ibu. "No matter what has happened, you're still my child. Your place is here," she said while stroking my hair..." (40).

It is interesting to note the way Han's mother is crying to restore the harmonious relationship between her family and Rini. Everything was perfect before the 'accident' happens. Rini's (future) position in Han's family has been apparent, and even the people of Pacitan have already perceived Rini as a part of them: "People had been calling us 'the future ideal couple.' Well, why not? The man was a *camat*, and the woman was about to graduate from the education institute" (40). Thus, Han's decision of leaving Rini has shattered all the hopes and expectations of his family and Rini. The Pacitan community has obviously lost its *mantra polisi*. Everything is in chaos. Therefore, Han's mother apparently has to perform her role as *ibu*, which is to restore the harmony, at least first of all between her family and Rini. She promises Rini that everything will be all right. Rini will remain a member of the family, thus she can still pursue her plans of teaching in Pacitan. Nevertheless, as the story ends, Rini has decided to leave her plans behind.

... Aku pamit masuk kamar, dan sejak itu tak keluar lagi selama 2 hari. Aku menangis, marah, kecewa, merenung. Mangapa hal ini terjadi padaku? Mas Han menghancurkan tidak saja cintaku, tapi juga hipudku, masa depanku, cita-citaku. Tanpa dia, aku tak bias hidup di Pacitan. Aku tak mau lagi jadi guru desa. Persetan dengan cita-cita! Kesadaran akan kehilangan cita-cita membuatku sedih, lebih dari sekedar kesedihan kehilangan calon suami (40-41).

[... I asked for permission to leave and enter my bedroom, and I did not leave the room for the next two days. I cried, I was mad, feeling disappointed, and beginning to ponder. Why did it happen to me? Han had not only destroyed my love, but also my life, my future, my dreams. Without him, I could never stay in Pacitan. I didn't want to be a teacher in a village anymore. To hell with my dreams! When I realized that I had lost my dreams, I felt sad, much sadder than losing my future husband] (40-41).

Losing a future husband for Rini means losing her whole future and dreams. Now she does not have anyone to depend on. Her desire to be a teacher in Pacitan remains a dream that will never come true. Her hope to be Bu Camat is shattered since she has lost Han, as well as her dream to be the head of PKK since its membership status is based on the husband's career position, rather than on personal achievement of the member. Thus, Rini does not have anyone from whom she can gain respect, dignity, and better social status. She cannot become an ibu. Therefore, losing her dreams is more painful than losing Han.

However, Rini still bears the image of 'good ibu.' The following quotation shows how she is able to perceive Han in a different way, a positive way, as she is trying to put herself in his shoes:

Mas Hanadoko dicaci maki diumpat oleh keluarganya. Dia kini terasing bersama istrinya, entah di mana. Dia pasti juga menderita. Aku tahu dia mencintaiku. Tentu tak mudah beginya menghadapi kejadian ini. Dia memang harus bertanggungjawab atas perbuatannya. Dia laki-laki. Aku tersentak. Kesadaran itu begitu indah. Mas Han adalah laki-laki yang bertanggungjawab. Bukan padaku, tapi pada yang lebihh berhak, istrinya dan jabang bayinya. Dia bias saja menyingkerkan wanita penggoda itu, atau menyuruhnya menggugurkan kandungannya, agar tetap bisa memilikiku. Tapi itu tak dilakukannya. Ia mengorbankan aku, demi sesuatu yan tak kurang berharga. Harga sebuah nyawa.

Mas Handoko adalah laki-laki yang bertanggungjawab. Dia brani berbuat dan menanggung risikonya. Dia adalah pahlawan bagi anak dan istrinya. (42-43)

[Handoko had been despised by his family. He was hiding somewhere with his wife. He had to be miserable. I knew he loved me. It had to be difficult for him to face the situation. He obviously had to be responsible for what he had done. He was a man. I was startled. This sudden realization was so wonderful. Han was a responsible man. Not to me but to those who deserve the rights: his wife and the future baby. He could just have left that seductive woman or simply asked her to abort the baby, so he could have me still. But he did not do it. He sacrificed me, his parents, his occupation, his future for something that was not less worthy. The price of a soul.

He was a man of full responsibility. He had the nerve to act and face the risks. He was a brave man for his baby and his wife] (42-43).

Rini's first reaction is a bitter disappointment toward Han who has destroyed all her hopes, expectations, and dreams. She is even ashamed to realize how her friend will react upon knowing what has happened to her: "What if Wati knew that Mas Han had compensated his sexual desire with another woman, and even made her pregnant..." (42). Nevertheless, she is able to understand the situation and begin to sympathize with Han. She refers Han as "a man" while the woman as "a seductive woman". It seems now she is able to put the blame on the woman, and not on Han, whom she thought of once as a selfish individual who could not control his sexual desire.

Rini also once again reveals a narcissistic tendency: before, she admires herself as a loyal and dedicated future wife who is willing to accept Han the way he is, with his physical or mental ailment (39). After she learns what the real 'accident' is all about, she begins to perceive herself as a victim: "He sacrificed me." Yet, she is glad that Han has sacrificed her for another woman and her baby, who deserve his act of being responsible: "This sudden realization was so wonderful. Han was a responsible man. Not to me but to those who deserve the rights: his wife and the future baby..." (43).

Another image of a 'good ibu' can be found in Rini in terms of her willingness to perpetuate harmony and unity, at least for Han's family: "... I would ask his family to forgive him and accept him again if he ever returned..." (43). Like Han's mother, Rini also performs her 'female duty' in restoring and perpetuating the harmony within the family of her ex-fiancé. By performing the act of letting go, and wishing that Han's family will be able to forgive and accept him again, she had perpetuated the role of ibu as the pillar of society: restoring the harmony in the family.

Defining individuality can be perceived in Han's attitude. Hans as an individual has the will towards freedom, satisfying his individual needs regardless of others'. As Rini has thought about it before, his sexual drive should have been tamed, so that his individual urge can be integrated as a less individual role. He should have performed his roles into harmonious whole, as a good *camat* and Rini's future husband. Yet, he has endangered the harmony both in the society and his family. As an individual, Han should have known and fulfilled his social place, like Rini, who is fully aware of

her position, knowing to react and having the right attitude. Otherwise, according to the Javanese tradition, a person is part of the group, who has no independent existence; his/her personality, wishes, and rights should be subservient to the social whole of which he/she is a part.

Thus, upon nothing that she is the one who should restore the chaos into order, Rini leaves Pacitan with a broken heart. However, she is able to forgive Han, and is willing to continue her aspiration to be a teacher, but not in Pacitan. Socially, Indonesian women like Rini are considered as the pillars that promote harmony, so the hierarchy and the 'order of Life' will be achieved.

The Wife as a Persistent Ibu in "Perempuan Suamiku"
("My Husband's Woman")

This is an interesting story about an encounter of a woman with her husband's mistress. The wife has been observing her husband and his routine for months. Although he has admitted that he has another woman, he refuses to reveal her identity. Finally, the wife gets enough evidence to find the mysterious woman. However, she finds the mistress as an unbelievable figure. She is sitting in front of her; the woman who has been a mystery for months. The mistress is truly beyond her expectation: "Her appearance, her attitude, her thoughts were all beyond my head. Since I was not well prepared to face the figure that had never existed in my mind, I stammered, lost for words, and thus I was dumbfounded. The only thing that I could do was study her, waiting for her to say something..." (113)

Before she met her husband's mistress, she thought that she was about to face "a young woman who was crying and clutching her legs, begging for forgiveness. Then she would promise to stop her affair with my husband..." (120). However, the mistress was not like any stereotypical mistresses, who are seductive, sexy, and alluring. "I felt extremely jealous because she was not like any ordinary women; in fact, she was completely different from me..." (114). Thus, it turns out she is the one who is speechless. She finds the mistress impossible to be her rival.

The wife bags to compare herself in terms of physical attractiveness. She perceives herself as a woman who is able to satisfy her husband, a flawless ibu:

...aku juga bukan istri yang mengecewakan. Aku cukup cantik, pandai merawat badan, selalu tampil rapi dan segar. Rajin melayani suami di meja makan dan di tempat tidur, bahkan aku bisa dibanggakan di kalangan bisnis suamiku. Dalam bayanganku, perempuan lain itu pasti seseorang yang lebih muda dari aku, lebih seksi, lebih piawai di tempat tidur, lebih berpendidikan, atau lebih mahir pengabdian dan pelayanan terhadap lelaki (116).

[...I was not such a disappointing wife. I was quite pretty, I was not heedless of my body, and I always looked neat and fresh. I was always available for my husband, both in the kitchen and in our bedroom. My husband was proud of the way I handle his business. In my mind, my husband's mistress had to be much younger, and sexier than me. She had to be an expert in bed, more educated, or more dedicated and loyal to men] (116).

The wife is confident about herself. She has been striving to be a perfect ibu. She performs her multiple roles with full dedication, trying hard to satisfy her husband and her children as a wife, a mother, and a good career woman. She does maintain the harmony and unity in her family: "... I knew exactly that we used to be an ideal, harmonious couple. My husband adored me, and I admired him. We were blessed with sweet children. Each of us had well established careers, and we share several hobbies ..." (115). Thus, when she learns that her husband is still seeing another woman, she is perplexed. She does not know what to do: "I was irritated, angry, and moody. I did not know what to do. Should I ask for a divorce since he had had an affair? There were so many things that I had to sacrifice, including the children. I was not ready to be a divorcee, and I desperately needed him. Just pretend that nothing happened? How painful!" (116).

A woman of good career does not mean she automatically perceives herself as an independent woman. Like those young women in "Gadis-gadis Pekerja" ("Working Girls"), the woman realizes that being single, or becoming a single parent, is not really appreciated by the society that promotes harmony in family and 'order of Life'. The wife obviously has a

good career, but she does not think that her public role as a career woman will guarantee her acceptability in the society. She faces a dilemma: a divorce means her children might lose the figure of a father in their lives, yet her dignity screams for justice. Furthermore, she fails to see herself as an independent woman. Despite her good career, she still needs her husband: "I was not ready to be a widow, and I desperately needed him..." (116).

The wife might also lose her *ibu* status if her proposal for a divorce was granted by her husband, which is likely to happen. She is shocked when she learns from the mistress that her husband is willing to leave his wife if that is what she really wants: "What if your wife learns about us? He said that he would ask you to forgive him... the decision is in your hands. If you ask for a divorce, your wish will be granted" (119). Yet, the wife is not prepared to become a divorcee. Thus, she does not know what to do.

The mistress is indeed a foil character to the wife. In terms of physical appearance, they are like heaven and earth:

...Aku masih sulit memahami, apa yang menarik dari wanita itu. Dia lebih tua dari aku, hal itu bahkan tampak jelas dari wajahnya yang tak ber-make up. Dandanannya sederhana, bahkan terkesan seenaknya. Dia sama sekali tidak seksi. Dan rumahnya—bagaimana aku bisa membayangkan suamiku bisa kerasan berada di tempat macam begini? Perempuan ini sepertitidak mempunyai apa pun yang Dapat dibandingkan denganku (118).

[...I still found her difficult to understand, what made that woman so attractive. She was older than me, I can obviously tell from her cosmetic-free face. Her appearance was simple, kind of grungy. She was not sexy at all. And her place ... how could I ever imagine my husband feeling at ease in such a place. This woman does not seem to be worthy of comparison with me] (118).

In terms of physical attractiveness, the mistress is definitely incomparable to the wife. She is so untidy, while the wife is so spotless. The mistress is also easy and straightforward in perceiving relationship: "Apparently I am among those who don't believe in loyalty to one person for the rest of one's life, it is nonsense and inhuman. I don't believe you have not ever been attracted to another man, either..." (119).

It takes the wife quite a while to understand the mistress. Both of them definitely have different notions of relationship and loyalty. For the mistress, the relationship is not necessarily a matter of commitment. One's individuality remains within a relationship, and his/her personal desire shall be granted. If one believes that he/she wants to leave the relationship, he/she is free to leave. Thus, there is no holding back for the mistress if ever the husband wants to leave her: "Well, I'm happy whenever I'm near him, but to tell you the truth, I don't really need him..." (123).

Perhaps her lifestyle as an artist has made her so easy and uncomplicated in perceiving life. When the wife asks her why her husband is so attracted to her, she simply replies that her husband needs her only for expressing amusement:

"Kamu nyaris sempurna. Kamu pintar, tampaknya. Menarik, pandai memasak, dan masih tangkas di tempat tidur. Tapi belakangan ini suamimu sepertinya kehilangan kamu. Kalian tak lagi tertawa bersama."

"Tertawa?" aku keheranan mendengarkan alasan yang kesannya mengada-ada itu,

"Ya, asal kau tau aja. Kami banyak tertawa di rumah ini. Bahkan kami jarang sekali bercinta. Biasanya karena di capek, atau aku yang merasa lelah. Lalu kami Cuma berbaring dan saling cerita. Sudah itu tertawa-tawa. Kata suamimu, enak juga hidup bersama seniman. Tidak harus mandi pada pukul sekian, memenuhi janji dengan rekan bisnis, atau terburu-buru saan makan siang sebab akan rapat direksi. Semua itu tak ada di rumah ini. Kami senantiasa rileks. Aku suka bercerita tentang mitos-mitos Yunani kuno atau juga legenda-legenda tua, dan suamimu akan mendengarkannya sampai tertidur" (121).

["You're almost perfect. You look smart. You look attractive, a good chef, a good companion in bed. But, it seems that your husband has lost you lately. You two rarely laugh together."

"Laugh?" I was surprised to hear her seemingly nonsensical excuses.

"Yup! Well, now you know. We have plenty to laugh about in this place. We ever rarely make love. He is usually tired, or I am. Then, we just lay and tell each other story. After that we laugh and laugh. Your husband will say it's nice to live with an artist. I don't have to follow a schedule only for taking a bath; I don't need to fulfill an appointment with a business partner, or to rush during lunch hour because of a meeting appointment.

There isn't such a thing in this place. We always relax. I love telling him ancient Greek methodologies or old legends, and your husband listens until he falls asleep] (121).

Living according to a strict and hectic schedule might be extremely tiring. The husband is tired of his 'too organized' life, and his wife does not seem aware of it, until she listens about it from the mistress.

The wife then realizes that they have been too busy with their own matter lately: "My husband and I even had to make an appointment if we would like to have dinner together..." (123). Meanwhile, the mistress keeps on repeating her simple philosophy in life: "...I have never programmed my life. I'm flowing freely like water..." (123). She does not really care about her future or what she really wants. Thus, she appears stronger and more independent than the wife. She is quite satisfied with her life. The wife, on the other hand, is accustomed to a scheduled life. She believes her family needs her, and vice versa. Everything should be planned for by the wife. Living in order and harmony is important for her. She is used to taking care of others, performing her role as an *ibu* without any complains.

When the wife is given a chance to take control of her own life, to make decisions on what to do with her marriage, she realizes that she is not ready to make any decision. Unlike the mistress, her strong attachment to her husband has made her dependent on him. Unlike the mistress who strongly knows what she wants in life, the wife is left confused as the story ends: "I scrutinized her face while imagining her presence in my life as my husband's woman. It was difficult to answer, I needed some time... Now I was the one who needs to make a decision, whether I accepted her presence in our life, or I forced her to leave, or I was the one who should leave. I didn't know!" (124).

The mistress is indeed jeopardizing the wife's position as an *ibu*. She does not have anything to lose, while the wife is left confused with several choices, where one of them seems fine. The mistress suggests to her to accept her husband the way he is, including his affair. She explicitly asks the wife to let them keep this affair (123). Nevertheless, the wife does not want to share her man with another woman. It means either she or the mistress

has to leave. Considering the mistress' unusual attitude toward love and relationship, the wife believes she will not get what she wants: kicking the mistress out of her life as soon as possible. She is particularly aware that the mistress is able to make her husband relax, something that she fails to do. She also smart, and kind of sweet (122-3). Most of all, the mistress knows what she wants in life, which is to lead her unscheduled life as it is, without any worries. On the other hand, the wife never reveals what she wants in life, except her refusal to lose her husband. The story begins and ends with her being confused. She simply does not know what to do.

Laila Gagarina and Her Willingness to Sacrifice

Laila is the first character being introduced in *Saman*. Laila's character seems unclear in the beginning of the story, until Shakuntala or Tala, another female character in *Saman*, gives an adequate eyewitness report on Laila's past and present life. The opening of the fiction gives an impression of youthfulness as in Laila's passionate language. She is portrayed as a young woman who is madly in love as seen in her diction and poetic language. She is so sentimental, and romantic in the sense that she considers herself flying like a migratory bird from Jakarta to New York, waiting for her lover. The novel opens with her personal journal dated May 28, 1996: "...I am a bird. Flying thousands of miles from a country that does not acknowledge any seasons, migrating to experience spring, in a place where I can smell the sweet fragrance of grass... (1)

Imagining herself as a migratory bird that is looking for a warmer climate to mate, Laila is indeed flying to New York to 'mate': she is meeting her lover, Sihar Situmorang, an oil analyst for Seismoclypse. He is flying to Odessa, Texas, yet he promised to stop by in New York only to meet Laila. The meeting point has been decided on, which is a particular spot in Central Park:

Dan hari itu danglah, setelah kami terbang beribu-ribu mil, seperti burung. Pagi ini saya duduk di pelataran itu, tempat orang dan satwa berbahagia. Orang-orang lari atau bersepeda. Tupai dari ranting-ranting meluncur ke tanah, sepearti tikus cerurut, ke dekat kaki kita dan mengendus-endus...

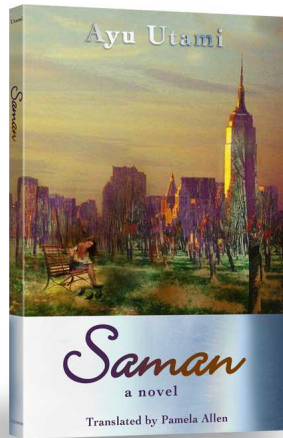


Fig. 4. Ayu Utami's novel, *Saman*, was published in 1998 and has been translated in English by Pamela Allen. <https://www.kitareview.com/buku/novel/saman>.

Cepatlah dating dan lihatlah, Sihar, mereka begitu halus dan hidup. Tak ada anak-anak kampung yang membawa katapel untuk mumbunuhnya sambil iseng-iseng, dan meninggalkan mayatnya di tepi jalan.... Barangkali inilah sebuah negeri di mana tak ada bahaya buat tupai di kota. Juga buat kita. Lihatlah, mereka beristirahat di balik daun-daun berbentuk telapak tangan (28-29).

[And the day has come, after we flew thousands of miles, like birds. This morning I'm sitting at its terrace, this is the place where people and animals are gay. People are jogging or cycling. Squirrels are surfing from the branch to branch, down to the ground. They're just like little mice, approaching our feet and sniffing around... Quick, come and see them, Sihar, they are so soft and alive. There aren't any little boys with the catapults to kill the simply for fun and leave their lifeless bodies by the street... Maybe this is the country where squirrels can live safely in a city. And so we can. Look, they are resting behind those palm-shaped leaves] (28-29).¹⁰

There is a sense of yearning for safety and protection for Laila. The way she reveals her astonishment to learn that squirrels and birds live safely and happily in a city is closely related to the feeling of safety and happiness that

she has been yearning for. She feels as free as the birds and the squirrels at the park, free from the danger of “little boys with catapults.”

Why does Laila have to fly that far only to meet Sihar? Jakarta turns out to be ‘too dangerous’ for clandestine ‘birds’ like them. There are not many ‘palm-shaped leaves’ to protect their affair from Sihar’s wife and Laila’s parents. Sihar Situmorang is a married man, a particularly sensitive type of husband who is always pursued by his guilt. However, he does not seem ready to give up Laila:

Namun, kami selalu bersipah dengan kecupan panjang, dan nafasnya makin keras. Setelah itu ia biasa berkata, “Rasanya menyesal karena telah menika. Tapi saya punya tanggungjawab. Apakah kita bersalah? Kadang saya merasa bersalah.”

Lalu cinta menjadi sesuatu yang salah. Karena hubungan ini tidak tercakup dalam konsep yang dinamakan perkawinan (26).

[However, we always parted with long kisses, and his breath was heavier and heavier. After that he used to say, “I feel like regretting that fact I’m already married. But I have a responsibility to keep. Are we wrong? Sometimes I feel so wrong.”

Thus, love has turned out to be something inappropriate. Because this relationship is not included within a concept called ‘marriage’] (26).

Laila believes that the rigid norms, traditions, and religious values have been limiting her relationship with Sihar. Feeling tired of Sihar’s guilt, Laila decides that they need to go to a place that does not recognize such norms and tradition. Knowing Sihar’s plan to go to Texas for business matters, Laila comes up with a snap decision: they should meet somewhere in the ‘land of freedom’:

Saya tidak tahu, kenapa saya bisa begitu cepat mengambil keputusan. Barangkali saya torebseksi pada dia yang bayangannya selalu dating dan jarang pergi. Barangkali saya letih dengan segala yang menghalangi hubyngan kami di Indonesia. Capek dengan nilai-nilai yang kadang terasa seperti terror. Saya ingin pergi dari semua itu, dan membiarkan hal-hal yang kami inginkan terjadi. Mendobrak yang selama ini menyekat hubungan saya dengan Sihar. Barangkali (28).

[I don't know why I was so quick to make such a decision. Maybe I'm obsessed with him, whose shadow always come and seldom leaves. Perhaps I'm tired of all that have hampered our relationships in Indonesia. Tired of all the values that feel like terror. I want to stay away from all those, and let all the things that we want to happen. Breaking the barriers that have separated my relationship with Sihar. Perhaps] (28).

Thus, flying like migratory birds that are yearning for a place to rest, she finds herself as free and alive as the birds and squirrels she sees in the park. There is no danger for the clandestine couple like her and Sihar: "Look, they are resting behind those palm-shaped leaves..." (28). The image of the palms connotes the sense of protection and safety from danger, from accusation of being immoral, from traditional rules and norms: "Let's rest from fear and guilt, or families at home, like a traveler who is allowed to stop fasting. Aren't you tired of becoming a husband? I am also tired of being afraid of my dad..." (29).

Who is Laila? Judging from her personal journal, Laila seems to be a woman who really knows what she wants in life. She believes in her decision that she is going to surrender her virginity to Sihar, the man whom she loves. Laila is a persistent woman. She knows norms, morality, and religious teaching have been hampering her love with Sihar. Meeting Sihar in Central Park, being far away from her parents and Sihar's wife, she thinks it will lessen their fear and guilt. However, Sihar never comes. Laila kept waiting the whole day in the park. He does not even call her at Tala's place, where Laila stays during her visit in New York.

However, several chapters away, a fuller description of Laila's characterization are clarified through Tala's first-person narrator. She lives in New York after she got a grant to take dance school. The reader might notice a foreshadowing of Laila's fuller characterization from Tala's description as she describes Laila's return from Central Park:

Namaku Shakuntala.

Aku melihat temanku Laila, lewat jendela. Ia muncul dari balik kabut debu yang ditiup angin jalanan. Ia menyembul dari bawah trotoar. Kepalanya lebih dahulu, lalu tubuhnya, terakhir kakinya, seperti bayi dila-

hirkan, dari stasiun metro bawah tanah. Ia melangkah lekas-lekas, tetapi daun-daun kering yang lelarian menyusulnya lalu menari berputar-putar... (116).

[My name is Shakuntala.

I saw my friend Laila from the window. She was coming out of the dust mist blown by the wind. She was emerging from the pedestrian walking underneath. Her head was first, then her body, and lastly her legs, like a baby being born, she was coming from the underground metro station. She was walking quite fast, yet those dried leaves behind her were as if trying to run after her, dancing and swirling around...] (116).

Before she comments on Laila and describes their friendship, Tala metaphorically portrays her like an image “coming out of the dusty mist” as if promising the reader a much clearer portrayal of Laila. The reader has only learnt about Laila from her “head,” her personal journal. Tala as a third person narrator is now about to introduce Laila as a whole being, “her head was first, and then her body, and lastly her legs, like a baby being born.” It is a foreshadowing of what she is about to tell the reader: the ‘reborn’ of Laila. Placing herself side by side with Laila, she describes Laila from her childhood to her present feeling and condition, and what Tala thinks about her dearest best friend.

Tala met Laila in an elementary school when she was just a new student, and a new girl in town. Tala was considered as a weird little girl since she used to believe that she was a fairy who lived in a castle surrounded by giants. No one liked or believed in her, except Laila: “All the other students were laughing and beginning to leave me one by one. Until there was only one girl who was listening to my stories up to the end. Whether she believed me, or just liked my story, I did not know. But she kept me company. Her name is Laila. She has been my best friend ever since...” (121).

Laila is indeed a loving and caring woman, and Tala considers her as a friend who always gives and does not expect anything in return. She has not changed. Tala perceives her as sweet and naive: “she remains petite, like an innocent little girl...” (150). Once Tala has a chance to read Laila’s diary, from which she concludes, “...she [Laila] has not had a kind of indecent obsession

toward any men... Her love... is mainly full of compliments and eagerness to give..." (150):

Dia telah jatu cinta beberapa kali, dan tak pernah menyakiti lelaki... setiap kali mencintai, Laila begitu penuh perhatian. Jika ahri ini si pria bilang kepingin sop konro, atau toge goring, kaset, atau kompakdisk lagu baru atau lama, atau pernik lain, dia akan berusaha mampir dan membelikannya. Ia tak pernah alpa member kado ulang tahun. Ia suka mengerim kartu, surat, dan kata-kata... (154-155).

[She has fallen in love several times, and she has never hurt any men... whenever she loves someone, she is full of attention. Of today her wanted konro soup, or fried toge, cassette of CD, either new or old one or any other stuff, she will try to find and get it. She never forgets to give birthday presents, she loves sending cards, letters, and words..."] (154-155).

Tala believes Laila is 'too kind': "You're too kind. I'm afraid you're too generous for man like him" (131). In terms of her on-and-off relationship with Sihar, whom she believes is only using Laila for his own sake, while her best friend is just a naive virgin. Tala even question herself why she is so concerned about Laila: "She has been the best friend I've ever had. That's why I'm kind of worried she will end up being hurt. Am I being too protective?" (131).

Tala's main concern about Laila, and her affair with Sihar, is based on her own interpretation that Laila is still confused about defining what kind of relationship she has with Sihar. Tala believes that there is no use pursuing such a relationship:

"Jadi, apa sebutulnya yang kamu cari? Perkawinan bukan, seks bukan."

"Aku cuma 'pingin sama-sama dia."

"Laila, kalau kamu kencan dengan dia di sini, kamu pasti akan begituan, lho! Kamu 'udah siap?"

