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FRAGILITY IN HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *HIKAYAT RAJA DAMSYIK* AND *WAWACAN AHMAD MUHAMMAD*

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya mengkaji narasi petualangan pangeran dalam naskah kuno bukan hanya sebagai representasi kepahlawanan, tetapi juga sebagai cermin struktur gender yang hegemonik dan kompleks. Tujuan penelitian adalah membandingkan konstruksi dan kerapuhan maskulinitas hegemonik dalam *Hikayat Raja Damsyik* (Melayu) dan *Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad* (Sunda). Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan kajian komparatif. Data berupa narasi teks suntingan filologis kedua karya dikumpulkan melalui studi pustaka dengan pendekatan hermeneutik, lalu dianalisis menggunakan teori maskulinitas R.W. Connell dan sastra komparatif Susan Bassnett. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam HRD, maskulinitas hegemonik dibangun melalui legitimasi simbolik status kebangsawanan dan relasi spiritual, sedangkan dalam WAM dibentuk melalui negosiasi ekonomi, performa emosional, dan pengaruh simbolik. Temuan mengungkap kerapuhan maskulinitas hegemonik yang terus dinegosiasikan melalui resistensi perempuan dan kelemahan internal tokoh laki-laki. Implikasi teoretis penelitian ini memperkaya pemahaman kompleksitas gender dalam sastra Nusantara, sementara implikasi praktisnya membuka ruang kajian lanjutan mengenai ideologi gender dalam perspektif budaya dan historis.

Kata Kunci: *Hikayat Raja Damsyik*, *Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad*, maskulinitas rapuh, maskulinitas hegemonik, Melayu, Sunda

Abstract

This study is motivated by the importance of examining the narrative of the prince's adventures in ancient manuscripts not only as a representation of heroism, but also as a reflection of hegemonic and complex gender structures. The purpose of this study is to compare the construction and fragility of hegemonic masculinity in *Hikayat Raja Damsyik* (Malay) and *Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad* (Sundanese). The method used is qualitative with comparative study. Data in the form of edited philological text narratives of both works were collected through literature study with a hermeneutic approach, then analyzed using R.W. Connell's theory of masculinity and Susan Bassnett's comparative literature. The results show that in HRD, hegemonic masculinity is constructed through the symbolic legitimization of aristocratic status and spiritual relations, while in WAM it is formed through economic negotiation, emotional performance, and symbolic influence. The findings reveal the fragility of hegemonic masculinity, which is continuously negotiated through female resistance and the internal weaknesses of male characters. The theoretical implications of this research enrich the understanding of gender complexity in Nusantara literature, while the practical implications open up space for further study of gender ideology from a cultural and historical perspective.

Keywords: *Hikayat Raja Damsyik*, *Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad*, fragile masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, Malay, Sundanese

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works, as a cultural product, not only represent the individual imagination but also become a mirror of the values, social structures, and ideological conflicts of their time (Damono, 1984). As part of society, writers pour their responses to reality into texts, including ancient manuscripts, so that literary works can serve as a window to understand a society's view of the world (Eagleton, 1983). One of the social constructs that is often immortalized in ancient texts, especially through the adventure genre, is the narrative of heroic journeys. Adventure stories not only serve as entertainment, but also as a vehicle for negotiating collective values, civilizational ambitions, and concepts of identity, including gender identity (Said, 1994).

Narratives of escape or departure from the place of origin, confrontation with challenges, and the formation of identity on the journey often form an element of masculinity in adventure stories. *Hikayat Raja Damsyik* (here in after referred to as *HRD*) from the Malay and *Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad* (here in after referred to as *WAM*) from Sunda are two examples of texts that depict the main characters who must leave their homeland, face various challenges, and build their identity along the way. As Connell (2000) points out, patterns of masculinity vary across different places, cultures, and historical periods. The theme of escape in literature offers a unique opportunity to analyze how these variations are reflected in the experiences of the main characters. *HRD* and *WAM*, respectively, feature a prince's escape narrative that is rich in adventure elements. The use of the term escape in this paper was chosen as a key concept to analyze the narrative of the princes' journey in *HRD* and *WAM*, although the two texts have different motives.

In *HRD*, although the disappearance of a character into the forest is not driven by physical threats or explicit conflict, the term escape remains relevant if understood more broadly as a process of separation from the original social space, whether due to supernatural intervention,

fate or divine will. By expanding the definition of escape to include cultural and metaphysical dimensions, the term remains coherent as a framework of comparative analysis. This research confirms that flight—both triggered by fate and threats—is a starting point for exploring the construction of masculinity through the dynamics of struggle, resilience, and interaction with the “other”. The use of the term escape not only maintains theoretical consistency, but also reflects the complexity of the narrative in both manuscripts.

This study uses these two texts to examine how cultural contexts shape representations of masculinity in the escape story. Masculinity is a diverse and complex collective habit of men, a performative game that is legitimized by peers or fellow men in a given social sphere. This includes various forms of masculinity that are idealized and accepted by society.

HRD, which is stored in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia with the call code W 164, has the form of a poem with the title *Syair Raja Damasik* (manuscript code W 260) by Haji Ibrahim Datuk Kaya Muda Riau. The transformation of this story into a poem reflects the trend of poetry that was popular on Penyengat Island at that time (Rahmi et al., 2024). The story tells the story of two princes, Syah Firman and Saif al-Kamar, who are separated and have to fight for survival. Their escape is colored by fighting against supernatural creatures, traveling across foreign lands, and proving themselves as worthy leaders. In *HRD*, masculinity is seen in physical and mental toughness in the face of danger, as well as how they use trials as a foothold to develop into stronger and wiser figures.

Meanwhile, *WAM* has a form of saduran titled *Petualangan Pangeran Kembar*. This adaptation is done to reconstruct a fantasy world that is worthy of being enjoyed by teenagers with a light writing style without eliminating the structure of the original story (Jenura, 2020). In the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, ten *WAM manuscripts* with various call codes were found. *WAM* tells the story of two twin brothers, Ahmad

and Muhammad, who are forced to leave their home to avoid danger. Their escape is not just a physical journey, but also a mental and emotional test. They faced hunger, exhaustion, and betrayal, which forced them to act with intelligence and courage. Their masculinity is built on the courage to survive, make difficult decisions, and show loyalty to each other.

Based on these two texts, it can be concluded that the concept of escape in the adventure script is not only an attempt to escape from a threat, but also a process of forming the identity of a man who is required to be brave, resilient, and intelligent in facing life's challenges. These two manuscripts, with significant differences in genre and cultural context, make ideal objects of study to analyze how the construction of masculinity is shaped by cultural factors and the experience of escape. Both reflect the way their respective societies face historical, geographical, and spiritual challenges. Therefore, this study aims to compare *HRD* and *WAM* texts to find out the construction of masculinity in escape in both texts based on the cultural context, class, and social role of prince figures.

This research departs from the problem of differences in the representation of masculinity in *HRD* and *WAM*, two ancient texts that reflect the differences in Malay and Sundanese cultures. Although both texts are themed on the prince's adventures, the constructed masculinity shown appears to be different, suggesting the strong influence of cultural context on the formation of masculine identity. This difference is seen in various aspects, such as the concept of heroism, the role of destiny, survival strategies, and the mystical elements present in the narrative. Understanding these differences requires in-depth comparative analysis. Therefore, this study formulates a research question, namely how masculinity is manifested in the texts of the *HRD* and the *WAM*?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of masculinity in literature has become a rich and diverse field of study. R. W. Connell's (2020); (2000) theory of masculinity

provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how masculinity is socially and culturally constructed, as well as how it is represented in various forms. Connell introduced key concepts such as hegemonic masculinity (a dominant and idealized form of masculinity in a society), complex masculinity (a form of masculinity that benefits from hegemonic masculinity without having to actively oppress), subordinate masculinity (a form of masculinity that is oppressed or perceived inferior), and marginal masculinity (a form of masculinity that is marginalized due to factors such as race, class, or sexuality). These concepts are particularly relevant to analyze how masculinity is displayed in *HRD* and *WAM*. Aurita, et. al (2017) in their research on "Konstruksi Maskulinitas dalam Cerita Rakyat Jawa" shows how local cultural values influence the formation of masculine identities in traditional narratives. They found that Javanese folklore often featured ideal male figures with traits such as courage, physical strength, and wisdom. This research highlights the importance of considering cultural context in analyzing masculinity in literature.

There are several studies that have discussed *HRD* and *WAM*. Asandhimitra (1984) in her undergraduate thesis "*Hikayat Raja Damsyik: Edisi Naskah dan Tinjauan Beberapa Unsur Strukturnya*" provides an in-depth analysis of the narrative structure and important elements in *HRD*. This research highlights how the *HRD* follows the traditional Malay narrative structure, focusing on themes such as power, love, and sacrifice. Rahman (2002) in "*Syair Raja Damsyik: Seri Karya dan Studi Haji Ibrahim Datuk Kaya Muda Riau*" discusses the transformation of the *HRD* into the form of poetry. This research is important because it shows how the *HRD* was adapted and reinterpreted in different cultural contexts. (Rahmi et al., 2024) examine the intertextuality of the Raja Damsyik poems, which deepens our understanding of how literary texts interconnect

and influence each other. Arifah (2025) in “Ekspansi Alur Syair Raja Damsyik dari Alur Hikayat Raja Damsyik” further analyzes how the storyline in *Syair Raja Damsyik* develops from *Hikayat Raja Damsyik*.

Harijatiwidjaja and Masduki (2000) in “*Alih Aksara dan Alih Bahasa Wawacan Ahmad Muhammad*” made an important contribution in facilitating access to the *WAM* manuscript. Jenura (2020) in *Petualangan Pangeran Kembar* explains the process of plating *WAM* for teenagers, showing how this story remains relevant and interesting to modern readers. However, it should be noted that these studies generally focus on the structural, linguistic, or historical aspects of both manuscripts. There has been no research that specifically analyzes how masculinity is represented in the *HRD* and *WAM* using a comprehensive theoretical framework. In addition, the genre differences between *hikayat* and *wawacan* also need to be explored further. *Hikayat*, as part of the classical Malay literary tradition, tends to have certain characteristics, such as the use of formal language and a focus on royal figures. Meanwhile, *wawacan*, as part of the Sundanese literary tradition, may have different characteristics, such as the use of more everyday language and a focus on themes that are closer to people's lives.

Although a number of studies have analyzed *HRD* and *WAM* separately, the focus is generally on structural, linguistic, or historical aspects. There has been no research that comprehensively compares the construction of masculinity in the two texts using a comprehensive theoretical framework such as Connell's theory. This study fills the gap by offering an in-depth comparative analysis, using Connell's theory to identify the types of masculinity represented (hegemonic, complex, subordinate, marginal) and Susan Bassnett's comparative literary theory to compare the representation of adventure and survival strategies in *HRD* and *WAM*. Thus, this research will contribute to a richer understanding of the

representation of masculinity in archipelago literature and how cultural contexts shape the social construction of masculinity in the context of prince adventures.

3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design to analyze the construction of masculinity in the context of the escape of princes in *HRD* and *WAM*. The primary data sources are the *HRD* text edits compiled by Asandhimitra (1984) and *WAM* edits and language translations by Harijatiwidjaja and Masduki (2000). The selection of these edits is based on rigorous philological considerations, which include the inventory of the manuscript, the selection of basic manuscripts, and the presentation of texts that can be accounted for for further research. Secondary data in the form of studies on Malay and Sundanese culture were used to enrich the contextualization of interpretation.