"Enggak, enggak tahu..."

"Dia pasti minta. Kamu mau 'gimana?"

"Aku cuma 'pingin sama-sama dia. Aku capek menahan diri" (145).

["So, what are you looking for actually? Not marriage, not sex."

"I just want to be with him."

“Laila, if you date him here, you’ll almost definitely ‘do it’. Are you ready?”

“No, I don’t know...”

“He’ll ask for it. How are you going to deal with it?”

“I just want to be with him. I’m tired of restraining myself”] (145).

Laila is actually a woman who is seeking for companionship and love. It seems she does not want to admit it to Tala that she has planned to surrender her virginity to Sihar if they are able to meet in New York. Indeed, Laila personally does not know how to define her relationship with Sihar, but for her it does not matter to name it since name and label will only provide limitation and barrier among things and human beings: “People are talking about anything that grows... as if they know those plants better than those buds know about winter and sun... But animals don’t memorize trees by their names... they don’t call their offspring by their names. They know each other without language. Does beauty have to be defined?” (1-2).

There is a notion of resistance in the way she denies the concept of marriage and relationship. She wants to be free like the migratory birds that are migrating miles away only to mate. For Laila, it is not necessary to find justification through names and labels that define yet limit her and Sihar. However, her desires to reveal her individuality is not as strong as her concern as a daughter of a family. Although she is a Sudanese, she reveals a Javanese tinge of respect, honor, and dedication to her parents, and, as a woman, she believed she can achieve it through marriage. Thus, her dilemma is shown in her dreams: “I was dreaming, Sihar. We were in a party. But it turned out to be our wedding. There was a penghulu,¹¹ and also some curtains. It seemed to be a secret wedding. But then, far behind the curtains, I saw my father approaching us. Yes, he was my father, walking in a hurry...” (31).

Laila is torn between her desire as a female individual, which is to have Sihar forever in her life, and her desire to fulfill her parents’ expectations, which is to get married and have a family of her own. Her desire to become an ibu is as strong as her love for Sihar. She knows it is difficult, almost impossible to marry him. He’s married, and he is a Batak, another ethnic group whose members are mainly Christians. Laila is a Sudanese, and is

obviously a Moslem. Thus, her relationship with Sihar is indeed something unpleasant for her parents. Her fear of the figure of her father has leaked into her dreams. Laila is just like any other women who yearn for settlement in marriage as well as pay respect to their parents, as Tala says: "Laila is in quest of finding 'Mr. Right' with whom she can begin a family and make her parents happy. Both of them are a devotion that invites God's rewards. How lovely..." (127).

Nevertheless, Laila also realizes that it is impossible to have Sahir in her life. She also faces an inner conflict, the clash of desire, and plenty of unfulfilled hopes and expectations. Laila is obviously aware of all the challenges she has to face:

Hubungan kami tentu bukan hal yang indah bagi orang-orang terdekat kami. Istri dan anaknya. Orang tua saya. Ia menelepon dengan nama samara yang berganti-ganti (Ayah selalu ingin bertemu dengan laki-laki yang dia anggap sering mencari saya). Saya menelepon hanya ke kantornya (di rumah istrinya yang sering mengangkat). Tak ada surat menyurat, karena itu hanya akan meninggalkan jejak bagi orang lain... Kami bertemu, makan atau minum, menonton di tempat yang jauh dari istrinya atau keluargaku, lalu ciuman di dalam mobil. Sepanjang jalan. Tapi kami juga sering batal berkencan, sebab tiba-tiba istrinya minta diantar berbelanja, atau anaknya mengambil rapor sekolah. Dan sayah harus menunggu. Sebab saya yang datang belakangan (26).

[Our relationship is obviously not a pleasant one for those who were close to us. His wife and his daughter. My parents. He used to call me using different aliases (My father always wanted to meet the men who regularly looked for me). I only called him at his office (his wife was the one who often received phone calls at home). No correspondence, since it would only leave some track to others... We met, ate or drank, watched movies in remote areas, far from his wife and my family, and then we kissed in the car. All the way. But we often cancelled our date because his wife suddenly asked him to accompany her for shopping, or he had to take his daughter's school report. And I had to wait. Because I was the later, she came first] (26).

Laila has positioned herself lower than Sihar's wife since she came into Sihar's life after he got married. Her awareness of the vertical relation with Sihar's wife is based on her understanding that she will never be able to

compete with her. Laila does not have the right to complain because she does not have any legitimating relationship with him. Society does not honor her relationship with Sihar. She only has love.

Laila shares the desire of Herlina, Tia, and Diani in “Gadis-gadis Pekerja” (“Working Girls”) who are beginning to realize the need to settle down. Laila has a promising career. She and a friend of her own a small production house dealing with advertisement of company profiles. Nevertheless, like Herlina, Tia, and Diani, she is not yet satisfied with her life. The need to achieve the ultimate completion as an ibu as unbearable, as Laila reveals in her journal: “...I’m already thirty years old... here we are in New York. Thousands of miles away from Jakarta. No parents, no wives. No sins. Except to God, maybe. But we can get married for a while, and then just split. There is something to lament for...” (30).

It is clear that Laila does not expect anything from Sihar, except love and companionship. Is it possible? She only wants to have him for a while, “and then just split.” She is willing to fly thousands of miles, (and leaving plenty of her projects behind in Jakarta, as Tala reveals) only to see Sihar and herself free from their guilt from her parents and his wife: “No parents, no wives. No sins. Except to God, maybe”. She seems to be reminding herself that she is already thirty years old, and she is in New York. Thus, she is old enough to do whatever she wants to do, and she has the courage to face the consequences, or perhaps she pretends not to see the consequences. Laila is trying to run away from these impossibilities, and reality. However, she fails. Sihar remains a man who is confined within an institution called ‘marriage’, and he has taken his wife with him during his trip to the USA, as Tala informs Laila later on.

Tala is trying to see Laila’s problem in terms of choosing the right man for her. She never blames Laila for falling for Sihar. Love is strange indeed. Yet, when love is complicated with the need to search for the most suitable man as a future husband, a woman might end up confused between cultural expectations and her individual need:

Tapi mencari suami memang seperti melihat-lihat toko perabot setelah meja makan yang pas buat ruangan dan keuangan. Kita datang dengan sejumlah

syarat geometri dan bujet. Sedangkan kekasih muncul seperti sebuah lukisan yang tiba-tiba membuat kita jatuh hati. Kita ingin mendapatkannya, dan mengubah seluruh desain kamar agar turut padanya. Laila selalu jatuh cinta pada lukisan, bukan pada meja makan. Ketika remaja ia tertarik pada seorang pemuda Katolik. Laki-laki itu menjadi pastor dan pergi mengembara. Sepuluh tahun temanku tidak bisa melupakannya, ia kirim puisi-puisi, padahal orang itu mungkin sedang asyik menggembalakan domba-dombanya. Kini, ia memulai cerita dengan pria beristri. Kamu juga tidak akan bisa menikah dengannya, kami menasihati. Tapi aku cinta, katanya. Ya sudah.

Tak pernah ada yang salah dengan cinta. Ia mengisi sesuatu yang tidak kosong (127-8).

[However, searching for a husband is like shopping at a furniture shop to find a matching dining table that suits our room and money. We come with all the geometric criteria and the budget. Then our lover simply pops in like a painting that suddenly steals our heart. We desperately fancy it, and are willing to change the whole designs of the room in order to suit the painting. Laila always falls in love with a painting and not with a dining table. Once she was attracted to a young Catholic man when she was a teenager. The man became a priest and went travelling. For ten years she was not able to let him go, sending him poems meanwhile the priest may have been joyfully shepherding his congregation. Now she begins a new story with a married man. You can never marry him, we advised her. But I love him, she says. Well, then.

There is nothing wrong with love. Love fills something that is not empty] (127-128).

Tala is analyzing Laila's clash of desire between the social and cultural expectation and her personal wish. The metaphors of geometric measurement and the budget for furniture shopping implies the norms, moral issues, religious obligation, as well as social and cultural expectation that have been limiting Laila to get the 'painting'. Sihar is not the man for her, yet Laila is trying to change the whole 'designs' to make him suitable. She has left Jakarta for New York. She finds the city with its Central Park a much freer and safer place, without any restrictions. However, the 'painting' fails to show up. Tala deeply understands Laila's bitter disappointment: "...she is lying and withering like a banana tree in a box that I ordered via postal service, so pale

since it needs sunlight... It has been late at night and Sihar does not even call her... 'I want to smoke,' she says" (155).

Why is Laila still hoping to have Sihar? Despite of her nature of being loyal and loving, she also knows something that Tala is not aware of. Sihar is tormented due to the fact that he will never have a child of his own, particularly a son:

Seorang laki-laki seperti dia mestinya menikah dengan perawan yang manis, tetapi dia mengawini seorang janda beranak satu, anak perempuan. Suatu hari, di sebuah restoran, ketika kami masih sering bertemu, dia seperti mengeluh kepada saya. Keluarga besar Batak mengharapkan anak laki-laki, katanya. Saya tahu. "Kamu akan menunggu sampai muncul bayi lelaki?" ia menggeleng. "Istriku, agaknya, tidak bisa hamil lagi." Lalu dia bercerita tentang semacam kista yang mengganggu di kedua indung telur istrinya. Saya cuma menjawab: Oh. (Jadi dia tak akan punya keturunan) (25).

[A man like him should have married a sweet virgin, yet he marries a widow with a child, a daughter. One day in a restaurant, when we still met regularly, he was like complaining to me that the Batak extended families were expecting a son from his marriage. I knew. "So you're going to wait until you have a baby boy?" he shook his head. "My wife, apparently, can never have a child." Then he told me about a kind of tumor that spoiled her two ovaries. I simply answered: Oh. (So he won't have any children)] (25).

Laila laments the fact that a man like Sihar marries a widow with one daughter. To make matters worse, there is a tumor in her ovaries, thus she is unable to give Sihar a child of their own. It is interesting to see how a woman like Laila is able to look down on another woman, simply because she is a widow. She seems to be saying that the widow is so lucky to have Sihar, who "should have married a sweet virgin" like her. She further sees a little chance for her to pursue her relationship with Sihar: "So he won't have any children." She believes she could have been a good wife and a mother for him, a complete and dedicated ibu.

Nevertheless, before she decides to meet Sihar in New York, Laila is basically a woman who is afraid of breaking the norms and religious teaching. She is scared of committing sinful deeds. The following quotation is based

on Laila's journal on her supposed-to-be first sexual intercourse with Sihar, yet it did not happen because Laila is a virgin:

Kami berada di kamar hotel. Saya hampir-hampir gemetaran karena malu dan berdebar. Saya belum pernah sekamar dengan seorang laki-laki sebelumnya... saya bersembunyi di kamar mandi ketika pelayan masuk membawa pesanan. Sebab saya ini orang yang berdosa.

Lalu kami berbaring di ranjang yang tudungnya pun belum disibakkan, sebab kami memang tak hendak tidur siang. ... Dia katakana, apakah saya siap. Saya jawab, tolong, saya masih perawan. (Adaka cara lain.) Dia katakan, bibir saya indah. Ciumlah. Ciumlah di sini. Saya menjawab tanpa kata-kata. Tapi saya telah berdosa. Meskipun masih perawan (4).

[In a hotel room, I was almost shaking since I was so shy and my heart was beating so fast. I had never been alone in a same room with a man before... I was hiding in the bathroom when the steward came with our order. Because I was a sinful one.

Then we were lying in the bed whose cover had not been removed, anyway, we were not about to take a nap. ... he asked me if I was ready. I told him, please, I was still a virgin. (Is there any other way.) he told me that I have beautiful lips. Kiss me. Kiss me here. I answered without any words. But I had already been sinful. Although I was still a virgin] (4).

That day turns out to be the anticlimax of their relationship. Sihar decided not to make love with Laila. He feels as if he were polluting her, exploiting a woman without any future promises. On their way back, he tells her that they should not see each other again. He is already married. Yet, Sihar sometimes calls her, asking her out for lunch or, dinner if his wife is out of town. Then, he will ask Laila if they can have breakfast together, if they have dinner the night before. Laila replies that she lives with her parents, and they will interrogate her if she does not come home: "Although you are already mature woman and has travelled a lot?" he asked me... 'Anyway, you're still a virgin' (5).

They have never met each other since then. There are several phone calls, planning for lunch or a date, but none of them fulfilled. Until Laila learns about Sihar's plan to go to Texas, she decides to meet him again, asking him to stop by New York on his way to Odessa, Texas. This time she

believes if she's going to surrender her virginity. She is not afraid anymore. Since the 'hotel incident', she has not seen him for 424 days. She is tired of restraining herself, following the norms, morality, and religious teaching that has been placed mainly on her shoulders: "Because I am not married, so I'm not supposed to 'do it'. Although I miss him so much. But who is going to bear this feeling between us? In the end I am the one who should endure it..." (6). Thus, Laila is tired. She is tired of being a sweet naive woman. She is tired of being a 30-year-old virgin. If the fact that her being virgin is what makes Sihar 'afraid' to meet her, Laila is about to let it go, and she has chosen Sihar to be her first: "But this time I'm going to tell him that I'm ready... perhaps we're going to do it here, in this park... then, we'll do it again in the hotel room... after that, honey, we will fall asleep. And when we wake up, we're so happy. Because we are not sinful. Although I'm no longer a virgin" (30).

Nevertheless, she still has not been sure about her own decision to make love with Sihar. Waiting for his phone call, which turns out to be useless, in Tala's apartment, her best friend asks her again if she is really sure about it, Laila simply replies, "I don't know. What do you think?" (127). The high-spirited feeling she had in the morning at the Central Park while watching the cute squirrels and birds has subsided. She thought earlier, "There are no parents, no wives. No unethical judges, no police. People, especially tourists, might act like poultry: having sex upon being hooked. After that, there's nothing to lament for. There is no sin..." (2-3). Now, being lovelorn, she is not sure what she really wants, except, "I want to smoke" (155).

Laila Gagarina has been brought up in the society that overvalues women's dedication and loyalty toward their families and communities. The burden of minding the social norms and cultural expectation has hunted her worse than her fear to God. She feels sinful toward her parents. She runs away from the parents, for Sihar's wife, from the traditional norms and moral teaching. In New York, she always assures herself that there is no sin, "except to God, perhaps." In New York, she can be herself since there is no one who will scold her for what she is about to do with her lover. New York is not Jakarta. For Laila, the city acknowledges clandestine lovers like her

and Sihar. She is now far from her father. There is a sense of fear toward her father since he was an important figure in her life. She is so scared of him, of making him disappointed, as seen in her dream. She refuses to spend the night with Sihar, not because she does not want to commit adultery, not because Sihar is a married man, but simply because “I still live with my parents.”

Although she is not Javanese, as an Indonesian woman she bears the notion of perpetuating good *ibu*: Laila has an image to perpetuate, the image of a good, innocent daughter, who is about to make her parents happy as soon as she finds the right man with whom she can begin her own family. She has a good job, and she has good friends who are always there for her. She also has the willingness to give without expecting anything in return. As a woman, she has the urge to become *ibu*. She yearns to settle down and begin a family, as Tala also notices from her best friend. Laila’s loyalty and dedication to her family, social norms, and cultural mandate have led her to face a great dilemma between pursuing her own desire and minding the cultural expectation.

However, Laila reveals an attempt to solve her dilemma. She has decided to pursue her personal desire, although it seems like an effort to run away from the reality that has restricted her. Under the influence of patriarchal society, Sihar and Laila perceive virginity as equal to sacredness and purity. Laila also finds herself confused about finding herself as a virgin, yet she has kissed a married man, which she considers as a sinful act. When she decides to surrender her virginity, as an attempt to solve her dilemma, Laila actually remains fearful toward the traditional norms and moral issues, as seen in the way she has to fly far enough from her parents only to make love with Sihar. She is trying to avoid chaos in her family and Sihar’s since she knows what she and Sihar might have threatened the harmony of the two families. She has an image to perpetuate, an image of a good woman, who seems to be obedient, submissive, and naive. Her decision to fly thousands of miles is due to the fact she does not want to disturb the harmony and unity of the families. Therefore, Laila has indeed perpetuated the notion of becoming *ibu*.

Yasmin Moningkar and Her Willingness to Please Others

Unlike Laila, the reader learns about Yasmin first of all from Tala's comments about her. The 'real' Yasmin is going to be revealed in the last chapter of the novel, which is about Yasmin and Saman's email correspondence between Jakarta and New York. Unlike Laila, the reader might find a lot of similarities between her troubled feeling portrayed in her journal and diaries. And Tala's personal analysis of her best friend. Trying to understand Yasmin, Tala has considered her as a pious and dedicated wife. She has never thought that her seemingly loyal friend will jeopardize her marriage because of her to desire to have a baby. Tala realizes that Laila and Yasmin have gone to South Sumatra with Sihar Situmorang and Saman (or Athanasius Wasingggen to uncover an accident that has killed one of Sihar's friends in the oil rig where he works: "I know they are all involved in a romantic adventure in Perabumulih: Laila, Sihar, Yasmin, and Wisanggeni, the man who then became a priest" (132). Nevertheless, Tala fails to perceive that, like Laila to Sihar, Yasmin is attracted to Saman.

Tala has known Yasmin since the four of them, Yasmin, Laila, Cok, and she, went to the same elementary school: "We have been good friends since we were six graders of elementary school. I was the tallest of the all. Laila was the smallest. Yasmin had the best grades in her report card. Cok was the most flirtatious..." (147). They soon became conspiratorial: protecting and covering each other's faults, and defining who their biggest enemy was.

Once the four of them locked themselves in Yasmin's bedroom, sat in a circle, and then made a list of their enemies. Yasmin disagreed with Tala, who believed that parents were the enemies. Yasmin was also about to fight with her only defend her argument that God had requested children to respect and honor their parents (148). Yasmin, a pious Catholic, also disagreed with Laila's crush toward Wisanggeni, who used to be an assigned seminarian student in the junior high school to teach social awareness. Nevertheless, since she had to agree to conspire with her best friends, Yasmin was willing to cover for Laila when she desperately missed Wisanggeni.

Thus, Tala perceive Yasmin as simply a bookworm, a smart girl, who loves spending her time with school works and private lessons: "Since she

was a kid, her parents have shaped her to spend her time efficiently. Her mother compelled her to take ballet class, piano and swimming lessons, and English since she was second grader, and she turned out to be multi-talented..." (146). Yasmin is also like Laila, who seems so naive in dealing with sexuality. That is why Tala never shares her sexual experience with Yasmin nor Laila, but she tells Cok everything since the two of them share the same interest in sexuality. When Cok's parents found a condom in her school bag, and then move her from her senior high school in Jakarta to Ubud, Bali, Yasmin and Laila were tremendously shocked upon knowing that their Cok was no longer a virgin: "... their faces... were like a piece of white cloth taken out from the washing machine, and then smacked with a hot iron. Crumpled, and then there was a huge, smoky hole in the middle. It seems I could see astonishment and relentlessness steaming from their flabbergasted mouths..." (152).

After senior high school, Yasmin continued to excel in school. She entered law school without taking the entrance test because she was so smart. Her campus in Depok was quite far from her house, thus her rich parents bought her a house around her campus. Then, Tala begins to notice Yasmin's changing attitude: "Yasmin who used to be pious had been seeing someone... Saturdays and Sundays she went back to her family in Simpruk, Mondays and Fridays she and her boyfriend lustfully explore each other's bodies..." (153). Her boyfriend, Lukas, finally left his lodging house, "which smelt like chicken", and stayed with Yasmin. One day, Yasmin shyly admitted to her friends that she had slept with Lukas: "But we're about to get married," she quickly added, since she felt like committed adultery..." (153).

Like Laila, Yasmin might also feel the sense of freedom beyond the reach of her parents. Whenever she stays with them, she remains a child who should maintain the good image of her family. The expectations of her parents and her awareness as the daughter of a small family have made her willing to do anything to satisfy them. Nevertheless, her dedication turns out to be a mere denial after she parts with parents. As Tala has perceived, Yasmin is no more a devout and pious girl. There is no slight sense of regret when she confesses to her friends that she is not a virgin anymore. Yasmin is

mainly embarrassed to realize that now her friends know she has committed adultery. For the sake of her parents, she keeps her image of a sweet dedicated child. She wants to keep her parents from being embarrassed. Thus, obviously social and cultural expectations have forced her to be a hypocrite.

Nevertheless, Yasmin has not completely changed in the eyes of Tala. When Laila tells them that she is seeing Sihar, she soon becomes the topic of a juicy discussion among the three of them, and Tala notices that Yasmin still does not perceive men and male sexuality negatively:

Sekarang dia [Laila] pacaran dengan suami orang. Laki-laki yang biasa dengan hubungan seks. Aku dan Cok bertaruh melawan Yasmin bahwa pria ini tak akan tahan ciuman terus-terusan. Taruhan kami adalah membeli kondom berbintil-bintil seperti buah pare di apotek Sogo saat pengunjung sedang ramai. Harus ketika banyak orang, biar malu. Yasmin percaya bahwa pria bisa mencintai tanpa seks. Tentu saja, kujawab, tapi pada anak atau anjing sendiri. Dan pasti buka pria ini, sebab dia tak punya anak ataupun anjing sendiri. Betul juga, lelaki itu akhirnya membawa temanku ke sebuah motel (128-129).

[Now she [Laila] is seeing a married man. A man who is accustomed to having sex. Cok and I were betting against Yasmin that this man would soon go beyond mere kisses. The loser should buy a pimply condom that looked like a bitter gourd, at Sogo drug store, when it was packed with customers. It had to be during rush hour, so it would be extremely embarrassing. Yasmin believes that a man could love someone without sex. Of course, I replied, but only with his kids or his dog. And definitely not this man since he does not have any kids of his own, or any dogs. And I was right; he finally took my friend to a motel] (128-129).

Yasmin believes that a man can love without any sexual attraction, something which Tala considers as irrational. Yasmin's opinion will be further discussed in the analysis of her relationship with Saman. Nevertheless, Tala, who can simply analyze Yasmin's outward character traits, still thinks that Yasmin is naive.

Yasmin finally marries Lukas just like she told her friends. Although she is Menadonese, she is willing to marry Lukas, a Javanese, in Javanese ritual, which is truly complicated and full of symbolism. Tala notices that Yasmin

is even willing to wash Lukas' feet as a symbol of loyalty and dedication of a wife to her husband. It is one of the rituals in Javanese marriage, something that definitely does not exist in Menadonese ritual of marriage. When Tala rebukes her, she scolds her with: "Ah, Jesus also washed the feet of his disciples. Anyway, you are a Javanese yourself!" (154).

For Tala, Yasmin is definitely confused between religious teaching of serving others and Javanese tradition of expecting women to be submissive to their husbands. As a Javanese woman, she truly knows what the ritual means, and she rejects the notion of submissiveness and extreme loyalty that are expected from Javanese wives. However, Tala is quite amazed to see how loyal Yasmin is to Lukas: "I have never heard Yasmin having any relationship with other man, except with her husband. They have been married for five years after going steady for eight years. Cok and I have always wondering how she could handle it..." (147).

As an attempt to understand Yasmin, Tala often compares her with Cok, who acts like a foil character to Yasmin. The only similarity is both came from wealthy families. After Yasmin finished her law school, she works in her father's law office, while Cok manages her parents' hotels. Tala describes Cok as cheerful and easy going: "Life is sso easy with her; nothing requires deep meditation or serious thinking. There isn't any hatred that needs to be preserved, like my vengeance toward my father... love for her isn't everlasting..." (146). upon knowing that Laila is going to New York and meet Tala, Cok soon decides to follow, taking her new lover with her, as she cheerfully tells Tala: "Laila can see someone. Well, why can't I?" She simply wants to have fun with him in New York, and also meet her friends. Meanwhile, Yasmin being efficient as always, she also wants to join her three friends, while doing something for the Human Rights Watch office in New York. And she is as loyal and pious as before: "Laila and Cok are seeing someone. How about you?' I asked her. 'Not me!' she scolded me. That's all..." (147). Loves seems to be something eternal. It has been only one man in his entire life: her husband, Lukas. Unlike Cok who has been hurting plenty of men, Yasmin remains loyal to Lukas.

Is Yasmin truly a dedicated and loyal wife? The last chapter of the novel has revealed her hidden secret. When Yasmin asks Saman if she could read his diary, he says yes because he feels that he does not have any secrets from her anymore. The following quotation from Saman's diary reveals that Yasmin has seduced Saman to go to bed with her:

22 April- ...Gemetar, selesai sebelum mulai, seperti tak sempat mengerti apa yang baru saja terjadi. Tapi ia tak peduli, ia menggandengku melakukannya. Ketika usai aku menjadi begitu malu. Namun ada perasaan lega yang luar biasa sehingga aku terlelap.

Terjaga dini hari atau tengah malam karena ada yang menggigitku dekat ketiakku. Kulihat tangannya masturbasi. Ia naik ke atasku setelah mencapainya.

23 April-Terbangun dengan galau. Sejak kabur dari paroki, aku tak pernah berpikir betul-betul meninggalkan kaulku. Kini tubuhku penuh pagutan. Tak tahu bagaimana Yasmin tertarik padaku yang kurus dan dekil? Ia begitu cantik dan bersih (177).

[April 22- ...Shaking, I was done before I even started, as if unaware of what just happened. But she didn't care; she led me into the room. I didn't know how I finally did it. I felt so embarrassed after that. Yet, there was a sense of tremendous relief so I felt asleep.

I was alerted around midnight because I felt something biting me, near my armpit. I saw her masturbating. She climbed on top of me after she had it. I realized that I didn't know how to satisfy her.

April 23- Awaken, and confused. Since I ran away from the parish I never have thought of leaving my perpetual vow. Now my body is full of love bites. Don't know why Yasmin is attracted to me, so skinny and dirty. She is so beautiful and clean] (177).