Data collection was carried out through literature studies with the application of a hermeneutic approach. This hermeneutic analysis process is carried out through several systematic stages: (1) initial reading, namely the reading of *HRD* and *WAM* texts thoroughly and repeatedly to gain a complete understanding of the narrative and character of the characters; (2) identification of themes, namely the marking of parts of the text that represent the practice of power relations, production relations, and cathexis as in the framework of Connell's theory; (3) contextual interpretation, which is interpreting the data that has been identified by considering the historical, social, and cultural context of the Malay and Sundanese communities to understand the meaning behind the construction of masculinity; and (4) verification, which is to test the accuracy of interpretation by confirming it in supporting literature, such as historical studies of the structure of the Malay kingdom and the social system of the Sundanese people.

The overall data analysis is guided by the integration of two theoretical frameworks. Susan Bassnett's Comparative Literary Theory is used to fundamentally compare the representation of adventure, the concept of heroism, the structure of genres (sagas vs discourse), as well as the role of mystical elements in the two texts. Meanwhile, R. W. Connell's theory of Social Construction of Masculinity is used to analyze and categorize the practices of masculinity (hegemonic, complex, subordinate, marginal) carried out by princely figures. The results of the analysis are presented in a descriptive-analytical manner using narratives, direct text quotes, and comparison tables to support argumentation and interpretation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hegemony of masculinity can be formed in various practices of social life. Hegemony of masculinity can also be carried out by anyone, especially members of the masculine gender to suppress and subordinate members of the feminine or masculine gender group itself. Like in the story of adventure in *HRD* and *WAM*. In this saga and discourse, the practice of masculinity hegemony is manifested from the actions and characters of male figures named Syah Firman and Saif al Kamar (*HRD*) and Ahmad and Muhammad (*WAM*). The practice of masculinity hegemony is carried out by the Prince of Damsyik and Prince Sham in the story of his adventures with many female figures. The capital used by the Raja Damsyik and the Prince of Sham to practice it is *power relations*, *production relations*, and *cathexis* (desire) (Connell, 2020).

Power Relations

The practice of hegemony by taking advantage of the status of a prince has been seen from the beginning of the story. The adventure in *HRD* begins when Syah Firman and Saif al Kamar racehorses in the forest until finally they disappear without a trace and separate. It is said

that Saif al Kamar accidentally first met the princess Ratna Kumala Sari, a giant child.

“Dan hambalah bernama Saif al Kamar, anak Raja Damsyik dan sebab pun maka sampai kemari ini ...” maka diceterakannyalah daripada permulaannya datang pada peri ia bercerai dengan saudaranya. Telah didengar oleh tuan putri itu, maka terlalu sangat belas kasihan hatinya (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 27).

Syاهدan maka Saif al Kamar pun disembunyikan oleh tuan putri di atas mahligai (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 28).

The data explains when Saif al Kamar introduced himself to Princess Ratna Kumala Sari by stating that he was the son of the King of Damsyik. Recognition as the “anak Raja Damsyik” is not only a form of introduction, but also a declaration of social status and royal lineage that symbolically contains power and legitimacy. Saif al Kamar identity as a prince is used to build trust, sympathy, and even protection from female figures, in this case Ratna Kumala Sari. Their name and status play an important role as symbolic capital in these social interactions. Saif al-Kamar explained that he was separated from his brother (Syah Firman) while racing horses in the forest. This separation became the starting point of his adventure full of uncertainty. In the classical literary tradition, separation between siblings is often a metaphor for life tests or the search for identity.

Ratna Kumala Sari's emotional reaction is a form of acceptance and response influenced by the narrative of Saif al Kamar's suffering and his nobility status. This reflects how elite masculine status can invite empathy, not just because of humanity, but also because of the power structure inherent in it. Ratna Kumala Sari, although described as a “anak gergasi” or figure who may be associated with power or threat, actually shows a compassionate nature. He helped hide Saif al Kamar in his *mahligai* so that he would not

be eaten by his father. This indicates that the form of protection was mediated by Saif al Kamar's social status as a prince. In addition, the act of hiding Saif al Kamar by Ratna Kumala Sari shows the beginning of a relationship that is both personal and political. *Mahligai* as a symbol of women's private space and power, is now entered by high-status masculine figures, reflecting a shift in power and the symbolism of masculinity into the realm of women.

In the practice of masculinity hegemony, consent agreed to by the hegemonic party—as happened between Saif al Kamar and Ratna Kumala Sari—is an effective strategy in maintaining masculine dominance. Saif al Kamar did not impose power directly, but rather built an image as an elite man through his nobility identity. This is in line with Connell's opinion that masculinity hegemony is usually not carried out through violence, but through a form of symbolic approval that seems natural (2020). In this context, the hegemony of masculinity operates through a gender configuration that places men in authoritative positions through narratives of suffering, high social status, and interpersonal relationships that provoke empathy. Ratna Kumala Sari's acceptance of Saif al Kamar and his act of hiding the prince in the *mahligai* can be read as a form of symbolic consensus, where masculine dominance is accepted because it is wrapped in an image of leadership, protection, and heterosexual relationships that are beginning to be built. The *mahligai* as a space of women's power is a symbolic reproductive arena of hegemonic masculinity that shows how unequal gender relations can take place subtly, but effectively.

It didn't stop there, instead of Saif al Kamar who was supposed to return the favor to Ratna Kumala Sari, but when he was about to leave, he instead asked for some kind of provision (*address*) for his trip because he had nothing.

Ia berkata-kata itu sambil berlinang-linang air matanya, terkenangkan ayah bunda dan

saudaranya. Maka tuan putri pun belas hatinya melihat laku Saif al Kamar itu. Maka kata tuan putri, "Baiklah. Ada suatu hikmat hamba daripada nenek moyang hamba. Ada sebuah cembul manikam" (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 29).

Literally, Saif al Kamar seems to be in a weak and helpless position, losing his possessions, and dissolving in grief when he is about to leave to continue his journey in search of his brother. In this situation, instead of returning the favor as it should be, he asked for help again. Ratna Kumala Sari, who was supposed to be the party who was "dibalas budinya", showed empathy and gave something valuable in the form of *cembul manikam* or heirloom jewels inherited from her ancestors. On the other hand, although Saif al Kamar is a male figure who is culturally supposed to be in a superior position, in the quote he appears in a weak position. Instead of showing strength or returning favor to Ratna Kumala Sari, he instead asked for help.

What is interesting is Ratna Kumala Sari's response. Despite being in a social or narrative position that is supposed to be "weaker" because she is a woman, Ratna Kumala Sari shows empathy, generosity, and the power to give. He handed over the inheritance of his ancestors—*cembul manikam*—to Saif al Kamar. Women have a tendency to be positioned in an inferior group that must submit to male superiority (Sugiarti et al., 2022). This reverses the traditional gender hegemony structure where women are often givers, not just recipients; protectors, not just protected ones. Therefore, this quote implicitly criticizes the hegemonic structure of masculinity. Typically, a man avoids everything that is stereotyped as feminine (Kusumaningrum et al., 2025). These include feelings of fear, affectiveness, whining, tenderness, weakness, dependence, and the need for protection. In the end, men do the opposite of feminine stereotypes, such as being brave, strong, rude, independent, and protective (heroic). Saif al

Kamar not only appears as a superior man full of power, but also as a fragile figure who depends.

Not only in women, Saif al Kamar also openly showed his fragile side to his brother, Syah Firman. This was seen when Saif al Kamar refused to let go of the image of a very beautiful princess whose origin is unknown. Since Syah Firman could not bear to see his brother crying, he tried to find the princess for Saif al Kamar's happiness.

Maka kata Saif al Kamar dengan tangisnya, "Ya kakanda, jikalau tiada diberikan gambar itu akan beta, niscaya matilah beta di sini" (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 45).

This depiction shows how Saif al Kamar openly displays emotions culturally associated with "feminine" traits, such as crying and threatening suicide. The expression is contrary to the norms of hegemonic masculinity that uphold power, rationality, and emotional control. However, instead of weakening his position, this action actually strengthened his authority in power relations. Syah Firman—who represents hegemonic masculinity in the form of protection and rational decision-making—submits to his sister's emotional demands because of the moral impulse of brotherhood. In this regard, Connell's (2000) concept of masculinity hegemony becomes relevant. He emphasized that hegemonic masculinity is not singular or monolithic. Power can be achieved through seemingly unconventional strategies, including the use of vulnerability as a tool to mobilize sympathy and actions of others (*strategic emotional manipulation*).

The threat of Saif al Kamar ("niscaya matilah beta") became a dramatic form that reversed the conventional power structure in the family. Although he was hierarchically subordinate to Syah Firman, his emotional statement forced his brother to take on the role of a *rescuer*. This shows that power can come from

a position as a center of suffering and an object of empathy. On the other hand, Saif al Kamar still affirmed the *privilege* of noble men. Despite her weakness, she is still entitled to the protection, obedience, and sacrifice of other men in the elite group. This reflects *homosocial bonding* in patriarchal structures, as Connell explains, where solidarity between men reproduces masculine dominance in forms that are not always harsh or aggressive.

Saif al Kamar's interaction with Ratna Kumala Sari and Syah Firman further strengthens the complexity of power relations in *HRD*. On the one hand, Saif al Kamar displays emotional fragility (crying, suicide threats) that seem to violate the norms of hegemonic masculinity. But on the other hand, it is precisely through the performance of this vulnerability that he managed to mobilize the actions of Syah Firman as a protector. This pattern shows that within patriarchal structures, the fragility of elite men remains a tool of power. Not through physical domination, but through the claim of *privilege* for solidarity and sacrifice among men. Power relations in *HRD* work not only through symbolic status and empathy of women (as in Ratna), but also through *homosocial bonding* that maintains a masculine hierarchy even with unconventional strategies. In this context, the rational and solutive Syah Firman is positioned as a facilitator for Saif al Kamar's emotional interests, thus showing that hegemonic masculine power does not always have to appear mighty, but can operate through dependency legitimized by social status. In other words, Saif al Kamar allowed his fragility to be transformed into a capital of power, something that was not available to non-aristocratic or female figures in similar narratives.

Meanwhile, in *WAM*, the power relations displayed prioritize a mature strategy to perpetuate masculinity, unlike *HRD* which seems "natural". The following quote tells the story of the conflict between Nyi Randa—a widow who used to be an empress who had a magical parrot—

and a wealthy merchant from Habsya who wanted the bird. This perkutut bird is believed to have supernatural powers, eating its head makes a person a war leader and financial ruler, while eating its body makes a rich king. Although Nyi Randa initially refused to sell the bird—even when offered a large sum of money—she eventually handed it over to Kanda, her new husband. This negotiation process reflects the dynamics of power relations, gender, and masculinity.

It appears that the object in the form of a *perkutut* bird is a symbol of power, manliness, and worldly splendor. The male merchants fought for it, but the bird was in the power of a woman, namely Nyi Randa, a widow as a feminine figure usually placed subordinate in the patriarchal system. Within the framework of *hegemonic masculinity*, the desire to dominate the *perkutut* represents the drive to maintain and assert masculine superiority through a strategy of symbolic power. Nyi Randa, who has a masculine object, is outside the structure that is considered reasonable by hegemonic norms. Therefore, masculine power seeks to return the object to male control. This is part of the strategy of power relations in hegemonic masculinity, which is to limit women's access to symbols and sources of power.