Love is strange indeed. Prior to the diary entry, which Yasmin reads, there has not been any fictional evidence that might lead to their affair. Saman himself does not know why Yasmin decides to sleep with him that night: a male virgin, a former priest. Yasmin is indeed surprised to learn that Saman has never seriously thought of leaving his life as a priest completely. He has not even broken his perpetual vow. Suddenly she feels sinful, as seen in her email to Saman:

JAKARTA, 13 MEI 1994

Saman,

Forgive me. Please. Setelah kamu keluar dari diosesan, setelah kamu mengganti nama dan mengubah penampilan, setelah sering kamu meragukan keadilan Tuhan, bahkan keberadaan Tuhan, aku tidak menyangka kalau kamu masih punya keinginan kembali menjadi pastor. Aku tidak tahu bagaimana harus meminta maaf sampai-sampai dua hari ini aku tak berani membalas suratmu. Aku menyesal sekali. Apakah kamu mengangapan aku Hawa yang menggoda Adam? (110)

[JAKARTA, 13 MAY 1994

Saman,

Forgive me. Please. After you left the diocese, after you changed your name and your looks, after you often doubted God's justice, and even his existence, I had never thought that you still have the urge to become a priest again. I don't know how to ask for an apology, I couldn't even reply your mail for the last two days. I'm so sorry. Do you think I am like Eve, who seduced Adam?] (110)

After she learns that Saman has never seriously left his perpetual vow, Yasmin feels guilty. The way she compares herself to Eve is interesting. Unlike Tala, Yasmin has always thought that, men can love women without any sexual tendencies. She has been raised with a strong Catholic background. Except with Lukas, she has never had any relationship with any men before, and now she has Saman. Saman is a virgin, a former priest who has not left his vow. Meanwhile, she is a married woman, and she has enough sexual experience. Thus, she begins to perceive herself as a seductive Eve. Eve has been considered as a seductress whose sin has tainted all women. Women have been considered as dangerous ever since because they are able to use their sexuality to tempt men to their downfall.

Since the figure of Eve is mostly opposed to the chaste, pious, and loving Virgin Mary, the dichotomy has left no middle ground between them. A woman can be angelic or evil, and she can never be in between. A woman, who commits sexual intercourse outside of her marriage, can never be considered as a 'good' woman. Thus, these two extremes have left Yasmin no

other choice except to identify herself with Eve. She seems deeply regretful of her act, she asks Saman several times whether she is sinful or not.

However, Saman has never blamed Yasmin for what she has done. Saman even perceives it as his responsibility too. He refuses to let Yasmin bear her sinful feeling alone. He felt a sense of relief that night when they made love, and he cannot deny it. He refuses to accept Yasmin's reference to Eve, which means she has tainted the pious Saman with her sexuality: "Have you ever realized that the [Eve] story has been inspiring all those unfair decisions for women for centuries? We have lived in fear toward sex, yet men refuse to be blamed, thus we throw all the sins to the women..." (183).

As seen in Yasmin's emails to Saman, there is an implicit motive for Yasmin to make love with him. Yasmin seems to want children. She has been married for five years but she does not have any children. One of her emails to Samaan is a biblical story about Ruth. She describes the way Ruth has dedicated her life to her mother-in-law, Naomi, who has lost her husband and her two sons in a foreign land. Naomi returns to Bethlehem in grief. She asks her friends to call her Mara because God has dealt bitterly with her. She left Bethlehem with 'full' and now she returns with 'empty'. As this point Yasmin declares that Naomi forgets: she has Ruth with her. Throughout the story Ruth has never gotten any praises from Naomi, although she works so hard to support Naomi. Until Boaz, Naomi's distant relative, is willing to take her as his wife, and from their marriage Naomi gets a grandson, Ruth is considered by the community as more valuable than seven sons.

Comparing Yasmin's version of Ruth to the original one in the Bible, there is an interesting discrepancy. Boaz, as the nearest kinsman of Naomi's husband, is chosen by Naomi to redeem the land of her husband, which, according to the law, should also take Ruth as his wife as well. The Biblical version describes that after Boaz's encounter with Ruth in the threshing floor, he promises Ruth to settle the matter, yet he believes that there is another kinsman who is closer to Naomi's husband than he is, thus he also has the obligation to redeem the land. Thus, Boaz is thinking of asking him first, and if he refuses, Boaz will take over the land. It turns out that the other kinsman refuses because if he takes Naomi's land and has Ruth as his wife,

it means Ruth will bear a child under the name of his first husband, Naomi's son: "... the day you buy the field of the hand of Naomi, you must buy it also Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth 4:5). It means the kinsman's child will belong to the bloodline of Naomi's family, and not his. Therefore, Boaz is finally the one who takes over the land, marries Ruth, and give Naomi a grandson, Obed, who is the father of Jesse, and Jesse begets David. Meanwhile, Yasmin's version of the Ruth story portrays Boaz and Ruth in the threshing floor differently:

Lelaki itu terbangun tengah malam, dan mendapati wajah perempuan pada pahanya.

"Siapakah engkau?"

"Aku Ruth, hambamu. Tuanku, kembangkanlah sayapmu untuk melindungi aku."

(Dan Boaz mengembangkan ujung jubahnya lalu menyelimuti Ruth. Dan perempuan itu mengangkat kainnya sehingga lelaki itu bisa memasukinya. Mereka berciuman seribu kali dan berdekapan di atas jerami.) ...

Demikian Ruth telah menghampiri Boaz dan lelaki itu menebus dia dari kesusahan dan kemandulan. Sebab Boaz menikahinya, dan ia melahirkan anak untuk meneruskan bagi Naomi (186-187).

[The man woke up in the middle of the night and he found the face of that woman on his thighs.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Ruth, your handmaid. My master, spread your garment over me to protect me."

(And Boaz spread his garment to protect her. And that woman raised her garment so he could penetrate her. They were kissing for a thousand times and hugging each other laying on the straws.) . . .

Thus, Ruth had gone in unto Boaz and that man had redeemed her from her misery and her bareness. Because Boaz married her and she gave birth to a grandson to Naomi] (186-187).

There is no existence of the nearest kinsman. Boaz finds Ruth attractive and without further details they simply make love in the threshing floor. The line stating "thus, Ruth went in unto Boaz and the man saved her from her misery and infertility. Because Boaz took her, and she was his wife, and

she bore a son to Naomi...” becomes a key line to see Yasmin’s motive of ‘going un unto’ Saman, hoping that he will ‘save her from her misery and infertility.’ Yasmin has changed some of the crucial details from the original version that she considers not suitable to what has happened between her and Saman. Omitting the fact that Boaz is actually not the nearest relative of Naomi who has the right to redeem her land is equal to her refusal to admit that Saman is actually not supposed to be responsible to ‘redeem’ her desire to have a child of her own. The way she portrays Ruth as the one who ‘goes in unto’ Boaz is exactly what Yasmin did to Saman. Her attempt to retell the story of Ruth becomes an allegory of her hidden desire to be redeemed by Saman. She allegorically expects Saman to be her Boaz, who is willing to fulfill her desire to bear children.

Responding to Yasmin’s hidden request, Saman replies with another allegory from a Biblical story: Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38: 1-30). Basically, his purpose of quoting this particular story is he wants to say that people in general value their own offspring, and refuse to simply regenerate for the sake of perpetuating another bloodline. Judah’s eldest son, Er, dies, thus, Judah asks his second child, Onan, to take Er’s wife, Tamar, so the offspring of his brother is granted. However, Onan refuses to rise up children for his brother. Thus, whenever he sleeps with Tamar, he spills his sperm on the ground. It was considered sinful by God, so he kills Onan. Judah still has a son, Shelah, but he asks Tamar to wait until he is older before Judah gives him to her. He sends Tamar back to her parents’ house. However, Judah is afraid that Shelah, his one and only son left, will end up like his brothers. Thus, he keeps Tamar waiting. One day Tamar learns that Judah is going to Timnath. She takes her widow’s gown off, covers herself with a veil, and sits in an open place, which is on the way to Timnath. Tamar soon realizes that his father-in-law has broken his promise: she sees Shelah as a grown man, yet he is not given to her. But Judah sees her. Thinking she is a harlot since she covers her face, he thinks of sleeping with her. When Tamar asks him what he will give her in return, he promises to send her a young sheep. But Tamar demands a pledge, and she receives Judah’s signet, bracelet, and the staff. The incident has left Tamar conceiving Judah’s child. Judah sends a

friend to send a young sheep to Tamar, but he fails to find her. After three months, people have been telling Judah that her daughter-in-law became a harlot, and now she is pregnant. Judah asks them to bring her to him and burn her. Yet Tamar was able to show him his signet, bracelet, and staff which make him realize that it was his fault for not giving Shelah to Tamar. She gives birth to twins, Pharez and Zarah.

From the story, Saman is trying to say how precious children are. Children are awaited with pleasure and mothers-to-be are highly valued. Saman also implicitly says that sex shall be done for the sake of procreation. Yasmin tells him that she wants to get pregnant, asking if she is allowed to pursue it through a test tube baby. Then, Yasmin openly asks him: "but honestly... I want a baby from your 'tube'. Am I sinful?" (190). She asks Saman whether he can be her 'Boaz', redeeming her from her bareness, and Saman replies:

NEW YORK, 4 JUNI 1994

Yasmin

(Aku memang bimbang tentang Tuhan. Dan aku tak bisa menceritakan keraguanku pada bapakku. Aku satu-satunya anaknya.)

Kamu selalu bicara tentang dosa. Tentu saja kita berdosa, setidaknya pada Lukas. Yang menghibur adalah bahwa yang kita lakukan ini dosa yang indah, yang imajinatif. Setidaknya bagi aku, dan kamu. Seandainya pun prokreasi adalah pengorbanan yang menyakitkan, aku tetap ingin memberimu anak jika kamu memintanya. Tapi tentu saja itu semua pengandaian yang mustahil. Sebab kita tahu, seks buka suatu pengorbanan, apalagi yang menyengsarakan. Seks adalah sesuatu yang membingungkan ... (190-191).

[NEW YORK, 4 JUNE 1994

Yasmin

(I am quite hesitant toward God. And I cannot share my doubt to my father. I am his only child.)

You always talk about sin. Of course, we are sinful, at least to Lukas. But it is nice to feel that what we had is a sweet sin, which is imaginative. At least for me, and you. Even if procreation is a bitter sacrifice, I still want to give you a child if you want it. But of course, all of these are impossible assumptions. Because we know that sex is not a matter of sacrifice, or even misery. Sex is confusing. ...] (190-191).

It is obvious that both Saman and Yasmin are confused about themselves. Yasmin is busy with her desire to have a baby, while Saman is still in the process of understanding his sexuality. Saman is a Javanese deeply understands Yasmin's desire to have a child of her own. He remembers his own Bapak ('father'), whom he believes must be disappointed to know that his only son decided to become a priest, as seen in his letter to his father: "I know Bapak is sad because I am your only child. My decision to become a priest has made you unable to continue your name. I have forced Bapak to bear your loneliness since cute grandchildren will never come into your life, those little kids who could have accompanied your retirement..." (159-60). Therefore, when he begins to doubt the authority of God and leaves the diocese, he does not have a heart to share his doubt with him. He believes his father had sacrificed his desire to see his only son 'landed,' having a family of his own, and thus perpetuating the Javanese hierarchal tradition of preserving the 'order of Life'.

However, Saman also believes that he can never be Yasmin's 'Boaz.' It will not settle the problem. Meanwhile, Yasmin's desire to have a baby has made her more attracted to Saman. She might have begun her affair as an attempt to get pregnant, but it seems now that she was infatuated with him. Both are also confused in terms of defining whether or not what they are doing is considered as a sinful act. Saman perceived it as a sin, obviously a sinful act toward Lukas. What they are doing obviously putting Yasmin's marriage in jeopardy. The harmonious vertical relationship between Lukas and Yasmin as husband and wife is destroyed with the presence of Saman. However, Yasmin does not attempt to tell Lukas the truth about her affair with Saman: "I got aloerotism, I was making love with Lukas but I had you in my mind. He kept on asking me why I began to ask him to turn the light off. Because I was imagining your face, your body..." (195).

Yasmin's affair with Saman has made her feel obsessed with him. Her main concern now is Saman, and not her husband Lukas. She becomes an object related to Saman. What she has in mind now is how to satisfy Saman's sexual desire. She does not even care about her own sexual pleasure. As long as she can make Saman happy, she is happy. Perhaps it is also how she pleases

her husband. On the other hand, Saman somewhat feeling guilty because he believes he can never satisfy Yasmin sexually:

NEW YORK, 19 JUNI 1994

Yasmin,

Mungkin persetubuhan kita memang harus hanya dalam khayalan. Persenggamaan maya. Aku bahkan tidak tahu bagaimana memuaskan kamu.

JAKARTA, 20 JUNI 1994

Saman,

Tahukan kamu, malam itu, malam itu yang aku inginkan adalah menjamah tubuhmu, dan menikmati wajahmu ketika ejakulasi. Aku ingin datang ke sana. Aku ajari kamu. Aku perkosa kamu.

NEW YORK, 21 JUNI 1994

Yasmin,

Ajarilah aku. Perkosalah aku. (196-197)

[NEW YORK, 19 JUNE 1994

Yasmin,

Maybe our sexual relationship only takes place in our imagination. Illusory intercourse. I don't even know how to satisfy you.

JAKARTA, 20 JUNE 1994

Saman,

Do you know, that night, that night all I wanted to do was to touch your body and enjoy your face while you were ejaculating. I want to go there. I'll teach you. I'll rape you.

NEW YORK, 21 JUNE 1994

Yasmin,

Teach me. Rape me.] (196-197)

However, Yasmin is able to assure him that as long as Saman is satisfied, she does not mind. Yasmin's attitude shadows the image of 'good' ibu in terms of her willingness to do anything to please others. Although the notion of 'good' ibu does not connote sexual obligation to please her husband, that fact that Javanese wives shall be submissive and dedicated in serving their husbands, as symbolically seen in the Javanese marriage ritual of washing the

feet of their husbands, it can be assumed that Yasmin, a Menadonese woman, has mentally adopted the Javanese tradition. Perhaps she has been more Javanese than the Javanese women themselves, as the way Tala protested her willingness to pursue Javanese rituals of marriage.

Yasmin leaves Jakarta to New York to do some business, meet Tala, Cok, and Laila, and obviously Saman. Will the affair continue? Perhaps. The novel ends with uncertainty, yet suggests that neither Saman nor Yasmin are willing to leave the affair. There is no fictional evidence that Yasmin is thinking of leaving Lukas, either. Nevertheless, divorce is not the way of solving marital problem in Catholic.

Yasmin is indeed portrayed as a woman who always relates herself to others. Her position as a lawyer with a promising career in her father's office also fails to make her an independent woman. Yasmin tends to do anything only to satisfy others, like the way she tells Saman in one of her emails that she has to work hard not for herself but for the pride of her father: "I have to work hard so I won't embarrass my dad..." (172). She honors her parents with good grades at school, and pious attitude as a mask to cover the fact that she has stayed with Lukas years before they are finally married. Now she has Saman who she eagerly pleases.

Her desire to get pregnant is also a burden that she bears alone. Her desire to have a child has become her personal desire. Nothing in the novel shows that Lukas has been nagging her for a child, nor attempts to get a medical advice. Perhaps it is simply her psychological desire to be a mother, as Chodorow argues as one of the reasons why women mother. Yasmin feels incomplete. As an *ibu* she needs to fulfill her desire to become an *ibu* by having a child of her own. She has shown her concern about the significant presence of children in two Biblical sections that she and Saman share in the net: "Why was offspring so meaningful for Israel? Am I not yet pregnant? Can we have a child through test tube baby?" (189). Yasmin sees herself as Ruth, who deeply understands Naomi's grief for not being able to have a grandson to continue her husband's name. Ruth obediently grants Naomi's order to meet Boaz, asking him to redeem her. Like Ruth, Yasmin finds herself weak in the position that she has failed to perform the ultimate task of a woman,

which is to procreate. Yasmin's reference to Ruth has made Saman recall Tamar, another weak and helpless woman in the Biblical story. Both Ruth and Tamar turn out to be 'valuable' after they are pregnant. Naomi's neighbors regard Ruth as seven times more valuable than a son. Although Judah refuses to admit that those things in Tamar's hand are his, he admits his fault of not giving Shelah to her, and God even blesses her with twin babies. In the case of Yasmin, she takes all the 'agony' of getting pregnant alone.

Yasmin and other women in this chapter have perpetuated the notion of becoming an ibu in order to keep the Javanese hierarchal tradition. Some of them do question their lives. Yasmin questions the fact why people value having offspring. Herlina, Tia, and Diani in "Working Girls" question their sudden restlessness upon learning that their simple friend is about to get married, while their good careers have failed to make them feel complete. Rini in 'Responsibilities' and the wife in "My Husband's Woman" question their failure for being a woman since their men are still seeing other women, although they have done their best to please them. All of them, including Laila who does not seem to question anything, have perpetuated the notion of becoming ibu in the way they project themselves only for the sake of others, performing willingness to sacrifice, repressing their desire to be a satisfied individual to make their beloved happy and satisfied.

All the female characters in this chapter also tend to blame themselves for the restlessness, the agony, or the misery that falls on them. Herlina, Tia, and Diani blames themselves for being too choosy, thus they cannot get married as soon as Wati. Rini even fails to see Han as an irresponsible man, at least to her as his fiancé. She fails to see him as a coward who does not have any courage to face her and tell the truth. She tends to be narcissistic, feeling sorry for herself and admiring her own loyalty to Han and her willingness to perceive him as a hero for his woman and the baby. Laila, being infatuated with Sihar, is willing to fly thousands of miles only to meet him, sacrificing her job and jeopardizing her parents' feeling. She only wants to lessen his guilty feeling toward his wife, and also hers toward her parents. Both Yasmin and Laila show great effort to satisfy others without expecting

anything in return, one of the qualities that is overvalued in defining a 'good' ibu.

There is also a tendency of revealing pity and sorry toward parents, particularly from the children who have been considered breaking the norms or moral teaching. This feeling of fear of punishment has made them perceive their attitude as something sinful, not to God, but more to anyone superior to them in social hierarchy. Laila continuously reveals her feeling of being sinful because she has kissed a married man: "I'm sinful, although I'm still a virgin." Yet, she also says that in New York she can do anything, "No parents, no wives. No sins. Only to God, maybe." Yasmin also asks Saman many times whether she is sinful. However, the feeling of being sinful that they experience is mainly because they deeply realize that they have disturbed the harmony. They have disappointed her parents, and for Yasmin, her husband as well. Both of them have destroyed the harmonious vertical relationship. Thus, they feel sinful—breaking not the religious teachings but the rigid social control, and traditional norms. They seem to fear their parents more than their God. This attitude has led to hypocrisy, as seen in the way Laila has to run away to New York, and the way Yasmin has to keep her affair with Saman.

There is also a fear of being noticed as improper by other people. Since Javanese perceive social respect and high social status as ascription from others, they really strive to perform proper attitude. Rini describes her and Han as a perfect couple because they have tried to perform perfectly, wearing appropriate clothes, showing politeness, and acting in good manners. Thus, she is so worried about what her friends will say if they know that Han has left her for another woman. It would bring such embarrassment and a degrading social status, and particularly in her case, she cannot become an ibu. The wife in 'My Husband's Woman' also cannot see herself as a divorcee because she knows it would affect her social status.

It can also conclude that good education and promising careers have failed to make women become independent in society. Leaving Han has made Rini unable to pursue her dreams for teaching in Pacitan anymore. The wife desperately needs her clandestine husband, which makes her unable to

decide what she wants to do. Herlina, Tia and Diani have great careers, yet still they do not feel settled. Laila is helpless without Sihar. These women tend to perpetuate becoming an ibu through marriage and having children. Yasmin's desire to have a baby has led her to seduce Saman. The wife seems to refuse leaving her marriage since it means she has to surrender her status as a 'good' ibu. Laila, Herlina, Tia, and Diani are eager to satisfy their parents as well as their personal desire to get married. These modern, upper-middle class women are truly portrayed as ibu oriented.

Demanding people to be aware of those cultural and social expectations, being an individual then becomes such an evil deed. Defining someone as being individual has shown little about the person in a positive sense. He/she has a will and a drive toward freedom. Therefore, individuals should know and fulfill their social place. Otherwise, a person is part of a group, has no independent existence; his/her personality, wishes, and rights should be subservient to the social whole where he/she is a part.

Obviously, the reproduction of and perpetuation to becoming an ibu have centered on the notion of Javanese hierarchical tradition. Maintaining hierarchy in society means perpetuating harmony. Politically and socially, Indonesian women are considered as the pillars that promote the harmony, so the hierarchy and the 'order of Life' will be granted. Becoming an ibu in both maternal and cultural sense, thus, become an ultimate sense of womanhood. The problems for Indonesian women occur when they become marriage-oriented to fulfill their utmost desire to become an ibu, when they begin to strive and use any attempts to satisfy their desire, when they keep on blaming themselves for their failure to maintain harmony or to become a 'good ibu,' and the worse is when they fail to be the way they are, forcing them to put on the masks of purity, perfection, and loyalty, only to satisfy social and cultural expectation. The Javanese hierarchical tradition truly has failed to empower its women.

The Negotiation In and the Resistance to Becoming an Ibu as Illustrated in Sirikit Syah's *Harga Perepuan* ("The Woman's Price") and Ayu Utami's *Saman*

This discussion reveals the portrayal of women's experiences dealing with the notion of becoming an ibu. Instead perpetuating the reproduction of becoming an ibu, Indonesian women, who are generally expected to become an ibu. Most of them begin with the question of personal happiness or satisfaction, before they try to understand what they really want in lives. As an attempt to fulfil their ascribed cultural mandate, like what Djajadiningrat argues, women are thinking about negotiating between the cultural and personal expectations.

"To negotiate" is "to hold communication or conference (with another) for the purpose of arranging some matter by mutual agreement; to discuss a matter with a view to some settlement or compromise." It also means "to transfer or assign (a bill, etc.) to another in return for some equivalent in value; to succeed in dealing with in the way desired to get the better of." Negotiation can also be perceived as "a process or course of treaty with another (or others) to obtain or bring about some result, esp. in affairs or state; the action or business of negotiating or making terms with others." Thus, negotiation takes place if someone has something to exchange or someone to negotiate with. Referring to this notion of the Javanese hierarchical tradition, which maintains the vertical relation as the 'order of life', the existence or negotiation in a Javanese family is in fact a woman's awareness to have a mutual relationship or an arrangement for a settlement with another individual, most of the time, her husband. Negotiation also requires each individual to have 'something' to deal or bargain with. It becomes one of the reasons for the female characters in the previous chapter to continuously reproduce as well as perpetuate becoming ibu. They do not have anything, or perhaps fail to see their ability to negotiate. However, the female characters in Chapter Four seem to have "something" to deal with in order to achieve an agreement. They also seem to value mutual relationship with the other individuals with whom they negotiate. Mutual relationship and the

confidence that “I have something” to negotiate are the two facts that the women in this chapter have in common.

Nevertheless, some characteristics also show the tendency to resist notion of *ibuism*. “To resist” is “to stop or hinder; to succeed in standing against; to prevent (a weapon, etc.) from piercing or penetrating.” To resist of person means “to withstand, strive against, oppose: a person, his will, etc.; a moral or mental influence or suggestion.” When the notion of reproducing *ibu* takes the creation of mental effort, female resistance to the notion of *ibuism* also takes the form of refusal toward the *ibu* mental influence. Resistance, “the act, on the part of persons, of resisting, opposing, or withstanding; organized covert opposition covert to an occupying or ruling power; underground movement,” might be seen as an open and hidden refusal to the notion of *ibuism*. The female characters who refuse to perpetuate becoming *ibu* might show their resistance openly or secretly. Sometimes covert resistance is much stronger than the open and blatant one.

Ani's Insistence on Perpetuating the Image of 'Good' Ibu against Her Mother's Negotiation to Achieve Her, Personal Happiness in Asmara Ibuku ("My Mother's Love Affair")

The story is about an *ibu* who negotiates her *ibu* status to get a divorce from her husband. After her sister's wedding, Ani is surprised by her mother's plan to leave her father. Ani believes that her mother has performed her role perfectly, just like what society expects of her. Ani cannot understand why her mother is not satisfied with her role as an *ibu*. Javanese hierarchal tradition has perpetuated the assumption for an employed *ibu*. Occupational commitments somewhat conflict with woman's cultural mandate. An *ibu* is responsible for the care of the family. This is linked with the man's cultural mandate that he, and he alone, is responsible for the family's support and status placement, even when the wife is able to provide significant contributions to the family income, yet, the ambivalence on the binary public/private experienced by Javanese women, as a result of the Javanese hierarchal tradition, has confused them. They are finally forced to leave their 'safe' domestic place to support their family. When it happens, the tradition simply accepts

the existence of employed ibu as long as their achievement is dedicated to the family. As a consequence, most employed ibu must perform dual roles in private and public spheres. When the burden of playing dual roles has become unbearable, for Ani's mother, she questions her existence as ibu, which turns out to be difficult to perform. She begins to perceive her social status as a 'good' mother to her two daughters as simply a duty that soon ends by the time they get married. That is why after her second daughter got married, she does not see any point to stay. Thus, she decides to her ibu status, something that does not make sense to Ani.

In any family, including Javanese, the tie that binds parents to children is widely understood as the strongest and the most enduring in people's lives. For parents, especially mothers, the costs, the sacrifices, and the inconveniences of rearing children have been the realities they have to bear alone. In *Asmara Ibuku (My Mother's Love Affair)*, the female character is an ibu who has been through those obstacles alone. She is the typical obedient Javanese mother who fully dedicates herself as a mother and a homemaker, as her eldest daughter, Ani, notices: "Father went home only for a few days, and then he would go again for months. For years my sister and I perceive her as a perfect being. She earns money, takes care her two children until they graduate and get married..." (47).¹²

It is obvious that the mother has led two roles as an employed ibu. She helps her husband financially to support the family. Nevertheless, the burden of household affairs is on her shoulders alone, which makes Ani perceive her parents differently: her father is the "good news," but her mother represents "life as it is." The constant absence of the father has made the children closer to their mother. Nevertheless, the father remains the paternal figure that requires respect and honor, a manifestation of the Javanese hierarchal tradition. Although Ani's father is irregularly present, his presence is always expected, particularly because he always brings something for his family, like Santa Claus who only comes for Christmas. Unlike the mother's, the father's unfamiliar image has made Ani perceive him as a distant, yet significant figure:

Selama ini pula kami memandang sosok bapak sebagai malaikat atau sinterklas yang hanya datang pada waktu-waktu tertentu. Tentu saja kami gembira bila bapak pulang. Lebih-lebih bapak tak pernah lupa bawa oleh-oleh. Baju untuk kami, minyak wangi untuk ibu, barang-barang keperluan rumah tangga, apa saja. Namun bersama ibu, kami lebih banyak mengalami masa suka duka. Barangkali cuma ibu yang tahu, betapa aku pernah menunggak uang sekolah ketika di SMA selama enam bulan. Waktu itu adikku sedang sakit, jadi aku dan ibu berbagi tugas. Aku mengurus rumah sementara ibu menjaga adik di rumah sakit dari sore sampai malam, lalu pagi dan siangnya beliau mesti bekerja. Mungkin tak banyak dari derita duka itu yang sampai kepada bapak. Ya, bagi kami bapak adalah kabar gembira, sementara ibu adalah hidup itu sendiri (48).

[We have also perceived father as angel or Santa Claus who came only on particular occasions. We were obviously happy when he came home. He never failed to bring presents. Clothes for us, perfumes for mother, household utensils, anything. Yet, we had experienced bittersweet life with my mother. Perhaps my mother was the only one who knew when I was not able to pay my tuition in high school for six months. My sister was sick at that time, so my mother and I shared the house chores. I took care of the house in the evening, and she still had to go to work in the morning. Father might not have known these stories. Yes, for us father is good news, while mother is life as it is] (48).

There is a sense of admiration in perceiving her mother as such. Ani considers her as a faithful wife to her travelling father, and a self-sufficient mother who always strives hard to raise her two daughters with the constant absence of her husband. Her mother is able to be self-sufficient dealing with her children's needs, yet she never fails to complete her public duty as well. The mother is fully aware that she is a working mother, yet the welfare of her family is still her main duty. As the center of her family, the mother has been able to maintain the harmony within her family; she leads dual roles, yet she never neglects her main role as a housewife. The mother character is able to perpetuate the notion of ideal ibu with the qualities of faithfulness, sacrifice, and high-spirited dedication to maintain the well-being of her family during the absence of the father. Thus, the harmony of the family is perpetuated. This mother-daughter relationship has built a special intimacy that might not exist in Ani's relationship with her father. The mother has become a role

model for her two daughters on how a woman should be: “So far, my sister and I have considered mother as a role model. She is not only beautiful and graceful, but is also smart, patient, and loving. Loving separately from father for years ... does not shake her at all” (46).

Ani portrays her mother as a woman with both physical and inner beauties; smart, patient, loving, obedient, and faithful. These are all profound inner strengths of women, things that are mostly recognized as feminine character traits. Therefore, when the mother proposes the idea of leaving her husband, her eldest daughter finds it hard to believe, and immediately she attributes to her mother’s psyche: her emotional imbalance due to her sister’s tiring wedding ceremonial affairs:

Bagai disambar petir di siang bolong aku mendengar penuturan ibuku. Beliau ingin bercerai dengan bapak. Betul-betul sebuah kejutan di akhir tahun. Aku bahkan sempat—terlintas—menganggap ibu sedang dalam keadaan tidak sadar. Mungkin sedang stress, terlalu capek. Kami baru saja selesai hajatan perkawinan adikku (45).

[It felt like being struck by thunder in the middle of the day when I heard what my mother just said. She wanted to propose a divorce from my father. It was truly a year-end surprise. I had—slightly—thought that she might have been out of her mind. Maybe she was stressed out, and was too tired. We just had finished with my sister’s wedding] (45).

Ani always admires her mother’s inner strengths. A divorce for Ani means her mother is giving up becoming the center of the family, something that is supposed to be continuously perpetuated as an ibu. After all this time, after what she has done for her family, after she has achieved the happiness of watching her children grown up and married, she suddenly wants to leave her own marriage. For her daughter, the mother does not sound the way she used to be, Ani ultimately sought possible explanation within the inner turmoil of her mother. Nevertheless, Ani’s mother does explain that she has lost her love for her husband:

“Sudah lama perasaan itu hilang, An. Jangan salahkan Ibu, sebab Ibu tidak ingin menyalahkan siapa-siapa. Sepanjang perkawinan kami banyak sudah

waktu yang Ibu luangkan untuk kalian atau untuk diri sendiri. Bapakmu terlalu sering berada di luar, Ibu jadi terbiasa hidup sendiri, tak lagi tergantung pada bapakmu Ibu tidak merindu pada bapakmu. Kalau dia sedang tidak ada, Ibu merasa, sepertinya, dia memang tak pernah ada. Ibu tidak merasa membutuhkannya.” Kulihat mata ibu berkaca-kaca. Ya, aku ingat betul. Hanya beberapa hari Bapak pulang, kemudian pergi lagi berbulan-bulan (47).

[It's been a long time since that feeling has gone, An. Please don't blame me because I don't want to blame anybody, either. During our married life, I have spent most of my time with you or with myself. Your father seldom stays with us, so I'm used to being alone, not depending on your father.... I don't miss your father. When he is not here, I feel like he never exists. I feel like I don't need him.” I looked into her eyes, which were shiny with tears. Yes, I remember exactly. Father would only stay for a few days, then he would leave for months] (47).

The problem becomes more complicated for Ani, who believes that the harmony and the unity of her family will be shattered by the time her mother, the center of the family leaves. She is also surprised to learn that her mother does not love her father anymore. Her mother's reason for leaving her father is not only a matter of vanishing love, but also her mother's plan to re-marry. Divorce is indeed permitted in Islam, thus it often becomes an escape for women to leave their marriage when they believe that they have no other reason to stay, something that is felt by Ani's mother. She has completed her duty as an ibu. She does not love her husband anymore. She loves another man, and her husband is also in love with another woman, as he admits in his letter to Ani's mother:

“Ma, seperti yang pernah kita bicarakan saat kepulanganku yang terakhir dulu, you may go on. Saya mengerti sepenuhnya. Bukan berarti Mama tak sayang lagi, tapi Mama memang butuh pendamping, butuh pengayom yang lebih sering hadir di samping Mama, yang senantiasa mencurahkan perhatian serta kasih sayang pada Mama. Bila Nita sudah mentas, nanti, segeralah bicarakan hal ini dengan kedua anak kita, sampaikan pada mereka bahwa I will be alright. Jangan khawatirkan diriku. Ma, bukan berarti aku nyeleweng, tapi selama beberapa tahun terakhir aku punya teman dekat di sini. Apakah aku akan menikah dengannya atau tidak, kamu belum bicara sejauh itu.

Yang paling kuutamakan adalah kebahagiaanmu, Ma. Aku ikhlas. Selama ini Mama bertahan karena ingin melihat saya dan anak-anak bahagia. Kini mungkin sudah waktunya bagi kami (aku, Ani dan Nita) memberi Mama, kesempatan mengejar kebahagiaan yang tertinggal” (50-51).

[“Ma, as what we have discussed during my last arrival, you may go on. I fully understand. It doesn’t mean that you don’t care about us anymore, but you need a companion, you need someone who can protect you, who is regularly by your side, providing you with attention and love. By the time Nita will have already been married, later, you shall talk about it with our two daughters, tell them that I will be alright. Don’t worry about me. Ma, it doesn’t mean that I have had an affair, but for the last several years I have a close friend here. Whether I’m going to marry her or not, we haven’t discussed that far. My top priority is your happiness, Ma. I’m sincere. You have been here with us all for the sake of our happiness. Now it’s about time for us (Ani, Nita, and me) to give you a chance to seek your unfulfilled happiness”] (50-51).

The situation has in fact reduced the relationship between the husband and the wife from vertical to horizontal since each one has something to negotiate. As seen in the letter, which is sent three months before Nita’s wedding, there is a possibility for her to negotiate her ibu status to a divorce. The father is described as an accommodating one: he agrees to a divorce. He admits his mistake, and is concerned about his wife’s happiness, Ani’s father realizes that he has not completed his duty as a protector of his wife, the ‘natural’ nurturer. He has been busy completing his public role, yet he has failed to be regularly present in his family and mutually supportive in achieving the objective of his life as a Javanese: to participate with his wife in securing the harmonious family life as the fundamental Javanese hierarchical tradition. In addition, he is seeing another woman. It could also be another reason for being tolerant. While paying attention to the implied meaning of the letter, there are at least two aspects of ‘gender consensus’ the agreement toward sexual division in Javanese family. First of all, it has been obvious that the father has failed to fulfill his duty as a protective husband and father that has been culturally assigned to him. He has failed to commit fully to consensus. Secondly, the line “By the time Nita will have

already been married, later, you shall talk about it with our two daughters, tell them that I will be all right” also has a connotation of completing one’s gender role. It means that the mother is allowed to discuss her plan to leave him only after *Nita mentas*. The parental task will come to an end when their children are married and seek the continuance of life by establishing their own families. This is when children are considered “landed” (*mentas*) because their marriage has signified the completion of parental task. With his d\regular absence in the family, it becomes obvious that the responsibility of completing parental tasks in raising and educating their children has been fully carried out by his wife. The Javanese also shares masculine notion like marriage as a final destination for women. *Mentas* means setting one’s children free on their own course and constitutes the last responsibility of their parents; thus, it becomes a condition for the mother to leave her children. The husband will consider that his wife has successfully carried out her role as an *ibu* the youngest daughter, *Nita*, marries. As long as his wife has fulfilled her duty she can freely leave.

Nevertheless, corresponding to her husband, Ani’s mother also perceives her duty as a parent has been completed as she has considered her two daughters *mentas* or landed by marrying them off. Uncle Han, her mother’s suitor, has proposed to Ani’s mother to marry him two years before *Nita*’s wedding. Yet, her mother has decided to wait. When Ani asks her why she was waiting for years to propose a divorce from her father; while she has lost her love toward him, she simply says: “I waited until you two landed. Yesterday I have delegated your sister to her husband. From now on you and *Nita* are under the responsibility of the man whom each of you has married. My burden has been lighter and lighter. My dirty of raising you two has been completed, although it isn’t perfect yet...” (49).

There is a sense of ambivalence as seen in the mother’s answer. On one hand, she might consider herself as a mother who has completed her task in raising her two daughters. She has fulfilled her natural duty, raising her daughters, marrying them off, so now they are ready to face the world by themselves. On the other hand, she perceives her task as a ‘mere’ duty, which, by the time she completes, signals her own completion as a mother. She is

also mentas. Her role as a mother has come to an end, and now it is also her chance to see the world outside. The Javanese gender role has confined woman in their domestic atmosphere, yet the tradition is quite permissive in releasing its women upon the completion of their role as ibu.

The word serahkan (“to give in” or “delegate”) also connotes the notion of reproduction in the sense that the mother had been shaping her two daughters to become Javanese humans as future ibu. Thus, upon their marriage, they are now “under the responsibility of the men whom each of them has married.” It means the mother has completed her cultural mandate: reproducing ibu and perpetuating the hierarchy of the family by putting her two daughters under the responsibility of men., her sons-in-law.

The gender roles between a Javanese husband and his wife have created a clear division between them. This brings an implication to the next hierarchal relation between a mother and a child, in which each of them pursues his/her own task in the ‘order of life’ to maintain the harmony in social life. When the task is completed, one will consider him/herself has completed his/her assigned role.

Ani can do nothing except ngajeni, giving respect and honor towards her parents’ decision, as she has been taught to be. Ani is also ambivalent toward her mother’s decision of leaving her father. She regards her mother as an accomplished woman in fulfilling her duty. Nevertheless, the fact that she is leaving her father is considered as betraying her harmony in the family. Suddenly, she feels lonely and misses her husband, her kids, and her sister (49). She has lost her confidence in her mother and is desperately seeking a new role model. The sense of connectedness with the maternal mother is what Ani experiences. The sudden feel of lost is due to the fact that she has been shaped under the Javanese hierarchal tradition in which as a woman she is always an object related to others, and now she has lost the most precious relationship: mother-daughter intimacy. It is truly improper for an ibu to be self-centered and individualistic within the notion of Javanese hierarchal tradition. A Javanese individual is expected to perpetuate the hierarchy, the ‘order of Life’. Ani’s mother might be considered as ‘unjavanese’ since she is able to leave her central position for pursuing her personal happiness. Thus,

the mother's decision to leave her marriage might be considered as a resistance to perpetuate the tradition and cultural mandate.

However, her decision can also be seen as an attempt to negotiate. She has perpetuated her role as an ibu. She has even reproduced the notion of becoming an ibu to her daughter, Ani, or else, Ani will not express her objection to her plan for a divorce. Ani is mentally influenced by her mother in perceiving herself and her mother as good ibu, and she has adopted the qualities of a 'good' ibu. Her mother's decision to leave her family is in fact an act of negotiation since she has completed her duty as a mother; raising her two daughters and marrying them off, thus she has assured the perpetuation of the hierarchal tradition as well since her two daughters now have families of their own.

As in Javanese tradition, children, regardless of the fact that they are already mentas, will always consider their parents as superiors, forever being "deeply impressed by the moral significance of their parents" (Mulder, "Parental World View" 32). Ani, therefore, feels betrayed by her mother's love affair. Her disappointment is clearly expressed in the way she 'investigates' her mother's relationship with Uncle Han by interrogating her mother's servant: "the servant said that Uncle Han never spent the night in mother's house... and Mother never spent the night outside the house, either" (52). She also openly rebukes Uncle Han when she meets him for the very first time: "Have you ever considered that you have hurt my father?" (54)

The tendency of a Javanese child to look up to his/her parents has made Ani shift her parental admiration toward her father. She used to think that her father was a distant figure like Santa Claus or an angel with "good news" while her mother was more real. When her mother turns out to be a wife who is able to leave her husband for another man, she begins to sympathize with her father, as seen in how she takes his side in confronting Uncle Han, without revealing the fact that her mother does not love her father anymore, and that the father is also seeing a another woman: "My father loves her very much. He always returns to us, although it might be quite rare. We are his family, we are his house. My mother also loves him very much. They rarely have an argument..." (55)

Meanwhile, Ani finds it hard to simply justify her mother's decision to re-marry, as seen in her telephone conversations with her sister. The above quotation shows that she still believes that her father always loves her mother. What else can a woman expect from her husband? Her mother should keep on valuing the importance of connectedness and vertical relation between parents and children, or husband and wife. Ani believes that only within a family can a woman achieve her personal happiness:

“Ternyata ibu mansia paling aneh di muka bumi.”

“Aku juga berpikir begitu, Ni. Bayangkan, meninggalkan bapak yang sudah bertahun-tahun jadi suaminya. Aku tak bisa membayangkan bagaimana seandainya hal itu terjadi pada diriku. Aku pasti tak akan tega. Meski nanti, barangkali, aku bisa saja jatuh cinta lagi pada lelaki lain. Tapi rasanya aku tak bakal tega meninggalkan Mas Darko”(56).

[“It turns out that our mother is the strangest of all in the whole world.”

“I think so, Ni. Imagine, she leaves behind our father who has been her husband for years. I just couldn't imagine if it happened to me. I'm sure I wouldn't have the heart to leave him. Maybe, later, I might fall in love with another man. But I guess I wouldn't have the heart to leave Mas Darko”] (56).

Both Ani and Nita show their disapproval of their mother's plan. The issue of loyalty in marriage becomes a crucial discussion among the daughters. The word *tega* in Bahasa Indonesia connotes a notion of betrayal, an act which is done based on one's self-centeredness. Their mother turns out to be selfish, and being selfish is *aneh*, strange, and 'unjavanese.' Therefore, in the case of Ani's parents, the children perceive her father as the victim, whom Ani particularly feels strong compassion: “I feel sorry for him” (57). As the story ends, Ani is described embracing her father for quite some time before he leaves the country for his job to show her support and sympathy: “And when he had to leave again, I hugged him for quite a while” (58).

The need for parental guidance and role model in the figure of the parents is important for Javanese children since the notion of order in their life is significant. The need to look up to the higher beings, in this case their

parents, is necessary. Their good moral character and obedience in pursuing their roles in life is so important that when the role models themselves disturb the order, the children will soon find themselves perplexed.

Before her mother announced that she was about to leave her father, Ani might have thought that at that moment, every woman in her family had achieved self-fulfillment: she and her sister have already married, and their beloved mother has made both of them *mentas* (“landed”). However, the fact that her mother still wants to pursue her personal happiness makes Ani begin to question “is it really love? And why can’t we, younger generation, understand it?” (53). If her mother still needs to leave the family upon the completion of her cultural task as *ibu*, what is the notion of harmony and unity within a family? Chodorow’s notion on women’s need to connect, and the fact that woman do not perceive themselves as separate and independent from others can be found in Ani. She also tends to define herself in terms of relationships with others and to feel a need for human connectedness days after she learns about her mother’s plan for a divorce. Since Ani has been shaped to seek for a relationship, she begins to project her desire to get connected to her father, a figure who has been absent for too long in her life. Thus, she is able to define herself again because she feels that at least she still has a father. Although Ani’s mother seems to be able to leave her cultural burden, and negotiates her *ibu* status for a divorce, she still perpetuates the notion of *ibu* by getting married for the second time. She maintains the notion of *ibu* is always an object related to others, in this case she has a new husband to whom she can relate herself, but this time, at least she can relate herself to her second husband with love. Thus, she is able to reproduce herself once again as an *ibu*.

Ibu has been reproduced and perpetuated not for the sake of empowering women but finally for the sake of maintaining the Javanese hierarchal tradition. Indonesian women facing a dilemma since they have been limited with two choices in life: becoming a mother or a failure of a woman. There is no middle ground in between. The mother in this story has begun her attempt to negotiate and resist the notion of becoming *ibu* with a simple yet honest question: ‘Do I feel loved and appreciated? Can I still relate myself to

my husband?’ Most of the time she is left lonely, striving alone in keeping her family in order.

Then, she begins to ask herself if she is happy and satisfied with her marriage, with her being an ibu. Upon noticing her two daughters mentas, finally get married and start their own families, she knows that it is about time for her to get ‘landed’ herself. Thus, she negotiates her desire. When women realize that becoming an ibu is not an ultimate female identity and try to negotiate, they still find it difficult to see themselves as free individuals having personal desire. Society does not appreciate women who live alone. The women’s psychological need to continuously relate to others also yearns to be completed. Thus, when divorce and re-marriage are welcomed in Indonesian society, they have become open spaces for their women to perpetuate and negotiate the cultural mandate of becoming an ibu.

The Second Wife’s Resistance on Ani’s Attempt to Become Ibu through Polygamy in Wanita Kedua (“The Second Woman”)

In this story, a mother finds her daughter, who is also named Ani, upset with her suitor who is madly in love with her, yet refuses to leave his wife. When her mother asks her to leave him instead, Ani argues by saying that she can simply be his second wife, just like her mother. Ani used to feel ashamed of the fact that her mother is a second wife of Radi, who was her mother’s employer in the office. Nevertheless, Ani begins to notice that her mother is happy with her life, and her father is financially responsible in accommodating the need of his second family. Living in a harmonious yet polygamous marriage, Ani, facing the fact that she is in love with a married man, considers polygamy as a way to solve her problem: “Leave him, my daughter.’ ‘Why, mother? Isn’t it your life, our life, good enough, although father has another family?’” (208)

The shift of Ani’s perception regarding polygamy is closely related to the notion of children’s obligation towards their parents in Javanese tradition on terms of mikul, dhuwur, mendhem jero (‘to carry high, to burry deep’). It connotes the obligation of carrying high the good name and moral irreproachability of their parents, by praising the parent’s goodness and extolling

the inner harmony of family life. At the same time, Javanese children are expected to deeply bury anything that might betray disharmony, aggressive feelings, which are considered as negative concerning their family. Thus, Ani, is ambivalent in perceiving her mother's status as a second wife. Once she feels ashamed, even to admit that she was born in a polygamous family: "I used to be ashamed of admitting that I was born from you as my parents... but now I'm sort of proud and glad..." (207-208). Upon noticing that her father is a responsible man who loves her mother and takes care of his second family properly, she begins to see polygamy in a positive way—as the best alternative. Ani "buries deeply" her doubt in polygamy while "carries high" her mother's way of life since it is her duty as a daughter in a Javanese family to perceive her parents as her role models, those who are wiser than she is, those who understand life better than she does. What is good for her parents, is also good for her.

Ani's new way of looking up to her mother as a role model might also be considered as a notion of reproduction of ibu in a polygamous marriage. She begins to realize that becoming a good ibu is not always necessary within a monogamous family. Her mother is a loyal and dedicated woman. She is also well-liked and is admirable. Ani begins to see that being a second wife is not a problem for her anymore. That is why she has been thinking of becoming a second wife herself. Ani has adopted the idea of becoming ibu in a polygamous marriage from her mother. However, it can be considered as a mental influence from a mother to her daughter, since the mother in this story strongly reject Ani's attempt to be like her. There is a notion of resistance from the mother toward polygamy, although she is involved in it, as seen in the way the mother tries to make Ani understand that she will lead a better life if she stays in a monogamous marriage instead: "I told her about my endless guilt for taking away a husband from his family. Maybe she was not as lucky as I was for having Sri as my husband's first wife, who was such a wise woman. ... I felt sorry for myself suffering those lonely cold night..." (208).

When a Javanese family is a part of the unity of existence in the hierarchal course of life, a Javanese polygamous family adds another vertical

relation: the first-second wife relationship. When Ani considers her mother as her role model, her mother's place as a second wife also 'forced' her to regard the first wife as her model. The second wife tends to position herself as an intruder in Hadi's family. She always considers herself the lowest in the hierarchy of this polygamous marriage. The situation gets 'worse' for her when she finds Sri, the first wife, as an understanding woman. The more she admires Sri, the more she feels lower than her, and somewhat, more intimidated by Sri's attitudes. Showing great respect in Javanese tradition will especially develop in relation to persons who are considered superiors to a corresponding attitude known as *sungkan*, "an uneasy feeling experienced while in the presence of someone with authority." It does not connote any fear of low self-esteem, yet an attempt to maintain harmony in the hierarchy, an attitude of self-protecting in a situation that is unbearable (Mulder, "Parental Worldview," 48). Sharing her experience as a second wife with Ani, the mother tends to reveal the burden in positioning herself in the vertical relation between her and her husband, Hadi, and also her relation with Sri. her emotional need of companion during those "lonely, cold nights" becomes the lowest of all.

The vertical relationship between Sri and the second wife has existed long before the second marriage takes place. Sri was the one who gave restu, or blessing, on Hadi's second marriage: "I allow you two to get married since I have a hunch that you are a good woman who is able to take care of my husband after I die" (204). Sri's terminal ailment has force her to be permissive of polygamy. Nevertheless, Islamic teaching also allows it. However, Sri's ailment is miraculously cured, leaving the second wife the only choice, which is to continue this polygamous marriage for the rest of her life with the burden of feeling guilty: "Meanwhile, Sri miraculously got better and better. I became fully burdened with guilt" (205). The guilty feeling is more accurately perceived as *sungkan*. With the continuous presence of Sri, the second wife has to be always aware of the hierarchy in the polygamous marriage, which puts Sri automatically as her superior. In order to maintain harmony, the second wife restrains herself to utter any complaints. She gets three days in a week while Sri has four, and she feels it fair enough: "I think

it's fair enough. Nevertheless, Sri is the first wife, and she needs more attention in her old days" (205).

The second wife often reveals the feeling of *sungkan*, being inhibited in the presence of the 'authority' (Sri), when she has to deal with Sri. Once the second wife perceives herself as an unbearably disturbance for the harmony between her and Sri, when Hadi has to stay longer in her place because he is sick, the three of them have agreed that every week Hadi stays with Sri for four days, while the rest of the week he stays with his second wife. One day Hadi becomes terribly sick in the second wife's house, which makes him stay longer than three days. Thus, the second wife decides to take Hadi to Sri, although he is still weak, simply because he has been with her more than three days, which means he stayed longer than he is supposed to: "But I returned him to Sri. I told her why Hadi had to stay for four days in my place" (205). It shows how the second wife reveals an attitude of self-protecting, as one of the implications of being *sungkan*. She tries hard to avoid being considered as selfish by Sri for taking away Hadi more than three days. However, Sri does not mind at all. When Sri does explain, once again she has ultimately strengthened the second wife's inferiority. When she argues that her reason for taking Hadi back in a hurry is because "it won't be fair" for Sri, the first wife then lectures her the meaning of fairness:

"Keadilan tak dapat diperhitungkan dengan angka dan logika. Bagaimana mesti membagi tujuh hari menjadi dua? Mustahil bukan? Tuhan tidak menciptakan hukumNya untuk sia-sia, bukan? Bila Mas Hadi tinggal lebih lama di tempatmu, itu cukup adil buatku, sebab kamu lebih muda dan cantik. Jadi kamu memang berhak mendapatkannya, Dik."

Selama mendengarkan ucapan Mbak Sri, aku menangis. Mbak Sri membuka cakrawala tentang hukum Islam yang mengizinkan pernikahan lebih dari sekali. Mbak Sri, dengan begitu gemilangnya berhasil menterjemahkan kehendak Tuhan. Aku bersyukur menjadi istri Mas Hadi sekaligus memiliki madu seperti Mbak Sri (206).

["Fairness will never be judged based on number or logic. How can we divide seven days into two? It's impossible, isn't it? God doesn't proclaim His law for nothing, does He? If Hadi wants to stay longer in your place, it's

fair enough for me, since you are younger and prettier. So you deserve to have him, Sister.”

While listening to Sri, I was crying. Sri was able to understand Islamic teaching concerning polygamy. She was amazingly able to translate God's will. I was thankful for being Hadi's wife and also having Sri as his first wife] (206).

Even though she is quite uneasy in positioning herself in such hierarchical marriage life, the second wife is also grateful for being able to commit herself to the Islamic teaching of polygamy, and for having Sri as her 'religious mentor.' Yet, the ambivalence persists as seen in the way she tells Ani the difficulty of becoming a second wife. Her guilty feeling is one thing, while the other is the need to be self-sufficient and independent, something that she perceives unbearable to convey:

“...sewaktu kamu berumur tujuh tahun, engkau bertengkar dengan anak tetangga sehingga kepalamu bocor. Darah banyak keluar, ibu hampir tak bisa apa-apa saking histerisnya. Ayahmu tidak dapat dihubungi. Dengan menangis dan tubuh gemetaran kamu ku bopong sendiri ke jalan mencegat taksi dan kubawa ke unit gawat darurat. Aku tak mau engkau mengalami hidup seperti Ibu...” (209).

[...when you were about seven, you fought with one of the children of our neighbors, and you were terribly bleeding in the head. There was a lot of blood, I couldn't do anything, I was so hysterical. Your father could not be contacted. Crying and shaking, I carried you by myself, took you to the street to get a taxi, and went to the nearest ER. I just don't want you experience the way I have in my life...] (209).

Being conscious that a Javanese wife does need a husband in dealing with day to day public affairs, as she has been culturally shaped based on the clear gender roles, she strongly advises Ani that living as a second wife is not a choice of life she wants to see for her daughter. Finally, strengthening her ambivalence towards Sri, her role model as well as her superior who continuously makes her *sungkan* and feels somewhat intimidated, the second wife admits that Ani will not be “as lucky as I was for having Sri as my husband's first wife, who has been such a wise woman” (208), therefore

does not encourage her to continue her relationship with her suitor. Like any ordinary Javanese children, Ani obeys her, leaving behind her married suitor.