Lagi pula untuk apa Nyi Randa, rasanya kurang pantas, seorang wanita memelihara burung perkutut, lebih baik memelihara ayam, anaknya banyak (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 23).

The data voices a patriarchal normative view that questions a woman's suitability to keep a *perkutut* bird—a symbol of male prestige and power—and compares it to chickens, as a symbol of domestication and reproduction. This is an explicit statement of *hegemonic masculinity*, which is an attempt to establish the roles and scopes that are considered appropriate for women. This statement reflects a form of

symbolic domination, in which women's values and identities are limited to domestic and reproductive functions only. The power relations strategy can be seen in how masculine identity is confirmed through the delegitimization of women's ownership of masculine objects.

He Nyi Randa, ku beri saja uang dinar yang banyak, atau pas seribu, pasti dibayar oleh Kanda. Nyi Randa menjawab lagi, meskipun uang berjuta-juta, saya tidak akan tergoda (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 24).

The data shows merchants trying to manipulate Nyi Randa's position by using wealth as a medium of exchange, but Nyi Randa firmly rejects it. This shows that power relations do not always go in the same direction. The offer of money is an explicit form of economic-based power relations in hegemonic masculinity. This offer is not just about money, but a symbol of male superiority and control. However, Nyi Randa's rejection reflects resistance to the strategy. In Connell's theory, this suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not always absolutely successful, but that there is always room for feminine resistance to domination. In this context, fragile masculinity refers to a condition when men feel “threatened” or lose power for failing to demonstrate their dominance normatively. Fragile masculinity does not mean that men are physically or literally weak, but rather that it is the worry and fragility of masculine identity when tools of domination such as money, power, or status are insufficient to maintain a position of superiority.

... Lalu Nyi Randa menyetujuinya, silakan saya mengikuti saja, begitu pula burung perkutut, meskipun kepunyaan saya, namun sekarang, segala sesuatunya, hanyalah Kanda pemiliknya (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 31-32).

In the end, Nyi Randa handed over the perkutut bird and its ownership to Kanda—Nyi Randa's new husband—a symbolic form of handing over power. Kanda manipulated Nyi Randa using magic and physical appearance to control her family's magical bird. Women are placed as passive victims controlled by masculine interests (wealth and power). Nyi Nanda's decision to hand over the perkutut reproduced the hegemony of masculinity where the ownership of the symbol of power must be in the hands of men (Kanda). This shows the internalization of patriarchal norms by women. Nyi Randa's actions reflect that women are "forced" to submit to a structure that favors hegemonic men. The power of Kanda as the "owner of everything" confirms an undeniable gender hierarchy. That is, hegemonic masculinity is not only imposed by men, but is also reproduced through female obedience.

Unlike *HRD* where women do not resist, in *WAM* women have time to resist even though in the end they have to submit to men. Power relations in *WAM* show masculine strategies in perpetuating dominance, especially through disguised but structured symbols and power narratives. In contrast to *HRD*, which presents hegemonic masculinity as if it were a natural nature or condition in the social order, *WAM* explicitly describes a systematic attempt to return symbols of power to male hands. This strategy was seen through economic and symbolic negotiations carried out by male figures against Nyi Randa.

It is important to note that the resistance carried out by Nyi Randa is a form of feminine agency that seeks to redefine the boundaries of power within a patriarchal framework. However, the strength of the hegemonic structure is so strong that even such resistance is eventually defeated by the established logic of domination. In this case, Kanda not only took over the perkutut bird as a masculine object but also positioned itself as the center of all forms of

domestic ownership and authority. Nyi Nanda's decision to hand over everything to Kanda, including ownership of the perkutut bird is proof of the internalization of patriarchal values in daily practice. If in *HRD* women tend to be passive and accept their subordinate positions without expressions of rejection, then *WAM* provides narrative space for women to play an active role, even though they are ultimately subject to patriarchal structures.

Raden Muhammad menangis seperti takut, segera oleh Danuk Bendara, disembah, dengan penuh rasa hormat, meskipun masih anak-anak (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 65).

The symbolism of respect and devotion that Danuk Bendara showed to Raden Muhammad—even children—represents a patriarchal hierarchical system in which men as authority figures receive respect that affirms the power of masculinity. It was an extreme form of respect in the feudal or royal system, which showed the existence of a hierarchical structure in social relations, especially between the nobility and the common people. This shows that masculine power is not only based on active or aggressive behavior, but is also shaped and legitimized by social and symbolic positions. Danuk Bendara worshipped not because of Raden Muhammad's courage or strength, but because of his symbolic position as a nobleman's son. This is an example of power relations in which male status is inherited and socially affirmed from an early age.

At the same time, her expression of fear indicates the potential for fragile masculinity, which is when masculine norms fail to be maintained in personal expression. Raden Muhammad cried out of fear—conventionally—that emotional expressions such as crying were considered contrary to hegemonic masculine norms, which tended to demand constancy, courage, and self-control. This fragility did not invalidate his authority because his social

position still guaranteed the respect he received. However, it shows that hegemonic masculinity is very vulnerable to performance and expectations. This illustrates the tension between masculine identities defined by social (symbolic) structures and personal expressions that can conflict with those norms. This quote combines two faces of masculinity, namely as a rigid and hierarchical social structure (Raden Muhammad is respected for his status) and as a performative identity that can be fragile (he cries, showing fear, which can be normatively considered "unmasculine"). However, the patriarchal system and power structure still guarantee his superiority, even when his emotional expressions reveal his fragility. This is where the fragility of masculinity becomes hidden behind its structural privileges.