Ani's relationship with her mother makes her never take her advice for granted. She perceives her mother as her role model. On the other hand, her mother perceives Sri as her role model; thus, in terms of vertical relationship, the second wife places Sri after Hadi, then she is the third with Ani at the bottom of the hierarchy. Particularly in terms of Sri's capability of perceiving fairness in polygamy, Sri- the second wife relationship resemble Suryakusuma's analysis on the PKK/Darma Wanita leaders—the female villagers in the way those superiors upper-middle class women have perpetuated the notion of 'good' ibu and efficient wives toward the female villager, reproducing more ibu mentality. Nevertheless, the second wife refuses to accept wholeheartedly the idea of fairness in polygamy since she cannot deny the fact that she has not experienced enough of fair treatment.

The portrayal of these female characters might illustrate how the strong influence of Javanese hierarchal tradition in perpetuating to become ibu is reproduced, negotiated, and resisted. The notion becomes complicated when the reproduction of becoming ibu takes place in a polygamous marriage. The fulltime mother in "The Second Woman" will always questions the notion of fairness for her as a second wife. She believes she can never be like Sri, who is able, or pretends to be able, to feel that her life is fair enough and she is happy with her marriage. Thus, she reproduces her dissatisfaction to her daughter, which means she resists the idea that a woman will never be able to achieve her ultimate identity as an ibu through a polygamous marriage. She is able to convince her daughter to surrender her idea of committing herself into a polygamous marriage by negotiating her personal experience with her daughter. She has 'something' that her daughter does not know. Becoming a second wife is not as comfortable as Ani has perceived from her mother. Her mother is able to 'carry high, burry deep' her feeling of loneliness, unfairness, and sungkan from Ani, which makes her seem to be ambivalent in her attitude toward Sri, nevertheless, she admits that she is still an object related to others. Within her domestic sphere, a place that⁶ she

is supposed to 'conquer,' she still needs the continuous presence of another person, her husband, the notion of becoming an ibu has indeed made women unable to become independent.

Nia's Resistance to Perpetuate Her Ibu Status in "Pilihan" ("Choices")

The story is about a woman's struggle to change her homosexual husband, whom she helplessly loves. The story is composed in the form of Nia and Rio's journals, which are placed together for the reader to compare and contrast what has really happened between the two of them. As seen in his journal, Rio is surprised to learn that Nia, his wife, is thinking of leaving him. He cannot imagine living without her: "I desperately need her. I thought she understood me. Yes, she used to understand. But not anymore. I don't know whether she returned to point zero, or she has simply pretended to understand..." (157).

Nia and Rio grew up together in the same neighborhood. Nia was attracted to him since they shared common interest, and Rio, was very polite to her. She heard some rumors that Rio was gay, and the more she knew him the more she realized that those rumors were true. Yet, she did not mind since she loved him the way he was and she really enjoyed his company, as she wrote in her journal: "I don't care if he's gay or not. I feel safe with him. And if he is, I don't mind. I also don't want to exchange him with any other men..." (160). Meanwhile, Rio felt his mother beginning to nag him to get married soon, a common feeling of Javanese mothers toward their grownup children: "Why don't you go out and see someone, Rio? 'she asked me... Suddenly she left her chair and stormed into her room, but I was able to hear her sobbing. I was dumbfounded. Why was she crying? Is she crying over me?" (161). Then he realized that telling his mother the truth that he was gay would shatter her. That was why Rio shared his sexual orientation only with Nia. She was not surprised, in fact she found herself more and more in love with him:

Catatan Nia:

Aku tidak terkejut atas pengakuan Rio. ... Bahkan anehnya, aku makin sayang. Aku seakan ikut merasakan apa yang ia rasakan. Aku mencoba

menghayati kata- katanya, “Betapa susah hidup di mana laki-laki bukan, wanita juga bukan. I am in the middle of nowhere.”

Kepeluk dia saat aku turut merasakan kepedihannya. Sebagai gay, perasaannya sangat halus dan lembut. Kuamati dia mudah bergaul dengan siapa saja, namun kelihatannya dia cuma bisa dan bahagia ketika berada di sampingku. Sebab ketika bersamaku dia bisa hadir dengan apa adanya-tak perlu berpura-pura (162-163).

[Nia’s note:

I wasn’t surprised to hear Rio’s confession... It’s strange but I fell more and more in love with him. As if I can feel what he feels. I’m trying to comprehend his words to the full, “How difficult indeed to live neither as a man nor a woman. I am in the middle of nowhere.”

I hug him whenever I feel his despair. As a gay, he has a very soft and sensitive feeling. I see him as an easy going one, but it seems he can be totally free and happy only when he is with me. Because with me he can be himself, the way he is-without the need to pretend] (162-163).

Nia indeed understands Rio. She never pretends to understand him, and she does love him the way he is. The two of them were so close together and their parents were happily expecting they would soon get married. Rio was beginning to feel sinful everytime he saw in his mother’s eyes her hopes and expectations to see him settle down soon. One night, Nia challenged Rio’s manhood. She took Rio to her bedroom and tried to sexually arouse him. She failed, but the people around their small neighborhood had suspected something indecent happened in the house. Rio and Nia were caught in bed, naked. Thus, according to the local law, they had to be married. That was why both of them now are ‘trapped’ in a false marriage.

Rio perceives Nia as a woman who is willing to sacrifice. It is obvious that Rio will never be able to satisfy her sexually. They were forced to get married since they have been considered breaking social norms. Due to Rio’s homosexuality, both of them are aware that there will be no children coming from their marriage. They only have friendship, and Nia’s willingness to love Rio the way he is, as Rio writes in his journal:

Begitulah akhirnya kami dinikahkan. Hubungan kami tetap sebagaimana biasanya. Penuh persahabatan dan juga pengertian. Seks? Aku belum

pernah merasakan kenikmatan seks dengannya. Nia wanita aneh. Dia sudah orgasme hanya dengan menyentuh dan mengusap-usap tubuhku, atau hanya dengan sentuhan tanganku di tubuhnya. Makin lama makin kusadari bahwa sesungguhnya Nia benar-benar mencintaiku. Dia rela berkorban. Dia kelihatan cukup bahagia bersamaku ... “Aku bersyukur menikah dengan kamu Rio” (165-166).

[That was how we got married. Our relationship has not changed. Full of friendship and understanding. Sex? I have never enjoyed having sex with her. Nia is strange. Her orgasm only takes touching and stroking my body, or the way I touch her. More and more I begin to realize that Nia really loves me. She is willing to sacrifice. She is happy with me... “I’m so glad that I married you, Rio”] (165-166).

However, their relationship begins to change when Rio meets Ari, a new manager in his office. Soon they are attracted to one another, and Nia cannot say anything except once again try to understand him. In his journal, Rio still portrays her as a loyal and dedicated wife. She even agrees to accept Ari, letting him and Rio stay in the house as their love nest. She will merely prepare some drink, and then leave the two of them together (167). Her position as a wife has made her believe that she has to do everything to keep Rio happy, to keep their marriage in harmony:

“...I thought I would still be able to understand him, I have tried so hard. In the beginning I was happy to see him happy. Whenever he told me about Ari, his eyes were so sparkling. Yet, slow but sure my sympathy turned to jealousy. I can’t be happy anymore whenever I see him happy. I’m jealous...” (168). Suddenly she loses her happiness and her feeling of satisfaction of being together with Rio. She is jealous. Yet, she begins to question: “Maybe I love you too much so I refuse to share you with anyone else...” (158).

She questions herself, whether she is doing it for Rio or mainly for herself. Her meditation turns out to be an honest way of perceiving her existence as Rio’s wife. She has been trying to change Rio, but she fails. She is ‘simply human,’ and she does not have any proper to control Rio. That is why she decides to give up her desire to change him:

Namun hatiku tidak berdusta. Perasaan cemburu begitu hebat menyakiti hatiku. Air mata hampir kering menangi nasib. Semakin aku rajin mengaji dan shalat tahajud, semakin sadar aku bahwa aku manusia biasa. Aku bukan malaikat atau nabi. Bila Rio tak bisa diperbaiki, mungkin sudah waktunya bagiku untuk pergi. Mungkin Tuhan telah menghendaki (168).

[But my heart can't lie. This feeling of jealousy has been so tremendous that it begins to hurt me. I almost lost my tears, all spent on lamenting my fate. The more I pray and shalat tahajud, the more I realize that I am simply a woman. I am neither an angel nor holy prophet. If Rio refuses to leave his bad habit, maybe it's time for me to leave. Maybe it's God's will] (168).

Rio deeply laments Nia's decision for leaving him. Rio even questions Nia whether she does not love him anymore, but Nia simply replies: "I'm still a virgin. I have never had any affairs, and now I'm not even thinking of re-marrying another man. And you said that I don't love you anymore?" (169-170)

Nia used to feel that as his wife she is required to satisfy him, and Nia loves him so much. She has promised herself to accept him the way he is. Her relationship with Rio is obviously unequal. She is the one who always gives and accepts nothing, except having Rio in her life. Once she is trying to remind him that what he is doing with Ari is improper, but Rio in fact tries to negotiate with God: "Come on Nia. I'm simply a human being. When I was young, I had never broken God's rules. No drinks, no women, or maybe in my case, no men. If I'm allowed to keep one bad habit, it's Ari..." (168). Thus, Nia realizes that it is impossible to negotiate with him, a man who even dares to negotiate with God, which she considers unbelievable: "It is enough of you and you alone who is beyond God's reach. I'm scared of God's punishment..." (167). Therefore, Nia decides to negotiate her choices within herself, between her desire to keep Rio in her life and her conscience that has been screaming for justice and personal happiness. She finally decides that, "I have to leave him before my love turns into bitterness..." (168).

In 'Choices', the woman is portrayed as a mere human being, who has a limit in terms of giving in and sacrificing. A woman is not a saint, and is simply a woman who also needs to be loved, not only to love. A relation-

ship should take a matter of taking and giving, mutual respect, and loyalty. Becoming a 'good' ibu always requires the willingness to give without expecting anything in return, and she is expected to follow whatever her husband asks her to do. It is an endless submissiveness and extreme loyalty. It is too much to bear, like what Nia has felt. Nevertheless, as long as women are able to be honest to themselves and are willing to question themselves the best for each of them, soon they will be aware that they still have choices. Nia has shown the need to reconsider, and the need to resist in perpetuating the qualities of a 'good' ibu that in fact will never be able to empower the women themselves, leaving them "in the middle of nowhere."

The Resistance of Saman's Mother on the Qualities of 'Good' Ibu

Saman, or Wis, as he used to be called by his parents, describes his mother as "warm, nice, beautiful, and mysterious. Ibu was a figure that was able to make all creatures helplessly fall in love with her. I guess, even angels and genies might fall in love with her, and it wasn't her fault..." (157). Once in his childhood life Wis lost his love and admiration for his mother. Wis considered himself lucky since he is the only child who is alive. Yet, as a grown up, he begins to understand her. It was not completely her fault that she lost her two infants, the third one died on the third day after it was born. Although Wis never really understand what has happened to her mother, now he is able to forgive her.

Wis' mother is a raden ayu, a female priyayi title. Although she is a Catholic, and she goes to church with her husband on Sundays, she spends most of her time grooming keris,¹³ and other Javanese ancient objects. Her husband, Sudoyo, is a commoner, or wong cilik, who came from Muntilan, a small city in Central Java. Unlike his mystical wife, he is a devout Catholic. He works as a bank clerk for a government owned bank. When Wis was four years old, Sudoyo was assigned to manage a small branch in Perabumulih, South Sumatra. It is in Perabumulih where he loses all of his children, except Wis.

Wis describes his mother as a woman who can never be understood rationally, particularly because she is often in *suwung*:

Ia sering nampak tidak berada di tempat ia ada, atau berada di tempat ia tidak ada. Pada saat begitu, sulit mengajaknya bercakap-cakap, sebab ia tak mendengarkan orang yang berbicara di dekatnya. Kadang kebiasuannya diakhiri dengan pergi ke tempat yang tidak di mana-mana: suatu suwung (44).

[she was often unavailable in a place where she existed, or she was in a place where she did not exist. In that condition people would find her difficult to talk to since she did not hear what the people around her were talking about. Sometimes she ended her quietness by leaving for a place where no one knew, perhaps she went into a place that did not exist: like suwung] (44).¹⁴

Suwung is a Javanese term for 'emptiness'. As the way Wis has described, there is a sense of non-existence in the real world because indeed someone who is in suwung means he/she has left the real world and goes inside his/her self. It is like a snail leaving its shell. It is the feeling of emptiness, yet it is also the moment of fullness, completeness between the body and soul, the ultimate unity between a mystical servant/human being and his/her 'Master'/'God' (manunggaling kawula lan Gusti) because Javanese believe that 'God' is nowhere but within themselves. Usually as an attempt to overcome the fetters of the worldly affairs, a Javanese individual needs to find himself in suwung, the moment when he has total control upon his own body. In suwung he experiences the freedom from pamrih or egoistic motives, and worldly rationality, which are somewhat unbearable for him to face. While being united with his 'God,' he himself can achieve perfection (kasampurnaan) by developing his/her self-knowledge and his/her understanding of the nature of life.

The habit of Wis' mother to experience suwung might be perceived as an attempt to run away from the reality of life as well as an attempt to achieve inner perfection. His mother is indeed portrayed as a quiet woman. She never argues, nor protests against anything. She always looks happy and satisfied with her life. She never complains. Except when she is in suwung, she remains loveable. She loves telling stories or chanting some traditional Javanese songs to those children around the neighborhood. Young Wis

would curl himself like a cat on her lap listening to her (44). Wis' mother is powerfully attractive, "like a strong magnet", she is capable of attracting anything and anyone around her. People who know her soon will easily forget that she has such a mysterious side that no one is able to understand: "When you were near her, you would soon see her like a sun, and all the planets would move safely around her..." (44). The two of them spend most of the time at the back of the house, sitting in a small bed that faces a small yet thick forest behind the house, while his father is busy in his office, which is located in the front part of the house.

Because there is a small forest behind the house, Sudoyo always reminds young Wis to stay away from it: "Were there any ghosts? No, his father replied. There was something more fearful than ghosts, it was the snake. The Devil. Lucifer... the serpent once seduced Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree... it has become the enemy of human kinds ever since..." (45). However, his mother tells him differently: "His mother told him not to go too far into the forest. Because there were hundreds of snakes? He asked. No, his mother replied. Because genies and fairies lived there. How did they look like? They were just like us. But Wis could not see anything..." (47). As if having a close attachment to the forest, Wis' mother is also able to make a distinction from one tree to another, and she really knows each of its branches and leaves. Wis believes that if his mother ever goes into that thick forest, she will be able to find her way out of the forest safely. Since his father is always busy with his work, Wis soon becomes closer to his mother. Wis is also the only one who later learns that his mother has a mysterious attachment with the spirit in the small forest behind their house in Perabumulih, leading to the mysterious death of his siblings.

One day Sudoyo happily announces that little Wis is about to have an adik,¹⁵ and his parents tell him that having a baby is such a blessing. Wis is truly amazed to see his mother's growing belly. She becomes more beautiful, but she is mostly found daydreaming, and is more and more often in *suwung*:

Lalu sesuatu terjadi.

Tatkala ibunya pulang, entah dari mana, wanita itu tak lagi mengandung... Ia nampak kelelahan. Ia rebah pada dipan di teras belakang,

lalu menatap pepohonan, yang semakin jauh semakin rapat. Wis tidak tahu betul apa yang terjadi, tetapi ia merasa sesuatu telah terjadi. Dicarinya ayahnya ke ruang kerja. Lelaki itu tergepoh gepoh menemui istrinya yang perutnya telah kempes. Kemana bayi kita? Tetapi istrinya tercenung saja. Manusia berasal dari kosong dan kembali kepada kosong (48).

[Then something happened.

When his mother came home, no one knew where she came from, she was not pregnant anymore... she looked exhausted. She lay down in the small bed at the terrace behind the house, watching the trees that the farther we saw them the thicker they looked. Wis did not know what had happened but he knew something bad had happened. He looked for his father. The man quickly summoned his wife whose tummy was already flat. Where was our baby? But she was just dumbfounded. Men came from emptiness and returned to emptiness] (48).

Doctors fail to find the baby in her womb, and there are no traces of bleeding. The baby simply vanished when the mother is already six months pregnant. Sudoyo asks his neighbors to find the baby in the forest, but it cannot be found. Requiem mass is held without the dead body.

Since then, Sudoyo invites one of his relatives, Lik Dirah, to accompany his wife. Four months after the mysterious incident, his wife is pregnant again, and this time he asks Lik Dirah to accompany his wife wherever she goes. She is not allowed to go anywhere alone. Sudoyo asks her not to daydream nor be in *suwung*. She is forbidden to go into the forest, and ordered to pray the Rosary. Yet, it happens again. This time Wis' mother is just sleeping in her bed alone, while Lik Dirah is cooking in the kitchen:

Inilah yang didengarnya: tangisan bayi dari jendela kamar ibunya di lantai dua. Ia menatap kearah suara dan menajamkan telinga. Itu pertamakali ia mendengar suara orok, yang jeritnya terpotong-potong. Sayup-sayup dia dengar Ibu menembang, tembang yang biasa mendamaikan hati Wis: lela lela ledhung... bagaimana keadaan Ibu sehabis melahirkan adik? (49)

[This was what he heard: the sound of a baby crying coming from the window of his mother's bedroom at the second floor. He stared at the source where the sound was coming, and listened carefully. It was the first time he ever heard the sound of a baby, it was screaming on and off. He coul hear his

mother chanting faintly the lullaby that she used to sing to comfort him: lela lela ledhung... how was ibu after she gave birth to Adik?] (49)

Since Wis has heard the sound of adik crying, he is assuming that adik was already born. He quickly runs to meet his mother, storming into her bedroom, yet he cannot find the baby, and once again he sees that his mother is not pregnant anymore:

Namun kamar itu menjadi senyap begitu pintu menganga. Tak ada bayi, tak ada bunyinya lagi. Hanya sepi serta Ibu yang terbaring di ranjang besi. Ia tertidur dengan senyum lega dan peluh yang melekatkan kain pada tubuhnya, sehingga orang bisa melihat perutnya yang tak lagi menggem-bung. ... dari percakapan orang-orang dewasa yang takjub dan sedang berada dalam suatu kengerian, Wis mendapati bahwa tak seorang pun mendengar bayi menangis. Tak seorang pun mendengar bahwa anak itu telah lahir. Namun, ada yang menghalangi Wis untuk bersaksi (50).

[But the room became so quiet by the time the door was opened. No baby, no more cries. Only silence, and ibu was lying in bed. She was sleeping with such a relieved smile on her face, and her sweats had made her clothes stuck to her body so people could see her flat belly. ... from the conversation of the adults, who were still bewildered and caught in fear, Wis learnt that no one had heard the sound of crying baby. No one ever knew that the baby had been born. But something was holding Wis to testify] (50).

This second incident has made Wis aware of his supernatural ability to get in touch with the mystical world. He could hear adik crying, and he knew adik was already born. Yet at the same time no one around him seems to hear and be aware. Wis begins to feel tormented because he believes his mother is hiding something, and pretending to grieve over the missing baby: "The family held a requiem mass, and his mother followed the procession like a grieving sinner. With her tears trickling down she kissed her husband's hands, the man who never lost his love for her although she never told him what had happened..." (51) Wis knows that his father loves his wife too much, and he is truly forgiving. It was the beginning of his negative thinking toward his mother.

After the requiem mass, Sudoyo returns to his workplace again, while Wis, Lik Dirah and his mother are sleeping in the same room. That night, Wis once again hears the sound of his Adik: "But in the middle of the night he was awakened because of the sound of the baby crying from the bed. Then he heard Ibu awaken, greeting her hungry baby. Ibu was chanting a lullaby softly: lela lela ledhung... the blurry lamp revealed her face, revealed and smiling..." (52)

Wis can hear the sound of the baby and his mother chanting the lullaby, so clear and obvious, yet he can only sense all the happenings from his nape. Everything seems to happen only behind him, and everytime Wis turns his head around to see his mother, he cannot hear anything anymore. When he is about to sleep again, he hears another voice, the third voice of a man:

Lalu terdengar suara lelaki, tiba-tiba berada di ruang itu. Ia bercakap-cakap dengan Ibu, tetapi Wis tidak mengerti bahasa mereka. Ia hanya menangkap intonasi yang melantun dalam gelombang tenang seperti angin yang bertiup malam itu. Rasanya mereka sedang memomong si bayi dengan bahagia. Lelaki itu mendengarkan Ibu menggomam: lela lela ledhung... lelaki itu bukan bapak.

Wis menoleh dengan cepat karena terkejut dan takut. Tapi, sekali lagi suara-suara itu hilang begitu ia berbalik. Mimpi melekat pada belakang kepalanya, sehingga matanya tak pernah bisa mencapai dunia itu. Yang ia lihat cuma ibunya berselonjor di ranjang.

"Ibu!"

Wanita itu diam saja. Seperti jika sedang berada di tempat ia tak ada.

"Ibu!" (52)

[Then he heard a male voice, suddenly he was there in the room. He was talking to ibu but Wis did not understand their language. He just heard the intonation, which was like singing within the sound of a quiet wave, as quiet as the wind blowing in that night. It seemd they were delightly nursing the baby. That man was listening to ibu whispering: lela lela ledhung... that man was not my father.

Wis turned his head quickly, he was surprised, scared. But, once again those voices vanished by the time he turned his head around. Like a dream sticking behind his head so his eyes would never see that world. He only saw his mother lying in bed sleeping.

"Ibu!"

The woman remained in silence. Like the way she used to be, when she was in a place where her body was not.

“Ibu!”] (52)

Wis is afraid, he needed his father, so he runs to his father’s office and finds him still doing this paperwork. Wis ends up crying in his arms, but he cannot tell him anything. He can never tell. He keeps all the mystical happenings in the house by himself. For the next three years he is beginning to get used to listening to those voices around him: toddlers running around the house, a man visiting his mother. Yet, Wis cannot see their figures, he only hears their voices. He never tells his father that there are a man and two little children who regularly visit his mother days and nights.

Sudoyo, on the other hand, never complains. He never asks his employer to transfer him to another city after all he has experienced in Perabumulih. He prays a lot. He never scolds his wife nor nags her for an explanation of losing those babies. He only has love for her (53). Three years after the last incident, Wis’ mother is pregnant again. Sudoyo is thinking of sending her to Yogyakarta to stay with her family until she delivers her baby. However, she tells him, “Are you sure you want your baby to be born without seeing its father?” (54). It is her attempt to negotiate her hidden insistence to stay in Perabumulih; thus, her role as an ibu for her ‘second’ family is perpetuated. Therefore, Sudoyo agrees to invite his mother-in-law to stay in Perabumulih to take care of her. This time Wis’ mother is never left alone by Eyang¹⁶ and Lik Dirah.

Wis finally has his Adik safely born. It is a baby girl. Everyone is happy. Sudoyo feels a great relief. After being satisfied watching his wife and his sleeping baby girl, he returns to his office to continue his work. It is already late at night, almost eleven o’clock. Wis, Lik Dirah, and Eyang are sleeping on a mattress on the floor while Wis’ mother and Adik are on the bed. Suddenly Wis hears footsteps on muddy land, coming from the forest. He begins to feel afraid: “But he remembered his father. Since Ibu lost her second baby, since he sensed the presence of someone else in her life, Wis began to get closer to his father. Thus, he remembered his father, who was working downstairs...” (56). Meeting his father in fear and confusion, once

again Wis cannot say anything to his father. Adik suddenly cries loudly, and when Sudoyo and Wis are trying to enter the bedroom, the door is jammed. Lik Dirah and Eyang are unable to raise their bodies from the mattress, Eyang feels as if something heavy is put all over her body, her brain cannot control her body, and when she is finally able to raise herself, she feels as if someone kicks her chest so she topples backward. It is when Adik stops crying, and dies:

Wis tercenung, sebab dia tetap mendengar sedu bayi itu dari belakang tengkuknya. Dan ia menjadi begitu gelisah. Sebab Adik masih hidup meskipun sudah mati. Sebab ibunya membiarkan itu terjadi. Sebab ia merasakan ada sesuatu yang lain yang begitu dekat dengan Ibu, amat dekat, amat bersatu, ada cinta di sana. Tiba-tiba, ia merasa begitu kasian pada ayahnya. Dihampirinya ibunya. Dipukulnya wanita itu dengan tangis kemarahan, sampai bapak membopongnya dari belakang. Itulah tangis Wis yang paling keras sejak ia menjerit saat dilahirkan (56-57).

[Wis was stunned because he could still hear the sound of the baby sobbing behind his nape. And he became restless. Because Adik was still alive although she was dead. Because his mother had let it happen. Because he had felt that there was something different yet so close to Ibu, something with which she was united, and it was love. Suddenly he felt sorry for his father. He went up to his mother. He began hitting her, in tears of rage, until his father grabbed him from behind. Wis had not wept like this since the day he was born] (56-57).

Everything becomes obvious now for little Wis. He is bitterly disappointed with his mother. He believes she should be responsible for all that have happened. Ibu has made his siblings disappear physically, and, although he knows they are still alive, he and his father will never be able to see, cuddle, and love them the ways she and her 'lover' have done for years. It is indeed a frightening revelation for Wis, the feeling of being born, like the way he was once 'forced' to leave his mother's 'safe' womb to enter the real world. He is forced to accept the bitter fact that indeed his mother has let all his Adik taken away by the spirit. Thus, he cries so loud that "it was his loudest cry ever since he was born" (56-57).

Wis also notices that there is a sense of closeness, love and unity between her mother and her 'second' family, something that he fails to find her relationship with him and his father: "Because he felt there was something different yet so close to ibu, so close, so unified, there was love." After each incident of the missing baby, Wis' mother is always portrayed as happy and satisfied, "sleeping with such a relieved smile on her face" (50), "the blurry lamp revealed her face, relaxed and smiling" (52). She does reveal a deep regret and sadness in front of Sudoyo, yet there is also a sense of happiness and satisfaction everytime she nurses her 'second' family, full of love and strong attachment, something that Wis perceives much closer than her attachment to Sudoyo. His mother smiles in her sleep, and she chants her little babies in her dreams, that Wis has regularly felt and heard. That is why he begins to feel sorry for his father, an obedient, loyal, and dedicated man who never stops loving his mysterious wife.

The night, after he lost his baby again, "Sudoyo held his wife the whole night in his arms, close to his chest. His sweat was trickling down like drops of blood..." (57). Sudoyo is portrayed like Jesus when he was praying in the mount of Olive (Luke 22:44). Sudoyo, a devout Catholic, perhaps feels exactly like his Lord, the feeling of agony and fears, while praying earnestly if the Lord is willing to remove the cup from him. Now he is aware that he is facing a strong, mysterious phenomenon that is greater than his existence as human can bear. Nevertheless, he truly remains a forgiving husband, who is always accepting. He never complains nor changes his attitude to anyone and his God: "That the man worked hard without asking his employer for a transfer from that place... he prayed and prayed without bothering whether God would ever grant his prays... Only for that woman, he had love to give..." (53).

It is indeed interesting the way Wis' parents are portrayed differently. Sudoyo and his wife are like a dichotomy of culture/nature. Sudoyo is so religious that he refuses to accept his friends' offers to get him a good witchdoctor to get rid of those evil spirits from the forest, which are believed to have taken his babies: "I only believe in Gusti Allah¹⁷ and the power of prayers..." (51). Meanwhile, his wife strongly believes in supernatural power as seen

in the way she spends her time grooming her keris and being regularly in suwung. Sudoyo also perceives the forest differently. It is the source of evil spirit, where hundreds of evil serpents live. Earlier Sudoyo has warned little Wis to stay away from the forest because there are plenty of snakes: "...serpent seduced Eve to take the fruit of the forbidden tree." He also forbids his wife to visit the forest so she will not be tempted like Eve. Furthermore, he strongly suggests her to pray the Rosary. His wife, on the other hand, tends to perceive the forest in a much friendlier way, as if she is the mother of all the trees in it. She knows each of the trees very well. She is able to make a distinction from one tree to another although all of them do look alike. She perceives the forest as the place where all the fairies and genies live. She also loves nature, chanting about birds and animals to Wis, while her husband is always busy with his works.

Unlike the ideally 'good' ibu, Wis' mother does not promote the harmony of either her family or her society. She is nice and well liked, yet she has such a mysterious side that has destroyed the harmony of the people around her. The incidents of missing babies have made her family and her neighborhood restless and worried. She never complains nor reveals open resistance toward anything, but she covertly refuses to give in for the sake of her 'first' family. Her refusal to go to Yogyakarta to deliver her baby, as she says, "Are you sure want your baby to be born without seeing its father?" (54), can be seen as her attempt to negotiate her hidden insistence to stay in Perabumulih since she wants to perpetuate her role as an ibu for her 'second' family. She is strongly conscious that leaving Perabumulih will separate her with the spirits of her beloved, jeopardizing her role as ibu for her second family. She might be considered as committing infractions, although she seems to be able to 'nurse' the spirits of her babies. She is really a dangerous woman.

When Sudoyo is finally transferred to Jakarta, Wis still remembers the way his mother was "lamenting like a widow crying over the death of her only child. She cried without a voice since she had lost her voice, but her breath and her body were trembling, her jaw was rattling. She did not say anything, she never argued, nor whined, she was only shaking..." (58). It is the only open resistance she has ever shown.

Wis is mature enough at that time to understand with his intuition that the separation has forced his mother to be parted with something that she dearly loves, something that she dearly loves, something that dearly loves her, too. After he has grown up, after all his jealousy and anger have subsided, after his mother passed away, Wis understands the bitterness of that separation for Ibu. Wis has also indicated a certain intimacy between his mother and her 'second' family. There is a strong attachment between the mother and her second family, which is full of love and affection, and it is different compared to what she has with Sudoyo. Although it seems obvious that Sudoyo loves her very much, but the fact that he is always busy with his job has divided the house into two: the front part with Sudoyo's office becomes his place, while the back part of the house is occupied by his lonely wife who spends most of her time with her son, pondering the forest in suwung. Wis has described several times his father's habit of working in his office days and nights. Every incident of missing babies always reveals the fact that Wis has to find his father in his office. Thus, it can be assumed that his wife is dissatisfied with her married life. She is often left alone by her busy husband. Thus, she greatly values the closeness that she feels with her 'second' family to compensate for her disappointment from Sudoyo.

Wis' mother has shown her covert resistance toward perpetuating to become ibu. Although she is indeed an ibu, she does not promote the qualities of 'good' ibu as ascribed in the Javanese society. She has created chaos instead of harmony. She has destroyed the intimate and harmonious relationship between her and her husband by having 'another man' in her life, and also between her son by committing infanticide and having an affair. Wis finds himself closer to his father due to his disappointment of her. He also perceives her like Eve since he believes his mother has let herself be tempted by the evil spirit, and has let the spirit take away his siblings. All of these have caused her family endless misery. Although she is portrayed as quiet and feminine ibu, she has such a tremendous power that makes people around her submissive to her will. She definitely does not think about giving in or sacrificing; in fact, her husband does. Having analyzed the results of her attitudes and choices in her life, this study perceives her as a lonely wife who

tries to find peace with herself and personal happiness in a very strange way indeed, creating an image of a covert rebellious ibu.

The Resistance of Shakuntala on the Notion of Marriage and Women as an Object Related to Men

Shakuntala might be considered as weird and the most eccentric character in Saman. Although she is the only character who seems to know what she wants in life, she remains mysterious. Unlike Wis' mother who covertly shows her resistance, Shakuntala, or Tala, openly reveals her rebellious perception toward the value of the Javanese hierarchal tradition, which expects children to pay unlimited respect and dedication to their parents, the way she introduces herself to her reader has been so striking that it becomes irresistible to learn more about this unique character:

Namaku Shakuntala.

Ayah dan kakak perempuanku menyebutku sundal. Sebab aku telah tidur dengan beberapa lelaki dan beberapa perempuan. Meski tidak menarik bayaran. Kakak dan ayahku tidak menghormati aku. Aku tidak menghormati mereka.

Sebab bagiku hidup adalah menari dan menari pertama-tama adalah tubuh. Seperti Tuhan baru meniupkan nafas pada hari keempatpuluh setelah sel telur dan sperma menjadi gumpalan dalam rahim, maka ruh berhutang kepada tubuh.

Tubuhku menari. Sebab menari adalah eksplorasi yang tak habis-habisnya dengan kulit dan tulang- tulangku, yang dengannya aku rasakan perih, ngilu, gigil, juga nyaman. Dan kelak ajal.

Tubuhku menari. Ia menuruti bukan nafsu melainkan gairah. Yang sublim. Libidinal. Labirin (115-116).

[My name is Shakuntala.

My father and my older sister call me a whore because I've slept with a number of men and a number of women (Even though I've never asked them to pay). My sister and my father don't respect me. I don't respect them.

Because for me to live is to dance and dancing begins with the body. God gives breath on the fortieth day after a speck of flesh was formed by the union of egg and sperm, so the spirit is indebted to the body.

My body dances. Because dancing is an endless exploration through my skin and my bones, with which I feel hurt, pain, chill, pleasure, and—one day—death.

My body dances. It submits not to lust but rather to passion. Passion that is sublime. Libidinal. Labyrinthine] (115-116).

It has been more than once Shakuntala, or Tala introduces herself to the reader, as if reassuring her own identity, is she confused about herself? At least in terms of sexuality, she is. The above quotation reveals that she has slept with several men and women, her bisexual tendency, revealing both femininity and masculinity, can be perceived as well in the way she dances; she is also able to change her voice into someone else, or imitate others,' implicitly exposing her absurd identity: "When I was a teenager I used to dance as Arjuna¹⁸ in Wayang Orang, and the girls adored me because unconsciously they could not find any traces of femininity in me... thus, if one can easily set her articulation like searching for a radio channel, what's so difficult to be a man?" (118). Tala's ability to change her voice into other's, men's or women's, animal's or cartoon characters,' has somewhat influenced her uncertainty on herself. Her tendency of reintroducing herself again and again is like an attempt to make sure her own existence and identity. It is Tala, who now speaks and reveals her ideas: "My name is Shakuntala. I saw my friend Laila from the window. She was coming out of the dusty mist blown by the wind..." (116).

Since the beginning of the story about her, Tala has been perceived as rebellious. She shows resistance to almost anything. The most obvious one is her resistance to her father, as a Javanese, A woman should have paid respect and honor to her parents, Tala nevertheless openly shows her refusal to obey the tradition. On the other hand, her father and her older sister also do not pay any respect to her. It does not matter with Tala since the most important thing in her life is dancing:

Sejak lama kutemukan hidupku adalah menari. Bukan di panggung melainkan di sebuah ruang dalam diriku sendiri. Entah berinding atau tanpa batas, tempat itu suwung tanpa pengunjung. Di sana aku menari tanpa musik mengiringi. Musik itu ada, aku bisa mendengar roceh dan

rebab. Tapi ia bermain sendiri-sendiri, seperti aku: menari sendiri. Kami penuh dalam diri masing-masing, tidak mengisi satu sama lain... di luar sana barangkali ada penonton yang datang sedikit demi sedikit; apa peduliku dan para penabuh gamelan itu? Aku menari sebab aku sedang merayakan tubuhku. Mereka bertepuk dan menamai aku: si Penari. Lalu orang-orang menegakkan panggung di alun-alun serta menggantung petromaks tinggi-tinggi, dan menafsirkan bahwa si penari haruslah sintal dan lentur supaya gerakannya indah bagi hadirin, tidak boleh terlalu bertenaga agar feminine, tidak boleh terlalu lambat biar tak mengundang kantuk. Maka, di pentas ramai itu ia pun menjadi seorang ledek: melenggok untuk memuaskan penonton tayub yang menuntut. Ronggeng. Gandrung. Si Penari tak lagi merayakan tubuhnya. Tubuh itu bukan miliknya lagi. Seperti seorang istri yang tidak memiliki badannya. Karena itu aku selalu kembali ke ruang di dalam diriku sendiri, di mana penari dan penabuh bermain sendiri-sendiri (125-126).

[It has been a long time since I began to realize that my life is for dancing. I'm not dancing on the stage, but in an inner space within myself. I don't know whether it has any walls or it is limitless, the place is suwung without any audience. There, I am dancing without any music, I can hear the sound of roceh and rebab. But each of them is playing independently for itself, like me, dancing for myself. We're being occupied within ourselves, not occupying one another... somewhere out there perhaps are beginning to come one by one; why should I and those music players bother? I'm dancing because I'm celebrating my body... they give applause and name me: The Dancer. Then people begin to build a stage in the middle of the town, and hang petromaks lights highly, and comment that the Dancer should have an attractive and pliable figure so she can move gracefully for her audience, not too energetic to keep her femininity, but not too slow to avoid her audience from sleepiness. Thus, on that packed stage she becomes a ledek¹⁹ swirling her body to entertain those demanding tayub spectators. Ronggeng.²⁰ Infatuation. The Dancer does not celebrate her body anymore. That body does not belong to her anymore. Like a wife who loses her body. That's why I always return to the space within me, where the dancer and the music player perform for their selves] (125-126).

Suwung, the feeling of emptiness, yet it is also the moment of fullness, completeness between the body and the soul, the ultimate unity between a mystical servant/human being and his /her 'Master'/'God', is indeed an attempt to leave the hectic of worldly affair. Like Saman's mother, Tala also

finds herself 'empty'. She is empty in the sense of losing contact with the outer life since she is mentally meditating within her inner life, to get in touch with her 'Master'/'God' within herself. As an attempt to overcome the fetters of the worldly affairs, like her hatred toward her father, Tala often finds herself in *suwung*, the moment when she has total control of her own body. She can experience the freedom from *pamrih* or egoistic motives, and worldly rationality, which are somewhat unbearable for her to face. Experiencing the fullness of herself, she finds no *pamrih* in *suwung*: she dances for herself, the music players perform for themselves. However, when people begin to come, admire, and name her, she loses her control of her own body.

Like Laila, who believes that it is not necessary to name or put labels on *thaw trees* and the buds 'as if people know them better than nature itself,' which only bear limitations and distinctions, Tala also thinks that naming the dancer as 'The Dancer' means ascribing her with a certain attribution and a set of requirements. It also means the lack of personal authority toward her own existence as a human being the spectator (or society) have already named her, claiming their rights to her body, defining and expecting her to be someone who is not her. One might lose the sense of being oneself, being an individual with his/her uniqueness. Tala's father defines to her what she should and should not do. Thus, to avoid him, she often goes into the 'inner space of herself.'

Tala has been used to creating a life of her own, an imaginary life as an attempt to run away from reality. Her love of dancing and her ability to change voices and characters have enriched her imagination, the only way to escape from the bitterness of her life. Nevertheless, as she argues, "what is the difference between reality and dreams anyway?":

Apa bedanya kenyataan dengan impian?

Waktu itu tahun 1975. Ayah membuangku ke sebuah kota asing. Kota itu begitu besar seperti belantara sehingga jika aku berangkat sekolah ibu selalu membekali dua tangkup roti. Yang satu untuk kumakan. Yang sepotong lagi untuk kusobek kecil-kecil. Kutaburkan sepanjang jalan agar aku bisa menemukan rute pulang sesuai pelajaran. Aku belajar dari Hansel dan Gretel. Mereka juga mempunyai ayah yang jahat (119-120).

[What is difference between reality and dreams?

It was 1975. My father cast me to a strange city. It was such a huge city that every time I went to school my mother would always provide me with two pieces of bread. I ate one of them. I store the other and tore it into pieces. I spread them all the way so I could trace my way back after school. I learnt it from Hansel and Gretel. They also had a wicked father] (119-120).

Tala never explicitly reveals the reason for hating her father. One thing for sure, her father sent her to another city, Jakarta, far away from her small town, when she was nine. Her father's decision for sending her to Jakarta broke her heart: "I cried because I wanted to go back to my shady hometown. But it was impossible to run away. Impossible. Therefore, I danced.." (20). Tala compensated for her sadness with dancing, the only thing she loved to do since she was still in her hometown. It is indeed, as she has said before, the only way to show her resistance toward her father's attempt to control her. Nevertheless, she never feels the same again. Adult Tala describes her feeling at that time as a 'broken' little girl, "like a broken stalk drifted in a ditch." Little Tala felt abandoned, alienated in the new city. Thus, she began creating a new identity: "I am a fairy."

...tubuhku menari. Berputar-putar dan melik-liuk, seperti kuntum yang dipatahkan anak-anak lalu dialirkan ke parit. Kulihat mereka mengikuti kemana aku bergerak: bocah-bocah lari membuntuti kuncup yang menari dari pematang. Ketika aku selesai mereka bertepuk tangan.

"Dari mana asalmu, anak baru?"

"Aku keturunan peri."

Mereka ketawa begitu keras sehingga aku terjerebab oleh anginnya (120).

[My body danced. Swirling around and wavy, like a stalk that the children broke and floated it in a ditch. I saw them following me wherever I drifted: little children were running after a dancing bud from a dike between the rice fields. When I was done, they clapped their hands.

"Where are you from, new kid?"

"I'm an offspring of a fairy."

Their laugh was so hard that I toppled backward because of its wind] (120).

Tala describes her childhood experience as a disappointing one. Like “a dancing stalk that drifted from a dike between the rice fields”, little tala has indeed drifted from her little town, probably a small province around Central Java, where rice fields cover most of its land. She waited until she was able to clutch into something. It was when she met Laila for the first time, the only girl who believed in her existence as a fairy (121). Before moving to Jakarta, Tala used to spend her childhood in a small women’s turret, where all little children learnt how to dance. She imaginatively remembered her place as a small castle surrounded by mounting hills where buto, or raving giants, lived. Yet, Tala fell in love with one of them. Every night Tala secretly met him in the forest, but soon her father knew. Once again, he decided what he believed as good for his daughter:

Tapi tukang kebun melaporkan kami pada ayahku. Ia menyuruh para satria memburu kekasihku, sementara aku dibuangnya ke kota ini. Di sini, di kota ini, malam hari ia mengikatku pada tempat tidur dan memberi aku dua pelajaran pertamaku tentang cinta. Inilah wejangannya: Pertama, Hanya lelaki yang boleh menghampiri perempuan. Perempuan yang mengejar-ngejar lelaki pastilah sundal. Kedua, perempuan akan memberikan tubuhnya pada lelaki yang pantas, dan lelaki itu akan mengidupinya dengan dana dan hartanya. Itu dinamakan perkawinan. Kelak, ketika dewasa, aku mengganggapnya persundalan yang hipokrit.

Di kota asing ini, setiap kali matahari telah tenggelam ayah menyuruh orang memasung aku pada ranjang. Sebab aku ini keturunan peri. Tapi, tanpa dia tahu, pada malam hari aku belajar menikmati rasa sakit. Pada pagi hari aku belajar menghayati tubuhku menggeliat ketika rantai dilepas. Pada siang hari aku belajar di sekolah. Matematika, ilmu alam dan sosial, juga Pancasila atau prakarya. (120-121)

[But the gardener reported us to my father. Thus, he commanded those warriors to hunt my lover, while I was cast away in this city. Here, in this city, at night my father would tie me in bed and give my first two lessons about love. This was his lecture: First, only men were allowed to approach women. Women who were running after men were definitely whores. Second, women would surrender their bodies to proper men, and men would shower them with their wealth. It was called marriage. Later when I grew up, I began to perceive it as a hypocritical prostitution.

In this strange city, after the sun set in the west my father would lock my legs to my bed. Because I am an offspring of a fairy. But, he did not know that at night I began to enjoy the pain. In the morning, I experienced my body to the full when the chains were released. I spent my whole day studying at school. Mathematics, science, social studies, and also Pancasila²¹ or arts and craft] (120-121).

That was why Tala had to leave her beloved hometown. Her father disliked her relationship with the ‘giant,’ and thus separated her from him. Perhaps it was the beginning of Tala’s hatred for him. Her overprotective father chained her in bed and lectured her about the main requirement of a proper husband: he had to be wealthy, a good woman was not like little Tala, who went into the forest to meet her lover. It was an indecent act indeed in the eyes of her father. However, little Tala also began to learn the feeling of pain of being chained, and the feeling of relief and comfort upon being released. Since then she believes that the only way to achieve freedom is to stay away from her father.

Tala also learns negotiating virginity/female body and money from her parents, from which she concluded that marriage is a ‘hypocritical prostitution’ because in marriage wives submit their bodies to their husbands while the husband showers them with their money.

Her mother, a priyayi woman, taught her the idea of prizing female virginity. Being feminine is good and is expected from a woman, and a virgin is highly valued. Tala had to be aware of the significance of being a virgin, and her virginity was something that she had to dedicate to her husband:

Wakku mereka mulai mendengar bahwa aku suka sembunyi-sembunyi menemui raksasa, ibuku membuka satu rahasia besar: bahwa aku ini ternyata sebuah porselin Cina. Patung piring, cangkir porselin boleh berwarna biru, hijau muda, maupun cokelat. Tapi mereka tidak boleh retak, jika retak mereka dibuang ke tempat sampah, atau merekatkannya sebagai penghias kuburan. Ibuku berkata, aku tak akan retak selama aku memelihara keperawanku. Aku terheran, bagaimana kurawat sesuatu yang aku belum punya? Ia memberitahu bahwa di antara kedua kakiku, ada tiga lubang. Jangan pernah kau sentuh yang tengah, sebab di situlah ia tersimpan. Kemudian hari kutahu, dan aku agak kecewa, bahwa ternyata bukan cuma aku saja yang

sebenarnya istimewa. Semua anak perempuan sama saja. Mereka mungkin saja teko, cawan, piring, atau sendok sup, tetapi semuanya porselin (124).

[When they knew that I had secretly met the giants, my mother revealed a big secret to me: that I was actually made of porcelain. Statues, plates, cups made from porcelain come in hues of blue, light green or brown. Yet, they must not get cracked since people would simply throw them away in a garbage bin, or put them as burial decoration. My mother told me that I would never get cracked as long as I kept my virginity. I was astonished, how could I keep something that I had not had? She further told me that between my thighs there were three holes. Don't you ever touch the one in the middle since it is there you can find it. Until one day I realized, and I was sort of disappointed, that I was not the only one who was special. All the girls were all the same. They might be a teapot, a saucer, a plat or a spoon, but all of them were made of porcelain] (124).

Virginity for little Tala was something fragile, like porcelain, there is the fear of punishment if she failed to keep her virginity. They would be “thrown into the garbage bins, or put as burial decoration.” Nevertheless, soon she learnt that every girl in her school, even in the whole world, also has it. Little Tala also learnt that her virginity never belonged to her. She mainly had to keep it ‘there’ until she got married and surrender it to her husband. Therefore, when she knew that she was about to be sent to another city, due to her relationship with the ‘giant,’ little Tala decided to give her hymen to her ‘giant’ lover, anyway, it had never been hers:

Waktu orangtuaku mendengar bahwa aku pacaran dengan seorang raksasa di dalam hutan, mereka memberi nasehat kedua. Keperawanan adalah persembahan seorang perempuan kepada suami. Dan kau cuma punya satu saja, seperti hidung. Karena itu, jangan pernah diberikan sebelum menikah... tapi, sehari sebelum aku dibuang ke kota asing tempat aku tinggal saat ini, aku segera mengambil keputusan. Akan kuserahkan keperawananku pada raksasa yang kukasihi.

Malam terakhir itu, di bawah bulan warna jambon, aku berjingkat ke pawon, dan kurengut ia dengan sendok teh. Ternyata cuma sarang laba-laba merah. Kusimpan ia dalam kotak perak Jepara dan kuberikan kepada anjing. Dia memang pengantar pesan-pesan rahasia antara aku dan si raksasa (124-5).

[When my parents heard that I had been seeing a giant in the forest, they gave me another advice. Virginity was a dedication of a woman to her husband. And you only had one, like a nose. Thus, never give it to anyone before you get married... But one day before I was cast away in a strange city where I live now, I had made up my mind. I would surrender my virginity to the giant I loved.

On that last night, under a purplish moon, I sneaked to the kitchen, and tore it out with a teaspoon. It looked like a red spider's web. I put it in a Jepara silver box and gave it to the dog. The dog was in fact a courier between me and the giant, delivering my secret messages to him] (124-125).

Thus, Tala lost her virginity since she was nine. She used to think that it was only a token of love, something that she had to leave for her lover/ a token of dedication like what a wife should give to her husband. Her mother never told her to surrender it, and Tala only knew where it is located. So, she simply took it with a teaspoon, and for her, it was nothing, and did not mean anything, it is how Tala shows her resistance toward a good quality of a woman. She rejects the fact that a woman is valued not by her good deeds, yet merely by "a red spider web" between her thighs. The patriarchal notion of virginity indeed relates the fact of being a virgin with the condition of being naïve, innocent, and submissive. It has been generally understood and perpetuated that most men prefer virgins for their future wives, as if saying that only virgins can be 'good' *ibus* for their children. Although being a virgin is obviously not one of the qualities of becoming a good *ibu*, the idea that only within the institution of marriage can a woman surrender her virginity, and only through marriage can she become an *ibu*, has made virginity become essential within the issue of reproduction and perpetuation to become *ibu*.

Unlike other female characters, Tala seems not to care about marriage and becoming an *ibu*. She perceives marriage as simply an exchange of money and sex, like prostitution, and the wives can never celebrate their own bodies. Tala also reveals her protest to Yasmin when she notices that Yasmin is even willing to wash Lukas' feet as a symbol of loyalty and dedication of a wife to her husband, as one of the rituals in Javanese marriage although Yasmin is not Javanese:

“Kok mau-maunya sih pakai cara begitu?” aku protes. Tapi dia menjadi ketus.” Ah, Yesus juga mencuci kaki murid-muridnya. Lagipula, kamu sendiri orang Jawa!” Aku mau memberondongkan argument panjang tentang Yesus-nya dan Jawa-ku. Misalnya, cuci-cucian Yesus itu adalah sebuah penjurangan nilai-nilai, sementara yang dilakukan istri Jawa adalah kepatuhan dan ketidakberdayaan. Tidak sejajar sama sekali. Tapi pekan ini mestinya merupakan hari-hari bahagia miliknya yang tak boleh kuusik. “Kalau bisa, aku kepingin jadi orang Menado saja,” sahutku kemudian (154).

[“How could you let yourself do such a thing?” I protested. But she scolded me, “Ah, Jesus also washed the feet of his disciples. Anyway, you are a Javanese yourself!” I was about to bombard her with a long argument about her Jesus and my-being-Javanese. For instance, Jesus’ way of washing the feet of his disciples was like deconstructing the values, while a Javanese wife’s was simply dedication and helplessness. These two are not equal at all. But the week was supposed to be her happy days, I should not disturb her. “Well, if it’s just possible I want to be a Menadonese instead,” I then replied] (154).

Actually, Tala has been trying to influence her best friend to adapt her way of thinking in terms of marriage and men, even her hatred toward her father. As seen in the above quotation, she openly admits that she dislikes the fact that she is a Javanese. She believes Javanese tradition mainly limits its women and it never attempts to empower them. She learnt about it from her father. He taught her to be submissive and obedient. Javanese ritual of marriage also perpetuates the notion of female submissiveness and extreme loyalty, as seen in the way a wife is expected to wash the feet of her husband. Marriage for her is like a jail, which only limits a woman’s freedom. It is obviously not an elevating experience for a woman. Her resistance toward marriage is mainly because she perceives the wife will soon become ‘nobody.’ The ‘good’ qualities to become an ibu, willingness to sacrifice, submissiveness, obedience, and loyalty, which are embedded and perpetuated during the Javanese ritual of marriage is simply resisted by Tala.

Tala has also tried to influence her friends to perceive her father as their enemy. As an attempt to identify their enemy when they were still in junior high school, Yasmin suggested to see teachers as their enemy. Laila believed

men were wicked beings. Cok was simply confused since she hated no one. Tala argues that parents were their biggest enemies. When none of them agreed, she happily concluded that: "Our enemy is MY father, because he is a teacher, a man, and my parent!" (149). although her friends rejected her suggestion at that time, soon they all begin to realize that indeed parents are their enemies. Laila has to run away to New York only to meet Sihar because she is afraid of hurting her parents' feeling. Cok was alienated in Ibud, Bali, after her parents found a condom in her bag. Yasmin pretended to be a nice, pious daughter for her parents every weekend while in fact she had been living together with her boyfriend. And Tala has obviously tons of reasons to despise her father. Tala's hatred for her father also makes her suspicious toward men. She perceives men as sexual-oriented creatures, Laila also shares Tala's idea that man only want sex from women. After a woman surrenders her virginity, he will leave her. That was why Laila told her friends that men were the most wicked beings. Tala was also relieved upon knowing that Tala did not blame Cok for being alienated by her parents, as Laila said: "Like what I always say. Our enemy is men. It is men who destroy her!" (152). Laila has shared some of Tala's idea about men. However, Tala fails to make Laila leave Sihar, a man whom Tala dislikes, and she repeats it several times: "I don't like Sihar." Tala perceives him, like any other men, difficult to trust. Nevertheless, she realizes that it is not right for her to show objections to Laila's relationship:

Barangkali dia bercerita tentang seorang gadis bernama Laila Gagarina yang mengejar- ngejanya, dengan menghapus cerita bahwa lelaki itu sendiri juga suka menelepon. Dan, sepulang dari rig di laut Cina selatan itu, dia berkata pada teman-temannya dengan gaya anteng tetapi mengandungkebusukan, "Kalian ingat, cewek fotografer yang waktu itu ke sini?" Dan dia bercerita tentang tubuh temanku Laila ketika ia menelanjinginya seperti menceritakan bonus prestasi karena menyelesaikan perkerjaan sebelum deadline, sambil mereka menatap gadis-gadis bar seolah semua bisa ditaklukan oleh uang dan otot-otot yang jantan, tanpa berpikir bahwa perempuan-perempuan itu juga menaklukan mereka dengan bokong dan tetekbengeknya. Asu. Aku tidak suka Sihar. Tapi temanku suka padanya. "Lupakan dia, Laila." Tapi dia tidak mau melupakannya. Ya sudah (133).