These differences show that hegemonic masculinity is not uniform, but contextual and adaptive (Beynon, 2002). It can appear as "natural" and inevitable as in *HRD* or as a construction that must be continuously negotiated and enforced as in *WAM*. Thus, this analysis shows that the hegemony strategy of masculinity depends not only on men's actions to control symbols of power, but also on how women are positioned—and positioned—in the system. Whether through voluntary surrender, or through negotiations and resistance that ultimately failed, women remain part of the reproductive cycle of patriarchal power (Drianus et al., 2019). This shows that hegemonic masculinity is dynamic, takes place in a space of conflict, and constantly seeks legitimacy through complex strategies.

The difference in representation of power relations and masculinity in *HRD* (Malay) and *WAM* (Sundanese) can be traced through the socio-cultural context, value system, and power structure that are distinctive in the two societies. In Malay culture, hegemonic masculinity is often maintained through symbolic legitimacy associated with nobility status and spiritual narratives, whereas in Sundanese culture, masculine hegemony is more built through

economic pressure and internalized domestic norms. These differences reflect not only variations in cultural strategies, but also responses to different social hierarchical systems.

In the Malay society, as depicted in *HRD*, the power of the kingdom and aristocratic lineage became the backbone of the social structure. Saif al Kamar was nobility as the "son of the King of Damsyik" was not just an identity, but a symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that gave him automatic access to empathy, protection, and resources. This is in line with the Malay tradition that places the aristocratic class as the center of power, where political and spiritual legitimacy comes from the divinity of the king. Furthermore, the concept of *sovereignty* (the authority of the king) in Malay makes the status of nobility the highest source of power, which is reproduced through the myths and literature of the palace (Andaya, 2001) (Reid, 2001). Ratna Kumala Sari, despite having physical strength as a "giant child", still submits to the patriarchal logic that binds women as moral guardians and emotional support providers for elite men. The hegemony of masculinity here works subtly through cultural consent (Connell, 2020), where male dominance is considered natural because it is wrapped in a narrative of suffering, chivalry, and spirituality.

On the other hand, in the Sundanese context—as depicted in *WAM*—power relations are more related to economic and domestic dynamics. Traditional Sundanese society, although also patriarchal, has a more fragmented social structure, where power is not only monopolized by the nobility, but also by the merchant and peasant classes that own the land (Wessing, 1997). The scramble for magical *perkutut* in *WAM* reflects economic competition as a means of affirming hegemonic masculinity. The statement that "women are not appropriate to keep *perkutut* birds" Harijatiwidjaja and Masduki (2000) shows an attempt to delegitimize women from public spaces that are considered masculine. Nyi Randa's obedience to hand over the bird to

her husband, Kanda, reflects the *patriarchal bargain* (Kandiyoti, 1988), in which women internalize patriarchal norms for the sake of social security, even at the expense of autonomy.

Production Relations

Production relations are part of the gender structure used by masculine gender to distinguish between male and female employment. In this context, production relations reflect not only economic structure, but also gender-based power relations. This means that there are several activities that are associated with certain genders, in the context of *HRD*, this can be seen in equestrian and flower arranging activities. Not only with women, but this difference also appears between men where Syah Firman carries more responsibility than Saif al Kamar.

Maka Syah Firman pun masuk ke dalam bilik, memakai cara Perempuan (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 49-50).

The data shows strategic and symbolic steps. Syah Firman adopted a feminine role to enter the private realm of women. However, this action does not mean subversion of the gender order but rather strengthens the goal of male domination where Syah Firman wants to arrange the marriage of Princess Indra Seloka and Saif al Kamar. Syah Firman's disguise as a woman is not a form of resistance to normative gender, but a masculine tactic to access the private realm of women that should be closed to her. In Connell's context, this can be seen as a form of flexibility in hegemonic masculinity that is able to adopt other forms strategically, but still with the aim of controlling and regulating gender relations according to its interests. Arranged marriage is part of the production of social relationships that maintain a gender hierarchy.

Maka tuan putri pun menangis terlalu sangat seraya katanya, "Sebagai laku patik bercerai dengan ayahanda bunda, sebab

patik tiada mau bersama, maka berbagai-bagai kehendak patik pada segala anak raja-raja itu. Sebab inilah maka sekarang patik bercerai dengan ayahanda bunda" (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 80).

The quote describes the deep inner conflict in Princess Indra Seloka when facing a change in her social status as a noble woman. She broke down in tears when she revealed the reason for her separation from her father and mother, which was because she had chosen to be with the man of her own choice—even though the choice took place within the framework of binding social norms and structures. The statement “various will of the kings in all the sons of the kings” indicates that the Princess had autonomy in determining a partner, but this freedom was still limited by the demands of the customs and her social position as a woman in the patrilocal system. After marriage, she had to leave her parents' house and move to her husband's power room (*Damsyik*). This reflects the logic of patrilocality, in which women are positioned as tools to expand the networks of male power, in this case, strengthening Saif al-Kamar political alliances through the institution of marriage.

Putri Indra Seloka's Cry reveals the emotional dilemma between love and attachment to parents and the obligation to submit to the husband's decisions and social norms. Interestingly, these emotional expressions do not develop into a form of rejection or active resistance. Rather, her grief is part of a ritual of obedience that reinforces hegemony, namely the understanding that suffering is a “natural” and even noble part of a wife's role. This quote contains a narrative about how women's emotions are used to reproduce the patriarchal social order.

Maka lalu ia tampil dengan panahnya, sambil katanya, "Mengapa kamu sekalian lari ini? Jikalau tiada engkau terlalu pergilah engkau kembali. Biarlah aku seorang melawannya sekalian rakyat itu" (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 83).

Saif al Kamar emerged as a heroic figure who took a singular initiative in the face of danger. He came out with his weapon—an arrow—and vocally rebuked those who fled the battle. The words “*Biarlah aku seorang melawannya sekalian rakyat itu*” became his declaration of courage. Not only does he challenge the enemy, but he also positions himself as the only figure willing to take responsibility for the safety of the group. However, if the broader context is examined, there is an irony: Saif al-Kamar did not kill hundreds of enemies as Syah Firman did but only saved his wife and killed the king's two children. This distinction is important because it illustrates the tension between the real action and the performative nature of the heroism on display.

His actions were personal, not leading to collective interests as Syah Firman did. If you look at the production relationship, Saif al Kamar is in a passive position. He took advantage of Syah Firman's courageous momentum to achieve his own goals without taking great risks on the battlefield. In this context, Saif al Kamar can be categorized as a *fragile masculinity* figure. Although Saif al Kamar was not entirely passive—because he still acted and had a role—he did not demonstrate the capacity for full masculinity within the hegemonic framework described through courage, sacrifice, and public leadership as in Shah Jaran. It is the same in marrying Princess Indra Seloka who is assisted by the help of Syah Firman.

... maka datanglah pada suatu hari Syah Firman berkata pada Saif al Kamar, “Ya adinda, manakala kita akan berjalan?” maka sahut Saif al Kamar, “Tiga hari lagi tuan kita berjalan. Di dalam pada itu pun mana bicara kakandalah adinda turut” (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 99).

Maka titah baginda, “Jika jangan keras anakku Syah Firman, apa jadinya saudaramu Saif al Kamar ini?” (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 104).

In the first quote, Syah Firman asks Saif al Kamar about their departure plans. Although asking, in a narrative context, the question shows the subtle dominance of Shah Jarat. Saif al Kamar's response, which stated that he would follow whatever Syah Firman commanded, reflected sincere obedience and without resistance. Here, the relationship between the brothers is not equal, even though they are formally both princes—equal status in the royal structure. However, in practice, Syah Firman appears as a dominant figure, both in terms of initiative, decisions, and emotional leadership. The second quote reinforces Syah Firman's superior position when their father stated that if Syah Firman was not strong or “hard”, then Saif al-Kamar would suffer setbacks or even failures. The king placed his hopes on the Shah, placing him as a representation of power and responsibility. This is not just a matter of trust, but a form of delegation of authority from fathers to boys who are considered more masculinely competent.

Syah Firman, in these two quotes, manifests hegemonic masculinity through the mastery of production relations in the social and symbolic context of the kingdom. He arranged and led Saif al Kamar's actions, controlled travel decisions, and became the main backup for his father. She became the dominant masculinity production figure who not only ruled, but also produced and maintained male authority structures in both the private (family) and public (kingdom) spaces. On the other hand, Saif al Kamar displays a form of subordinate masculinity, not because of physical or emotional weakness alone, but because of his symbolic position that does not dominate the relations of masculinity production. He submits, follows, and does not take over the initiative. The relationship between the two shows that masculinity does not stand alone, but is produced and reproduced through concrete social relationships. This production relationship is also not neutral, because it determines who can access

the power symbol and who is only the executor of the power.

After understanding that hegemonic masculinity in traditional texts is often represented through mastery of production, power, and symbolic relations, it can be examined how the construction of masculine gender in *WAM* reveals the process of production of masculinity itself. If in the figure of Syah Firman and Saif al-Kamar the power relations are seen through the structural dynamics in the palace and family space, then in the case of Raden Ahmad and Muhammad, masculinity is produced through concrete experiences in the war room. This context shows how the value of courage and military ability is an important part of symbolic capital in shaping male identity. This is evident in the following quote:

Luar biasa Raden Ahmad dan Muhammad, padahal hanya melawan anak-anak, apalagi kalau sudah besar, nakhoda Habsi berkata, oleh karena itulah raja Hasbi, kita jaga burung tersebut, tidak segera bersedia. Perang itu dimenangkan oleh Ahmad dan Muhammad, karena hamba mendengar, ada satu riwayat, yang akan menghancurkan Habsah, tidak ada yang berani, selain, tentu saja Ahmad dan Muhammad (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 55).

This quote shows the active role of Raden Ahmad and Muhammad in the activities of struggle or war which are part of the production relations in their social context. Masculinity is produced and characterized through courage, physical strength, and success in war, which is a form of male roles and work in society. Raden Ahmad and Muhammad appear as the main characters who are active in war activities. In fact, the praise for their courage (even though it is only against children, especially when they are grown) marks that they are not just passive figures, but part of the power and social structures that actively shape their identity as men. According to Connell, masculinity is not a biological trait, but

rather a social construct that is produced and reproduced through production, power, and symbolic relations. In this case, the production relations of masculinity refer to the division of labor and roles in society that place men in positions of value and power production, for example as soldiers, war leaders, or protectors of territory. The courage, physical strength, and military capabilities of Raden Ahmad and Muhammad became symbolic and social capital in the patriarchal structure of society.

The phrase “perang itu dimenangkan oleh Ahmad dan Muhammad” is not just a heroic story, but a testament to the performative success of hegemonic masculinity. They are not only able to fight, but also win. In a society that glorifies military power, victory itself is a form of masculinity production. War, military work, and violence are arenas in which the male body is produced and interpreted as an instrument of power. In this context, Ahmad and Muhammad's bodies are not only biological, but have become representations of masculine values such as courage, assertiveness, and success. The statement from the Habsi skipper who said "it is necessary to take care of the bird" and the acknowledgment that no one can defeat except Ahmad and Muhammad show that the structure of society affirms their masculine role. This is a form of institutional support for hegemonic masculinity. The society around them (including figures such as the captain Habsi) serves as an agency that affirms and distributes this masculine power.