[Perhaps he keeps on telling about a girl named Laila Gagarina who has been pestering him, omitting the fact that he also loves to call her. And, after he returns from the rig in South Pacific Ocean, he tells his friends with his cool, yet stinky style, "Remember that chick with the camera who was here?" And he describes my friend's body, Laila, when he took all her clothes off, as if bragging about a bonus he gets for he is able to finish his job before a deadline, while they are watching those bar girls as if everything can be conquered with money and muscles, without even thinking that those girls have also conquered them with their buttocks and their teats and breasts. Dogs. I don't like Sihar. But my friend likes him. "Forget him, Laila." But she refuses to forget him. Well, then] (133).

Actually, Tala's main rejection toward men is due to male tendency to control women. Tala feels disturbed to see how Laila willingly gives Sihar anything he wants. In Javanese marriage, the wife is also expected to serve her husband whatever he needs, or else the harmony and unity of the family will be threatened. She also sees that her father has been endlessly trying to own her. Thus, like Laila, she wants to leave her family:

Terutama juga agar aku bisa pergi amat jauh dari ayah dan kakakku yang tidak menghormati. Yang tak menghormati aku, tak pernah menyukai aku. Aku tidak menyukai mereka. Tapi ketika pertama kali aku mengurus visa di Kedutaan Besar Netherland, yang mereka tanyakan adalah nama keluarga.

"Nama saya Shakuntala. Orang Jawa tak punya nama keluarga."

"Anda memiliki ayah, bukan?"

"Alangkah indahnya kalau tak punya."

"Gunakan nama ayahmu," kata wanita di loket itu.

"Dan mengapa saya harus memakainya?"

"Formulir ini harus diisi."

Aku pun marah. "Nyonya, Anda beragama Kristen bukan? Saya tidak, tapi saya belajar di sekolah Katolik: Yesus tidak mempunyai ayah. Kenapa orang harus memakai nama ayah?" (137)

[Particularly so I could go far away from my father and my older sister whom I don't respect. Who don't respect me, and never like me. I don't like them. But when I first applied for a visa at Netherland Embassy, the first question they asked me was my family name.

"My name is Shakuntala. Javanese don't have family name."

"But you have a father, don't you?"

“How wonderful if I didn’t.”

“Use your father’s name,” said the lady in the counter.

“And why should I?”

“This form should be completed.”

I went mad. “Madam, you are a Christian, aren’t you? Well, I’m not, but I went to Catholic school: Jesus does not have a father. Why do people have to use their father’s names?”] (137)

Her resistance toward ‘ownership’ can be seen in the way she realizes to use her father’s name. Tala knows that the Javanese hierarchal tradition has legitimized her position as a woman who belongs to her father. When she gets married, she will belong to her husband. And his daughter, obviously Tala’s father has put his name as her family name. later when Tala gets married, she will use her husband’s name. Nevertheless, Tala refuse them all. Like what she has argued before, any attempt to define and name something or someone is an attempt to control it. She refuses the fact that her father will remain forever a part of her, who people might relate to her. This is another attribution of Ibu. An ibu has always been an object related to others, like her husband or her family. She never stands alone nor defines herself. An ibu is nobody without her husband. The notion of ownership embedded in the necessity of using her family name is something that she resists.

Tala strongly refuses to use her family name in all the documents required. When she is force to use her father’s name, Tala decides not to go. Although she really wants to leave her family, to be far away from her family yet if she still has to use her father’s name in order to leave him, she finds it useless. Nevertheless, another offer comes. She gets a grant to explore dancing in New York from Asian Cultural Centre, she has to live in New York for two years to learn about dancing, get involved in some dance festivals, join some workshops, and finally choreograph her own performance. This time she finds it difficult to refuse:

Aku akan menari, dan menari jauh dari ayahku, betapa menyenangkan,

Lalu ako melobi mereka agar tidak memaksaku mengenakan nama ayahku dalam dokumen-dokumen, sebab kami tak punya konsep itu. Dan kukira tak perlu. “Tapi tak mungkin orang cuma mempunyai satu kata,” kata mereka. Atau, barangkali aku ini bukan orang? Lalu aku terpaksa

kompromi, sebab jangan-jangan aku memang bukan orang padahal aku betul-betul ingin melihat negeri mereka. First name: Shakun. Family name: Tala (138).

[I would dance, dancing far away from my father. How lovely.

Then I lobbied them not to use my father's name in all my documents because we don't have such concept. And I think it's not important. "But it's impossible one has only one name," they said. Or, perhaps I'm not human? Then I had to compromise, what if I am truly not human, while I really wanted to see their land. First name: Shakun. Family name: Tala] (138).

To name something or someone means he/she knows, understands, and owns it or someone. This is difficult to accept for Tala, yet she cannot let another chance leave her because of her refusal to use her father's name. Thus, she negotiates, and she gets what she wants: "First name: Shakun. Family name: Tala" (138).

Tala's hatred for her father has made her bitter toward him, so disappointed that she even refuses to make him happy. She does not want to respect him, like other Javanese children to seem more afraid of their father than God. Her refusal to admit her family name also means her refusal to regard him as her father. Tala personally can never recall why she has such a feeling for her father:

Banyak hal dengan mudah terlupakan, seperti kita sama sekali lupa kenapa kita tidak bias mengingatnya lagi. Sesuatu bias hilang begitu saja dari ingatan, seperti arwah, seperti mimpi. Kita Cuma bias merasakan jejaknya pada diri kita, tanpa bias mengenalinya lagi. Kita tinggal benci, kita tinggal marah, tinggal takut, tinggal cinta. Kita tak tahu kenapa (136-137).

[There are so many things that are so easy to forget, like the way we have completely forgotten why we cannot remember them anymore. Something can simply vanish just like that from our memory, like a spirit, like a dream. We can only feel their traces within ourselves, without being able to identify them. We are left with the hatred, with anger, with fear, with love. We never know why] (136-137).

Nevertheless, Tala still shares the slight desire to settle down, to become an ibu, like the urge that is felt by her best friend: "Laila is in the quest of

finding 'Mr. Right' with whom she can begin a family and make her parents happy. Both of them are a devotion that invites God's rewards. How lovely. I want it, too..." (127). Knowing the honest desire of Laila to settle down has also made Tala feel the same way. There is also a sense of loneliness she has felt while living far from her family: "Me? Well I have some experience with several people. I left some of them, some of them left me, and now I have nobody. Except my three best friends, perhaps..." (147). Nevertheless, her disappointment toward her father has made her perceive marriage like hell on earth: "Laila isn't like me or Cok, the kind of people who don't care about marriage and hell except thinking that both of them are different associations with a section between them..." (127). Marriage for Tala is an institution that put wives in chain, 'a hypocritical prostitution': "...Women would surrender their bodies to proper men, and men would shower them with their wealth. It was called marriage. Later when I grew up, I began to perceive it as a hypocritical prostitution..." (120-1).

Like Laila, who refuses any definitions, labels, and names on her relationship with Sihar, Tala also refuses to use her father's name because it connotes ownership, "why does my father have to own part of mine?" (137). Why should I use his name? how about my mother's? (138). She refuses the fact that she will remain a property of someone, either her parents or her husband later in marriage. Her refusal to use his father's name means her resistance to the notion of vertical relationship in the Javanese hierarchal tradition. She wants to be a free individual who can define herself without any restraints or limitation.

Although Tala has not been married yet, she can be considered as the strongest woman in this chapter who shows strong resistance toward this particular institution. She has learnt about it since she was only a child, she finds it unbearable. For Tala, marriage is simply a prison for women. Nevertheless, her understanding of marriage and hell as "different associations with a section in between" is somewhat shared by the other female characters discussed in this chapter. Except for Tala, the rest are already married. They have achieved their cultural mandate as *ibu*. However, all of them share the same enigma: they question the fact that they remain unhappy

about their lives. In “My Mother’s Love Affair” the ibu finds herself tired of becoming a wife and a mother, questioning herself whether or not she is happy and satisfied with her marriage, although all her daughters are already grown up and married. The ibu in “The Second Wife” finds herself failing to perceive her polygamous marriage as satisfying as the way the first wife perceives it, thus she questions herself why she fails to experience fairness in her marriage. Nia in “Choices” questions whether her insistence to maintain her false marriage is for the sake of Rio or herself since she is confused, feeling like ‘she can’t be herself, she in the middle of nowhere’. Wis’ mother, on the other hand, does not seem to spell out any question, but she also experiences dissatisfaction in her marriage with Sudoyo, which made her have ‘another family’ with the spirit from the forest. Meanwhile, Tala’s question is mainly on her identity. Her confusion of perceiving herself as a fairy, a dancer, and even questioning herself whether or not she is a human being portrays her desire for the quest of self-understanding, an attempt to define herself without letting others define her, particularly her father.

Another significant similarity is the fact that the long absence of a father in the family has made his wife confused in terms of completing her desire to project herself to be related with him. The woman in “The Second Wife” and “My Mother’s Love Affair” similarly shared the same enigma: the feeling of being neglected, unfairness, and the confusion to relate themselves to the continuous absence of the husbands. As Suryakusuma argues that the ‘tradition’ *ikut sumai* (following the husbands’) has been propagated by PKK/Dharma Wanita throughout the nation that the image of fully dependent wives with their strong needs to relate themselves to the husbands has become a common phenomenon. Nia and Saman’s mother, upon the frequent absence of their husband and Rio’s self-centeredness toward Nia, are also portrayed as submissive women. Saman’s mother in fact remains submissive and quiet throughout her married life, although she secretly resists the notion of a loyal ibu due to her mysterious affair. However, Nia in Choices refuses to remain submissive and self-sacrificing to keep her false marriage with Rio. Meanwhile, Tala’s constantly present father in fact has caused her to experience a bitter father-daughter relationship. The image

of an overprotective father and the limitation of a priyayi mother to get in touch intimately with the daughter make Tala went to escape from her oppressive house and finally attempt to shape her own female identity. Her bitterness toward her father and the lack of mother-daughter relationship during her childhood have probably caused her tendency to become bisexual. In general, the female protagonists discussed in this chapter are able to listen to their 'truest' selves as an attempt to answer the enigma, through negotiation and resistance to become an ibu.

All these women are finally able to make peace with themselves. There is an attempt to answer their questions through negotiation and even resistance to the notion of becoming an ibu. Since the concept of becoming an ibu is closely related to marriage, the only institution that legitimates and grants the continuous generation, the negotiation and resistance to become an ibu is closely related to the idea of separation, or divorce, as the only way to escape such an unbearable marriage. Thus, when divorce and re-marriage are welcomed in Indonesian society, they have become open spaces for their women to perpetuate and negotiate the cultural mandate of becoming an ibu, as well as to answer their questions. Negotiating her ibu status, an ibu might leave her loveless marriage and marry another man whom she loves. The first and the second wife negotiate to achieve fairness between them, although the second wife still fails to feel satisfied. However, her position as a second wife has made her feel reluctant to leave her marriage since she finds herself heavily dependent on her husband. Yet, she is able to negotiate her unhappiness in a polygamous marriage with her daughter's insistence to marry a married man, convincing her daughter that she deserves a better life than her mother. Divorce also becomes an escape for Nia from her false marriage. It becomes the answer to her question that it is about time for her to have her own happiness. Wis' mother reveals another way of perceiving personal happiness: an affair, something that is also done by the ibu character in "My Mother's Love Affairs." Meanwhile, Tala is a single woman who does not propose a divorce from her husband, yet a 'divorce' from her father, a 'divorce' from his ownership. She is finally able to define in New York, dancing happily far away from him.

All of them have shown resistance as well as negotiation to become ibu. It might take shape as a refusal to be chained in marriage, like Tala. It might also be a proposal for a divorce, or perhaps a covert affair. Nevertheless, all these women are able to make peace with themselves, living happily and satisfied. Although some of them still show regret and slight disappointment, like Tala with her repressed desire to make her parents happy by settling down with a man, or the woman with her unfair polygamy, these women have experienced progress in their lives, and they truly appreciate the changes.

Conclusion

The hegemonic Javanese hierarchal tradition has been reproducing and perpetuating to becoming an ibu as an ultimate female identity as seen in the chosen female characters in this study. The notion of becoming an ibu is considered as an elevating status as well as a female identity in Indonesia. Some women have been trying to fulfill the cultural mandate to become an ibu. However, as seen in female experiences in Chapter Four, the perpetuation to becoming an ibu entails struggles, and it is difficult to fulfill, leaving these women with questions. The study reveals that the perpetuation to becoming an ibu by the Javanese hierarchal tradition also opens up the emergence of negotiation and resistance to become an ibu as a female identity. The study has shown that as an attempt to solve their questions they begin to negotiate, and even to resist, becoming an ibu.

Most of the female characters are single, except for the wife in “My Husband’s Woman.” Their marital status became the main reason why they are clustered under those who reproduce and perpetuate becoming an ibu. The cultural mandate to maintain the cultural hierarchy beginning from a family has automatically placed the burden of getting married, having children, thus maintaining the ‘order of Life,’ mainly on women. In terms of educational background or achievement in career, the women discussed in the third chapter can be considered as an ibu. Nevertheless, the cultural expectations as well as psychological need seems continuously remind them that they are not yet a complete ibu. Thus, these single women experience the

restlessness and agony of not being able to marry soon, or of not being able to procreate. The wife in “My Husband’s Woman” faces a different challenge: she is facing a dilemma between leaving her clandestine husband and being a divorcee, both of them being unbearable to face. She considers herself a failure in keeping the harmony, which makes her husband dissatisfied.

Unfortunately, becoming an *ibu* brings a negative implication on female possibility to become an independent individual. The habit of ‘following the husband’ and being an object related to others are phenomena that Suryakusuma has criticized as the implication of the “state *ibuism*” on Indonesia women. Becoming *ibu* as wives who strongly depend on their husbands have made them unable to believe in themselves and obtain strong self-confidence. Good career and strong educational background, as seen in the fictional texts, fail to empower women in terms of acquiring self-assertiveness. They are mentally preoccupied with maintaining harmony and the ‘order of Life’, which has been considered as “a quasi-religious significance”:

As a physical manifestation of the great order of Life, the human person has the task to master his phenomenal appearance, such as his body and emotions, thus shaping life elegantly while fulfilling his duty and following the destiny that he has to accept. Part of obligation is to function as a link in the continuance of Life, to become married and have offspring. In this sense, parenthood has a quasi-religious significance which places children under the obligation to honour and respect their sources of life; if not, these children will be subject to automatic supernatural sanction (Mulder, “A Kajewan Perspective” 20).

Therefore, the burden to continue the ‘order of Life’ is highly respected by the Javanese. Its quasi-religious significance has ordered women to respect their superiors: parents, husbands, and employers. Whenever they feel like failing in perpetuating harmony within the vertical relationship among individuals, they soon feel ‘wrong,’ and ‘sinful,’ and endlessly blame themselves. The burden to perpetuate the hierarchy also forces them to pretend and cover their ‘sinful’ acts, acting as if they have remained obedient and dedicated women. Thus, there are strong tendencies of an *ibu* to be dependent, submissive, and somewhat hypocritical.

Life and destiny are also ordered in a great scheme that is beyond human volition, in which moral choice means faithfulness to position and obligation. Javanese should always be *nrima* ('accepting'). It means one should know one's place, trust in one's fate, and be grateful to 'God' because there is satisfaction in fulfilling one's lot in the consciousness that all has been destined. The origin and destination of a Javanese is 'God', the force of life that is all around them. Whether they believe in 'God' or not, they are part of it since it is the principle of Necessity (*Kodrat Alam*) that expects them as Javanese to perpetuate the conditions of their existence. Thus, Javanese women like Rini and the wife in 'My Husband's Woman' also tend to be submissive and 'young' while playing their roles as women. They obediently play their roles as women in Javanese society.

On the other hand, the women in Chapter Four are mostly married, except for Tala. They have achieved the ultimate identity as an *ibu*, fulfilling their cultural mandate. However, these *ibu* do not seem satisfied with their lives. They question the fact that they still face the enigma, and try to find the answer while dealing with their 'confusion' and dilemma. The attempt to answer the questions, nevertheless, has made them realize the need to negotiate, and sometimes to resist becoming an *ibu*. These women soon learn that it is not absolutely true to claim that the ultimate achievement of being a woman is to become an *ibu*. Placing themselves within the hierarchy through marriage as the most possible way of supporting the hierarchy in fact does not always satisfy them. Some of them negotiate for a divorce; others prefer having an affair, the others having learnt mostly from their parents the bitterness of becoming an *ibu*, begin to resist the notion.

Perpetuating to become *ibu* is in fact an acceptance of a certain definition and qualities for becoming *ibu*. To become an *ibu* also means to be named, labelled, and identified as an *ibu*. It means there is a set of criteria to identify a woman as an *ibu*, based on certain requirements. Like the way Tala has been identified as The Dancer, she can never have her body anymore since the spectators have demands to fulfill. To become *ibu* also means to submit one's self to the social and cultural demands of being an *ibu*. Becoming an *ibu* means identifying one's self to an ascribed image of *ibuism*, which limits

women to celebrate their womanhood, their bodies, and their freedom as an individual, since an ibu figure under this ideology is a figure without personal interest or desire.

Thus, becoming an ibu as an ultimate female identity for Javanese/Indonesian women simply means to identify themselves with other ibu, to submit and strive in fulfilling all the qualities of ‘good’ ibu, which are often unbelievable to pursue. The notion of becoming ibu as an elevating experience as well as the ultimate completion of female identity only puts women under certain sets of qualities or conditions of being the same with nature, character traits, and attitudes. They are perceived and dictated under consideration of absolute or essential qualities of a ‘good’ ibu. They are expected to be oneness in the image of ‘good’ ibu. “The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality” are the notion of identity, which takes a deep understanding on the sense of self as an individual. From a psychological perspective, personal identity is “the condition or fact of remaining the same person through the various phases of existence; continuity of the personality.” Thus, when the notion of becoming an ibu has made women to perceive it as their ultimate female identity, it is definitely an attempt to limit women’s choices into two: to become an ibu or a failure of a woman. The Javanese society does not see any middle ground. Therefore, the reproduction and perpetuation continue. Feeling unable to be identified in feeling, interest, etc.; belonging or relating to an identity, as in identity crisis, a phase or varying severity undergone by an individual in his need to establish his identity in relation to his associates and society as part of the process of maturing,” brings the notion of unfulfilled sense of self, and an incomplete process of development to become an ideal Indonesian woman due to the fact that she has not been able to become an ibu. The perpetuation takes shape in the existence of an ibu-oriented woman. The uniformity or *keselarasan* as one of the elements of harmony and unity has made women consider they’re ‘weird,’ *aneh*, or ‘unjavanese’ if they fail to fulfill the cultural mandate. As a consequence, the uniqueness of an indi-

vidual is neglected, personal desire is not fulfilled, and a little mistake might be considered as a threat toward the harmony and unity of the society.

Controlling other by naming and defining them connotes a sense of ownership. Keeping the Javanese hierarchal tradition, the Javanese identify their women to be ibu, in fact, 'good' ibu. Identifying women as ibu, expecting them to perform their cultural role obediently, the society seems to have claimed that women are simply a cultural property. They belong to the society and are expected to submit to the criteria of becoming 'good' ibu. Thus, a woman's attempt to be accepted and acknowledged as part of the society is really an attempt to gain appreciation and respect, to be identified as a good social being, a good ibu.

Thus, the study concludes that ibu has been reproduced and perpetuated not for the sake of empowering women, but for maintaining the Javanese hierarchal tradition. Indonesian women are facing a dilemma since they have been limited into two choices in life: becoming a mother or a failed woman. When they realize that an ibu is not an ultimate female identity, it is still difficult for them to see themselves as free individuals with personal desires. Therefore, they begin to negotiate. When they choose to resist, they are portrayed as being 'forced' to leave the country or their marriage since the hierarchy leaves them no choice except to become an ibu and continuously reproduce and perpetuate becoming an ibu. The Javanese tradition has been strongly embedded in the mind of the women that it limits women's options for achievement, self-respect, and independence.

Putting women on a pedestal as an ibu in terms of elevating women's social status only leads to the extreme idealization as well as the denigration of an ibu. In "Choices," the woman is portrayed as a mere human being, who has a limit in terms of giving in and sacrifice. Nia, and the other ibus, are not a saint. They are simply women who also need to be loved, not only to love. A male-female relationship should be a matter of taking and giving, mutual respect, and loyalty. Nia has shown the need to reconsider, and the need to resist in perpetuating the qualities of a 'good' ibu that in fact will never be able to empower the women themselves, leaving them "in the middle of nowhere." Confusion and dilemma will be solved through a deep exploration

of self and female body. An ibu needs to question her place as a woman, the place of her female body in the hierarchal tradition. Some might think it is fair to submit the female self to being an obedient ibu. They might find peace and harmony with the selves through the ibu status. Nevertheless, the others might experience restlessness, and an urgent need to celebrate their own female bodies. Unfortunately, the rigid socio-cultural control and its patriarchal norms have left no place for those who want to 'celebrate their own body,' like Tala. Thus, the only way to be free is through divorce, and any other attempts of leaving the family, the society, and even the nation, as Tala in Saman implicitly described:

Because for me living is dancing and the first dance of all is the dance of the body. Like God only blows out his breath on the fortieth day, after the egg cell and the sperm become a clot in the womb, so the soul owes its existence to the body.

My body is dancing. Because dancing is an endless exploration of my skin and my bones, which I feel hurt, pain, shudder, as well as comfort. And later death.

My body is dancing. What it follows is not lust but rather passion. The sublime. Libidinal. Labyrinth (115-116).

The rigid Javanese hierarchal tradition might not yet be quite permissive to women like Tala. Thus, Tala, and also Saman's mother, returns to their own selves, seeking personal satisfaction. They believe that their souls owe to their female bodies a sense of happiness and personal satisfaction. When divorce is the only crack for tired ibu to leave their unbearable marriage in order to satisfy their personal need, women like the mother in "My Mother's Love Affair," or Nia in "Choice," are considered a new growing self-realization to fulfill their own expectations as a women, beyond a mere socio-cultural expectation as ibu.

However, this study argues that the Javanese hierarchal tradition is not unavoidable. It is still the result of a social reality based on male dominance. To overcome its insidious implication completely might take some time, yet there is still a chance to reduce its insidious influences. The study shows that the ambivalence of the Javanese tradition itself perceives ibu

might be considered as an alternative to perceive ibu as a truly significant role in Indonesian society in the 'truest sense'. As long as Javanese/Indonesia women are willing to continuously question and be critical of themselves, honestly returning to one's self, like a notion of *suwung*, they will soon realize what they really want in their lives, that their inner desire is, and what their real problems are. There is a space for resistance for Javanese/Indonesian women within the notion of 'order of Life': life as an ordered and coordinated whole that people must accept and to which they should adapt themselves. A wise Javanese is the one who is able to live in tune with something greater than oneself. Thus, it is the people themselves who can achieve perfection or *kasampurnaan* by developing their self-knowledge and their understanding of the nature of Life. Thus, an attempt to meditate their existence both as an individual and as a social being, and to ponder the achievements they have gained as a woman, might lead them to a deeper understanding of themselves and achieve the perfection as female individuals. This is actually the ultimate achievement of a female being. Understanding the mechanism of Javanese tradition that has curtailed Indonesian women, this study claims the need to see the ibu figure as a female being, a free individual who has the right to define what she believes as the best for her own life, and not as an object related to others. Thus, the value of becoming an ibu is able to empower not only their husbands and their careers, or their children, or their nation. Yet mostly the Indonesian women themselves.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Harga Perempuan ("The Woman's Price") a collection of short stories by Sirikit Syah

"Gadis-gadis Pekerja" ("Working Girls," 1990)

The incident and events in the story are presented in four sequences based on the four female protagonists, namely, Herlina, Tia, Diani, and Wati. The story portrays the reality and dilemma of modern, independent women who are mostly torn between their public roles and their female desire to get married.

The first protagonist in the story is Herlina, a young woman who works as a secretary for a famous foreign consultant, Peter Lewis. She secretly admires her boss, a handsome intellectual foreigner who treats her with respect. One day, Peter tells her that starting next month she will be promoted as his assistant. Peter openly admires her talents and believes that she can do more than a secretarial work. Herlina becomes so excited and hopes that her new position will bring her closer to Peter.

Tia, is 29 years old, single, and works as a public relations manager for Heritage Club in Surabaya. She is portrayed as a key figure during a press conference for the opening of the club in Surabaya. Responding to the journalists' questions, Tia confidently argues that the club she represents mainly sells prestige and comfort. She is also confident that the club will be able to embrace a number of sophisticated members. At the end of the press conference, Tia believes that she has successfully completed her duty and feels self-satisfied.

The third satisfied young woman is Diani. She is portrayed as a woman in power who is able to run her business even from her bathroom. Diani is directly presented in the story as an efficient and practical woman. She is also smart and energetic. After completing her B.A. in English, she already had her own translation agency, a language course, and a thesis typing service.

Not having come from a wealthy family, she is happy and satisfied to see what she has achieved so far and is always confident in what she does.

After she graduates, Diani learns from the rector of her university that she was supposed to be acknowledged as the best graduate of her batch, yet her candidacy is ironically denied by her own teachers in the English Department. They consider her as 'too critical', which somewhat gives a negative impression on her teachers. The rector's intention of revealing this 'little secret' to Diani is to make her realize that she has to learn how to adapt to her environment.

The last sequence of the story presents a simple protagonist named Wati. She is the foil character of the other female protagonists due to her simplicity in perceiving her life and her dreams. She is an English teacher in a government-owned high school. Wati even refuses an offer to teach English literature in a university. She believes that being a lecturer is "too demanding", particularly in terms of personal development.

Wati is pleased to see how her best friends, Herlina, Tia, and Diani, have not changed their attitudes toward her. Her three best friends actually envied her. When Wati announces the 'good news' that Latif, her colleague, had proposed to her, she makes her friends begin to think about their own lives. Herlina, Tia, and Diani suddenly realize that they had been too busy with their career, and had forgotten about their "future." They also think that they had been too choosy toward men. A simple young woman like Wati is considered luckier than a successful career woman who remains single since it is Wati who will find it easier to find a husband. The story ends happily for Wati, who is much more satisfied than her successful yet restless best friends.

"Tanggung Jawab" ("Responsibilities," 1990)

The female protagonist of this story is Rini. She reflects a strong image of a Javanese woman who is so very forgiving toward her dishonest fiancé. Rini spends five hours on a bus traveling from Surabaya to Pacitan, a little province in East Java, to visit her future in-laws, only to find out that her fiancé, Handoko, has run away from home with his pregnant lover.

Rini remembers how great they used to be together. Han's father is the one who introduces her to his son during her university's immersion program in Pacitan. They soon become close friends and then, lovers. When Rini returns to Surabaya to complete her study, she promises Han that she will return to Pacitan as soon as she graduates. They plan to get married and Rini sees herself teaching in a Pacitan local school. However, reality destroys all her dreams and expectations.

After Han betrays her, she decides to give up her dreams of living in a province and of working as a teacher. She leaves Pacitan in tears and with a broken heart. However, during her return trip to Surabaya, she suddenly realizes that Han has done the right thing. He is a man responsible enough to accept the consequences of his conduct. He is a hero for the girl and the baby. Lamenting her condition, Rini nevertheless is fully proud of Han and is still deeply in love with him. The story ends with her strong urge to call Han's parents and to ask them to forgive their son as she has finally able to.

"Perempuan Suamiku" ("My Husband's Woman," 1996)

This is an ironic story of a woman who finally identifies her husband's mistress yet finds the mistress is different from what she expected. Meeting the mistress face-to-face, the woman cannot believe her eyes when she learns that the woman is completely nothing compared to her. The mistress is older than the woman. She is an artist clad in dusty jeans, with messy long hair, and no make-up. She lives in a dirty house full of cigarette butts and empty alcohol bottles. Meanwhile, the woman is a young successful career woman always looking neat, fresh, and pretty. She always keeps the house clean for her husband and provides delicious meals and a great sex life for him. The woman is perplexed, wondering about the reasons her husband had to have an affair with a woman who, in her mind, is obviously less in everything.

Nevertheless, the woman soon learns from the mistress that her husband mainly needed to relax. She tells the woman that he enjoys staying with her because he never has a schedule to complete or any rules to follow in her house. She says he wants to enjoy his life with laughter and with freedom from hectic schedules and is ready to face the risk of losing his wife due to his

affair. The story ends with the woman left in a dilemma. She has to choose between two courses of action: to become a divorcee or to have the mistress as her husband's second wife. Both are undesirable for her.

"Asmara Ibuku" ("My Mother's Love Affair," 1991)

This is a story of a strong bond between a mother and a daughter. After her sister's wedding, Ani is surprised by her mother's plan to leave her father. Her mother, a 48 year-old woman, promises to herself that she will raise her daughters properly. After her daughters both get married, she believes it is fair enough to leave them and her husband who often leaves her alone for months with the children due to his job dealing with foreign affairs. Ani is surprised for the second time when she learns that her mother has accepted another man's proposal to marry her. Divorces under Islamic laws are permitted as long as both sides agree to end their marriage. With the permission of Ani's father, her mother and Han, her husband-to-be, will postpone their wedding until Nita, Ani's sister, gets married.

Ani can never understand her mother until she reads her father's letter to her mother, stating that it is his fault for being absent most of the time in their marriage, and that he fully understands if she pursues her own happiness. Ani feels that she is forced to accept the fact that her parents do not need each other anymore. She cannot believe that her parents do not love each other anymore, so she blames her mother for leaving the family for another man.

Less than two months from Nita's wedding, Ani's mother marries Uncle Han, leaving Ani and her unresolved feeling of happiness and perplexity. She begins to understand her mother's needs to pursue her personal happiness, yet she still considers it unfair to sacrifice her father's happiness in such a way. Her mother's decision, nevertheless, makes Ani closer to her father. Ani begins to perceive her father as another figure to whom she could relate after she loses the intimacy of a mother-daughter relationship.

“Wanita Kedua” (“The Second Woman,” 1992)

It is another ironic story about a mother (nameless) who forbids her daughter to follow her past in committing herself in a polygamous relationship. The story begins with a mother who is saddened when she learns that her only daughter, Ani, is in love with a married man. The man refuses to leave his wife yet cannot afford to lose Ani. The mother strongly warns Ani to leave him since she herself has experienced a similar situation. She knows that Ani’s life will not be easy. Ani insists that it is fine for her to be a second wife, just like her mother was. She believes she can be as happy as her mother was. Ani’s naive understanding of polygamy forces the mother to uncover the bitter consequences of being a second wife, something that she has kept to herself throughout her married life. The story turns flash back to the life of Ani’s mother who used to be a second woman in someone else’s marriage.

Although polygamy is an accepted practice in the society, the stigma as a female intruder in another woman’s marriage is unbearable to live. Ani’s mother used to be in love with her boss, Hadi, who was married to Sri and with whom he had several children. Sri was terribly sick at that time and was told by her doctor that her ailment could not be cured and she was dying. Knowing that Hadi was in love with another woman, who was Ani’s mother, Sri permitted Hadi to marry her. Under Islamic law, as long as both the wife and the husband agree and the wife is willing to have polygamous marriage, it is an acceptable practice.

One day, Sri met Ani’s mother and Sri told her to marry Hadi after she died. Ani’s mother firstly refused to do so, knowing that Sri was terminally ill, but Sri strongly argued that Hadi needed a woman in his life and Sri considered Ani’s mother as the best one for him. However, Ani’s mother soon realized that she is trapped in an eternal polygamy when Sri strangely gets better and healthier. Sri never complains about the presence of the second woman in her marriage. However, the presence of Sri in the life of Ani’s mother has never been easy. She never thought of being in polygamy.

Even if Ani’s mother can never stop feeling like an intruder in Sri’s marriage, Sri tells her that it is fair enough for her if Hadi spends more time with his second wife since she is much younger and prettier. Soon Ani’s

mother begins to consider Sri as her religious mentor since Sri understands polygamy from a religious perspective, something that Ani's mother fails to see.

Nevertheless, when Ani wants to follow her path in life, the mother disagrees remembering the time when she needed Hadi so much and he was not available since he had to stay with Sri. As a result, as the second wife, Ani's mother is forced to be independent, something she finds difficult to do. Knowing the truth about her mother's hidden feelings and her dissatisfaction with her polygamous marriage, Ani decides to leave her married lover. The mother is relieved that her daughter does not take her experience as a second wife for granted, although deep in her heart she admits that she has not told Ani the whole bitter truth about her life as a second wife.

Pilihan ("Choices", 1993) by Sirikit Syah

The story is written in the form of a personal journal. It begins with Rio's journal, revealing his bitterness over the fact that life is indeed a matter of choices. He is forced to choose between his "marriage" and his sexuality since his legal wife has proposed a divorce. He is used to having Nia, his devoted wife and his best friend, who faithfully covers up his homosexuality. Hopelessly in love with Rio, Nia is willing to marry him simply to 'have him' even without the sexual pleasure that comes with marriage.

The marriage-in-disguise has gone on for a year when Rio meets Ari, a new manager in his office. Ari introduces him to 'true' sexual pleasure, something that Rio never has had with Nia throughout their marriage. Having realized that she has never sexually satisfied Rio, Nia permits Ari to 'date' Rio in their house. Nevertheless, she cannot help feeling jealous and hopes that one day Rio would change and return to her.

It has been quite a while but Rio and Ari seem to enjoy their clandestine romance. Nia bitterly realizes that she is unable to bear such a disappointing life and misery. Nia decides to leave Rio. On the night when Nia tells him that she is about to leave their 'marriage', Rio does not know what to say. Thus, he decides to pray, something which he has never done for years, and takes his Koran where he finds a small note Nia once wrote to him for their

first wedding anniversary. Nia has written that she will never give up her hope of seeing him as a normal human being and that she believes it will take Allah's hand to 'cure' him.

***Saman* by Ayu Utami (1998), a novel**

Saman is written based on various points of view and in different formats. The novel begins with the sentimentality of a female protagonist. The novel opens in 1996 with Laila Gagarina, a woman who flies from Jakarta to New York to meet her lover, Sihar Situmorang, an engineer in an oil analyst company. She follows Sihar to the United States because she is tired of all the norms and values that have constrained her from loving Sihar freely and publicly. Sihar is already married, thus, they can only meet secretly for dates. That is why when Laila learns that Sihar is about to fly to Odessa, Texas, she immediately asks him to meet her in New York.

Waiting for him in Central Park, New York, Laila sentimentally describes the park as a safe and comfortable place for people like her and Sihar to meet clandestinely. Everything Laila sees in the park seems to be beautiful, even the most trifling things like the shape of leaves, the squirrels and the birds. She recalls using the first-person point of view, her first meeting with Sihar in 1993 at Texcoil's off-shore oil-drilling rig in South China Sea. As a photographer, she is assigned to take some pictures of Texcoil company profile. Laila and Toni, a profile writer, meet a snobbish Texcoil representative, Rosano, who introduces them to the team of Sismoclype, a company that Texcoil hires for logging into the oil source. The team consists of Hasyim Ali (a machine operator), Imam (a junior engineer), and Sihar Situmorang (Imam's senior and mentor). Sihar's arctic attitude toward Laila, which she finds unbearably sensual, and his masculinity soon attract Laila.

Soon Laila begins to realize that Rosano and Sihar can never work together. Their latest conflict leads to Sihar's suspension from his involvement in Texcoil. This is soon followed by an explosion in one of the oil wells, killing three persons including Hasyim. Feeling guilty about the death of his

friend and angry because Rosano did not follow his advice, Sihar decides to leave the rig and return to Palembang. Nevertheless, Laila is able to convince him that he can bring the case to court, sue Texcoil, and have Rosano put in jail. The case brings Laila closer to Sihar and Sihar to Laila's friends—Yasmin Moningka, a lawyer, and Saman, an NGO leader.

Laila's love toward Sihar is intense. However, Sihar has never attempted to go beyond long kisses and heavy petting. Laila's friend, Shakuntala, believes that Sihar only uses Laila for the sake of winning his case against Texcoil. One night, Sihar finally rents a motel for a one-night-stand with Laila. Yet, Sihar suddenly changes his mind and begins to avoid her since that night in the motel. His main excuses are his marriage and his unbearable guilty feeling toward his wife. Although her friends tell her to end her relationship with Sihar because he is only after lust, when Laila learns that Sihar is planning to go to the States, she decides to follow him as she is madly in love with him. However, Sihar ends up going to the States with his wife which bitterly makes Laila miserable.

Laila seems to always fall for the wrong man. Before she fell for Sihar, for years she has been in love with a young priest, Wisanggeni, in her junior high school. As the narrative shifts to Wisanggeni's first-person point of view, the setting of time also flies back to 1983. Saman, or Athanasius Wisanggeni, is a newly anointed priest who is able to convince the Church to assign him to Perabumulih, a small city in South Sumatra where he used to spend his childhood. He has a strong urge to return to Perabumulih to get in touch with his hidden, mysterious past: his mother's attachment to an "invisible man" who makes her lose three babies—two who mysteriously vanish during her untimely pregnancy and the third who dies after only three days of being born.

Remembering his childhood in 1962, Wis re-visits his past and childhood home with a small forest at the back. His father, Sudoyo, a pious Catholic, always warns him about the danger of snakes in the forest. However, his lovely mother tells him that the forest is not full of snakes but of spirits. Wis' close attachment to his mother makes him realize that she has an extraordinary power to communicate with the spirits in the forest. She is "out of reach"

while communicating with her inner self or the voices around her. Facing the mysterious death of the babies, Sudoyo as a pious believer persists that he will never ask the help of any witchdoctors to exorcise his house from evil spirits that Wis believes as the cause of the death of the babies because Little Wis is gifted with the power to hear, yet unable to see, the voices of the evil spirits that take the lives of his siblings. Little Wis is torn apart between his father's stubbornness and his love and hatred toward his mother. Wis, who seems to inherit his mother's supernatural ability to get in touch with the spirits, is the only one in the house who can hear the voices around him -- the voices of his dead siblings running around the house, his mother and her invisible lover nurturing them secretly and talking in a strange language that Wis never understands. The unusual sets of circumstances for which Wis wanted an explanation force him to return to Perabumulih in 1983 to find out the truth.

Wis' attempt to get in touch with his lost siblings in 1984 only leads him to Upi, a 14-year-old intellectually disabled native girl, and the problems of her village: the failure of rubber tree plantation and the extreme poverty that results. Feeling sorry for Upi and her poor village, Wis builds a little hut for her and helps her neighbors develop a better rubber tree plantation. He also introduces the villagers to electricity using the money he borrowed from his father. Meanwhile, his ability to hear the voices of the spirits around him becomes stronger. The spirits also mysteriously save him from several lethal accidents and dangers, while his prayers to God for the sake of Upi, her village, and his personal problems have been left unanswered. Recalling his father's past failure to cling only to God while dealing with the mystery of his dead siblings, Wis begins to question God's existence. His inner conflict will later lead to growing disappointment with God.

Watching the prosperity Wis has brought to the village, the villagers become optimistic in their rubber tree plantation. They do not realize that once, before the presence of Wis in the village, they had been cheated into signing a blank piece of paper 'contract' stating that they agree to surrender their land and change from rubber tapping to coconut tree harvesting for Anugrah Lahan Makmur Co. Upon knowing that Upi's village plants rubber

and not coconut, the company begins its terror on the village, as it is the only village left with rubber trees. One day, two men rape Upi in her small hut, and others destroy the generator, turning the village once again in darkness. Some rubber trees are destroyed and some cattle are stolen.

The company, supported by the military, believes that Wis is the source of the people's rebellion against the 'contract.' The climax of the clash between the villagers and the military is the burning of the village, killing Upi who was trapped in her hut. Wis is kidnapped and tortured. Learning about the death of Upi from his cell, Wis begins to lose his spirit to resist. He bitterly curses the power of God. Everything that he has done for the village has turned into nothing.

Wis is further tortured for 14 days by the military and is forced to accept that he is a leftist in disguise who tries to brainwash the villagers into fighting against the government. When the villagers are able to find the military's hidden place, they launch a counter attack, and burn the whole place, including Wis' cell. The spirits once again save Wis from his burning cell, whispering the warning signal to him. The spirits also inject an extraordinary energy into his weak body that makes him able to penetrate the fire and literally elevate himself from the burning place.

Another of Wis' disappointment with God is that the Church in fact cannot do anything to protect him with the police looking for him. The Church, thus, gives him two choices: if he is indeed guilty as charged, he has to surrender his status as a priest; if he is innocent, he can still be a priest but he has to surrender himself to the police. Finding both choices unfair, Wis prefers living as a fugitive to staying in his hide-out in a local abbey and so changes his identity to Saman. His experience with Perabumulih draws him closer to the issues of human rights and labor problems. He joins an NGO dealing with those matters while waiting for his chance to leave the country.

Wis later meets his former student, Yasmin Moningkar, who has been a lawyer dealing with the NGO he takes part in. Yasmin tags along with Laila, his former long-term admirer from the junior high school where he used to teach them. Laila then introduces him to Sihar with his case against Texcoil. The four of them begin to work together. Yasmin, being the richest and the

smartest among them, promises to help Wis leave the country. She and Cok, her best friend, are finally able to send Wis away to New York after they win the case against Rosano and Texcoil.

Yasmin, Laila, Cok, and Shakuntala have been good friends since they were in elementary school. As the narrative shifts to Shakuntala's first-person point of view, the intimacy of their friendship is depicted, as well as Shakuntala's life. Shakuntala or Tala is portrayed as a young woman who strongly knows what she wants in life and stubbornly fights for what she believes in. Her father and her older sister call her a bitch because she has been sleeping with several men and women. She loves dancing and is able to get a scholarship to explore modern dance in New York.

Tala often lets herself drift into her own imaginary world. When she was a child, she used to describe herself as a dancing fairy. Tala portrays her father as a cruel man. Her childhood house is a little castle surrounded by frightening giants. Her parents always warn her to stay away from those giants, yet she ends up falling in love with one of them. Her mother then tells her about the importance of her virginity, to keep it until she is married, and surrender her virginity to her beloved husband. Her parents finally decide to take their daughter to another city so she will not be able to meet her lover again. Therefore, the night before she is about to be separated from her sweetheart, Tala naively takes her virginity with a teaspoon, puts it in an antique box, and sends it to her lover. It marks the beginning of her long resistance against her parents, particularly against her father.

Her parents send her to an extra-ordinary strict school that, in her imagination, is a very peculiar building surrounded by a river so deep that ancient fish inhabited its depths. At school, she meets Laila, Yasmin, and Cok, and the four of them soon become friends.

Tala finds her three best friends as unique individuals. Laila has had a platonic love for Wis, still a future priest at that time who gives religious guidance in their school. Yasmin comes from a very wealthy family. Beautiful and tall, she is 'Miss Perfect'. Meanwhile, Cok is hopeless compared to Yasmin. Cok is Yasmin's foil character, who did not care about school or her parents. She spends her time mainly for fun, dates several boys in one week

and leaves all of them the following week. She and Tala have experienced sexual relationships since their teenage years while Yasmin and Laila piously keep themselves as virgins. Like Yasmin, Cok also comes from a rich family yet she is more relaxed than Yasmin. One day, Cok's parents find a condom in her school bag. Her parents become so angry that she is moved to Ubud, Bali. However, after high school graduation, the four of them are united once again in Jakarta: Cok is taking a tourism course; Yasmin gets a scholarship and takes up law in a state university; Laila is majoring in computer science; and Tala, against her parents' will, is enrolled in dance school.

In 1994, each of them settled with her own life. Cok is managing her family business in tourism and hotels; Yasmin is a successful lawyer dealing with human rights matters and seems happy with her marriage; Laila is enjoying her work as a profile writer and a photographer; and Tala is exploring modern dance in New York City, a place far from her father. In New York, they meet each other again: Laila wants to meet Sihar; Cok simply wants to introduce her latest boyfriend to her best friends; and Yasmin is about to deal with her human rights case related to Saman a.k.a Wis, who is hiding in New York and working as a part timer in one of the human rights offices in New York.

From Saman's letter to his father, and his emails to Yasmin, it has become obvious that he still has hidden urges to keep his perpetual vow, despite his open disappointment with God and the Church. As seen in one of his journal entries, on the latest night of his story in Medan before he was safely sent to Singapore with the help of Yasmin and Cok, Yasmin seduces Saman, which makes him see women and sexuality from a new perspective. Learning about Saman's inner conflict from his emails, Yasmin suddenly feels guilty and sees herself as 'Eve,' since she seduced Saman into bed with her. However, Saman is able to convince her that what she has done to him is the strangest, yet the most beautiful thing that has ever happened in his life. They intensely communicate through emails, expressing their sexual desire for each other. Yasmin sends an allegorical email on a Biblical story, underlying the urge that she is in need of a man to save her from her barrenness. Saman responds with the story of Tamar and Judah, allegorically portraying the weakness and

the lack of value for a woman who failed to procreate. Although Saman can only promise Yasmin an imaginary sexual intimacy, he cannot wait to meet Yasmin, who will seduce him once again.

Saman/Wis and the four female characters are interconnected throughout the fiction. The story is presented through several points of view, and through narratives, letters and emails. There are small details intentionally and casually dropped as the plot develops and the sub-plots emerge. They add up to produce a powerful tale with the touch of Javanese mystic about the diversity of modern Indonesian women who are searching for justice and freedom. The fiction leaves the reader with cliff-hangers that open for more interpretations and personalized conclusions.

Appendix B. **Biography of the Authors**

Sirikit Syah (b.1960)

Sirikit Syah was born in Surabaya in 1960 on the day when Queen Sirikit of Thailand visited Indonesia. She has been writing since elementary school. She took her BA in English Literature in the Department of Languages and Art, IKIP Surabaya, and completed the program in 1984 with a thesis on Hemingway's short stories. Sirikit Syah is known as a writer and a lecturer. Her field is mass media and journalism, even though she also study language and literature and write fiction. Sirikit is now teaching at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Surabaya. She also manages Sirikit School of Writing, which she founded in 2012. Her Media Watch organization has a regular program in JTV "Melek Media" (Media Literacy, a talk show on the practice and ethics of mass media and journalism).

In the past, Sirikit worked as a reporter at *Surabaya Post*, the *Jakarta Post*, and the *Brunei Times*. She also worked at SCTV-RCTI as reporter, news producer, and assign editor. Her study was in language and literature (first degree, Surabaya State University, 1984), Communication Science

(University of Westminster, UK, Master of Arts, 2002), and she completed her doctoral degree at Surabaya State University. Her dissertation is on how mass media use language in reporting terrorism issues.

Her published books are: *Media Massa di Bawah Kapitalisme* (essays on mass media and journalism, 1999), *Harga Perempuan* (short story anthology, 1997), *Mohammad* (translation of Karen Armstrong, 2001), *Politik, Budaya dan Media Massa di Indonesia Orde Baru* (translation of David T. Hill and Krishna Sen, 2001), *Internet di Indonesia* (translation David T. Hill, 2007), *Memotret dengan Kata-kata* (Poetry anthology, 2005), *Sensasi Selebriti* (short story anthology, 2007), *Rambu-rambu Jurnalistik* (Journalism Signs, a book on media ethics and law, 2011), *Watch the Dog* (essays of mass media and journalism, 2012), *Membincang Pers dan Kepala Negara* (essays on the press vs the presidents, 2014).

She also edited *Keadilan untuk Semua* (2003), *Rekonstruksi Pendidikan* (2011), *Bunga Rampai Pendidikan Karakter* (2012). She used to have a column in *Surya* and *Surabaya Post*, but now she writes as a freelance writer. Sirikit Syah has given speech on mass media and journalism in Freedom Forum, London-UK; AMIC Forum, Penang-Malaysia; University of North Dakota-USA; and La Trobe University, Melbourne-Australia; and other national dan international seminars and workshops di Indonesia. She is married, has two children and one grandchild.

Ayu Utami (b. 1968)

Ayu Utami was born in Bogor, West Java, on November 21, 1968. Ayu Utami is an Indonesian writer. She has written novels, short stories, and articles. *Saman* (1998) is widely considered her masterpiece. It was translated into English by Pamela Allen in 2005. By writing about sex and politics, Utami addressed issues formerly forbidden to Indonesian women.

Ayu Utami grew up in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. She obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of Indonesia, where she studied Russian language and literature. During her college years she began publishing reports and essays in newspapers. In 1990, she was selected as a finalist in *Wajah Femina*, a beauty pageant in Indonesia. However, she

did not pursue a modelling career because of her dislike of cosmetics and make-up. She has been a journalist for Indonesian magazines, including *Humor*, *Matra*, *Forum Keadilan*, and *D&R*. Shortly after Suharto banned three magazines in 1994 (*Tempo*, *Editor*, and *Detik*) during the New Order era, Ayu joined Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Alliance of Independent Journalists) to protest the ban. She continued her journalistic work underground, which included the anonymous publication of a black book on corruption in the Suharto regime.

Utami's first novel, *Saman*, appeared in 1998, only a few weeks before the fall of Suharto, helping to signal the changing cultural and political landscape in Indonesia. The novel won the Jakarta Arts Council's first prize that year and caused a sensation, and controversy, among Indonesian artists and intellectuals. It was acclaimed by many reviews and was considered a new milestone in Indonesian literature. *Saman* also won the Prince Claus Award in 2000. It has sold over 100,000 copies and been reprinted 34 times. The sequel to *Saman*, *Larung* was published in 2001.

Ayu Utami currently works for Radio 68H, an independent news radio station that is broadcast all over the country, and as a writer for the cultural journal *Kalam* and in Teater Utan Kayu in Jakarta. Her play and book protesting against anti-pornography legislation, *Pengadilan Susila* ("Susila's Trial"), appeared in 2008.

Notes

1. It is the governmental period after Soekarno's government ended in 1966. Soeharto, Indonesia's second president, and their followers named their successor-government as the "New Order" and by 1967 had instituted fundamental reorientations of most major economic, political, and foreign policies. The "New Order" regime ended in 1998.
2. The notion of 'feminism' in Indonesia has been considered as a westernized female attempt to overcome men, something which requires consideration to be adopted in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the term 'emancipation' is considered less radical than 'feminism,' in which the society perceives it as women's struggle to achieve equality with men, and not domination over men.
3. All subsequent quotations are from *Harga Perempuan* ("The Woman's Price") by Sirikit Syah.
4. KORPRI stands for Korps Pegawai Negeri Indonesia (Corps of the Government Officers of the Republic of Indonesia).
5. Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) is a required immersion program and field study in a rural area for senior students in universities, from which they shall gather enough data that might support their thesis.
6. It is an abbreviation of (a) kangmas, a Javanese term of reference and address for elder brothers or (b) dimas, a Javanese term of reference and address for younger brother.
7. It is an abbreviation of mbakyu, a Javanese term of reference and address for elder sisters.
8. A (female) teacher; Bu is an abbreviation of ibu.
9. The wife of the chief of district, or camat.
10. All subsequent quotations are from *Saman* by Ayu Utami.
11. A Moslem religious leader who acts as a link between the groom and the bride and who marries them.
12. All subsequent quotations are from *Harga Perempuan* ("The Woman's Prince") by Sirikit Syah.
13. A Javanese wavy double-bladed dagger that is believed to give supernatural power to its owner.
14. All subsequent quotations are from *Saman* by Ayu Utami.
15. Younger brother or sister.
16. Javanese term of address for "grandmother."
17. Javanese term of address for God.
18. Arjuna is the chief hero of the Mahabharata, known for his martial and sexual prowess.

19. A Javanese hired dancer, usually during a performance at feasts. Some honored spectators are welcome to dance with the ledek.
20. Paid dancing or singing girl, sometimes also available for sex.
21. Civics education. It is a required subject for all school levels beginning from elementary school.

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Vyrna, S.S., M.A., completed her BA in Literature from Petra Christian University in Surabaya, Indonesia, in 1996. In 2001, she finished her MA in English Literature and Cultural Studies from Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines. She was a lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University until 2005. At present, she is the principal of Maria Regina High School, an international Catholic School in Semarang, Indonesia.