The difference in the relationship between masculinity production in Malay and Sundanese cultures does not appear randomly, but is shaped by the historical conditions, social structure, and cultural orientation of each community. Malay culture (especially in sagas and poems) is rooted in a hierarchical and centralistic feudal royal structure, where the authority of kings and nobles strongly determines social positions. In this system, the relations of masculinity production are determined by proximity to the center of

power, such as palaces, offices, or hereditary status. As a result, masculinity is produced and maintained through symbolic and political roles—being counselors, royal leaders, or mediators in alliance marriages. Meanwhile, Sundanese culture in texts such as *WAM* is more rooted in a dynamic agrarian and religious social system. There is greater room for individuals to prove their worth through hard work, wandering, and spirituality. Therefore, the production relations of masculinity are not only monopolized by the nobility or formal symbols of power, but are also open to anyone who demonstrates courage, ingenuity, and moral fortitude.

In addition, in Malay culture, masculine identity is closely linked to symbolic stability and social order. Appearance, speech, and political maneuvers are the main means of showing masculinity. Strategies such as the disguise of Syah Firman or arranging marriages are not just tactics, but part of a power ideology that is deeply rooted in the Malay value system. In contrast, Sundanese culture values masculinity more based on real action, courage, and contribution to the welfare of the community, especially through struggle and spirituality. In this context, the production relations of masculinity are more meritocratic and flexible, since they rely not only on birth status, but on personal achievements.

Classical Malay literature has a strong function as a legitimacy of power and reproduction of the value of the palace. Thus, narratives often present the male figure as the dominant figure in a static social system. The stories focus on the rearrangement of power, so that masculinity is produced within the framework of control, planning, and symbolism. In Malay texts, religion is often attached to the legitimacy of power, so that proximity to religious values is used to strengthen masculine positions (e.g., the role of Syah Firman as a wise figure, full of strategy). In Sundanese texts such as *WAM*, the storyline is more colored by adventure, transformation, and odyssey that gives ample space to individual processes in forming masculinity. The production of masculinity in this

narrative focuses more on the dynamics of change and inner experience, rather than just fixed social status. In Sundanese culture, religion is part of the spirituality of travel and self-development. Masculinity is produced through practice, sacrifice, and a personal relationship with divine power.

Cathexis

Cathexis are practices that shape and manifest desires, motives, or psychic energies derived from the id used for a particular object or to satisfy an instinct manifested in a series of sexual desires and instinctive desires. The goal is to produce a movement or image that will satisfy the instinct for object selection. Since *cathexis* is related to sexual desire, one of its legitimacy is the institution of marriage. The institution of marriage is one of the many ways in which humans achieve the satisfaction of sexual desires.

... terlalu sangat berahinya gambar itu seraya katanya, “Hai kakanda, berilah adinda gambar itu.” Maka kata Syah Firman, “Apa gunanya pada kakanda gambar ini, papan sekeping itu? Jikalau yang empunya gambar itu, berahi juga aku akan dia”. Maka kata Saif al Kamar, “Gilakah kakanda ini, tiada mau mengambil ini?” Maka kata Syah Firman, “Aku tiada gila. Barangsiapa berahikan gambar itu, ialah yang gila” (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 45).

This quote shows the form of *cathexis* in the form of erotic desire triggered by female imagery. According to Connell, *cathexis* refers to the social regulation of desires and emotional expressions related to gender relations and sexuality. In this quote, men's desire for a female figure is expressed through the object of the image, which not only arouses passion, but also regulates how men should respond to the image of beauty. Syah Firman, who called the person who uploaded the image “crazy”, implied resistance to the objectification, but paradoxically, he himself

admitted to being if he met the owner of the image. This reflects the contradiction in the hegemonic masculinity system, which is the tug-of-war between personal desires and masculine social norms. Syah Firman's rejection of the desire for images also reflects a resistance to *cathexis* that is considered unnatural, or even pathological, when not controlled through legitimate channels such as marriage. In this case, the image becomes an object of selection that arouses instincts, but it still needs to be legitimized through established social relationships (marriage) so that it is not considered "crazy".

Maka kata Maharandewi, "Jikalau lain daripada anak Raja Damsyik yang bernama Saif al Kamar itu, tiadalah layak akan jadi suami tuanku karena Saif al Kamar itu terlalu amat elok rupanya dan sikapnya patut sekali akan suami tuanku" (transliterasi oleh Asandhimitra, 1984: 58).

This statement shows how women's *cathexis* towards men is also governed by masculinity norms. Maharandewi judged Saif al Kamar as a husband based on his physical appearance and "proper" attitude, which was in accordance with the construction of the masculine ideal. It shows women's internalization of hegemonic norms, in which male values are determined by body aesthetics and the elegance of attitudes that correspond to social expectations. In Connell's context, this is an example of how *the cathexis* is not only a field of competition between men, but also an arena in which women participate in maintaining masculine dominance. The desire for Saif al Kamar is positioned as something appropriate and natural because it is directed towards the goal of the institution of marriage.

Maharandewi not only affirmed Saif al Kamar's physical attractiveness, but also framed him as a logical reason to make him a husband to his master. Indirectly, marriage is *framed* as an institution of legitimacy to satisfy desires.

Physical beauty (object of desire) combined with noble status (social criteria) became the basis of "worthiness". That is, *the cathexis* here is not presented as a purely individual turmoil, but as part of a normative social structure: desire is institutionalized and justified when it leads to marriage. Sexual desire for the masculine body is not only understood, but also confirmed as something that must be socially acted upon.

Cathexis in *HRD* is not just a personal expression of attraction or affection, but is conditioned by social norms that direct desires into a framework that can be controlled and institutionalized. Saif al Kamar's interest in the image of Princess Indra Seloka should not be allowed to flow freely as a form of autonomous affection, but should be directed towards institutional goals such as marriage, which in the patriarchal order serves as a means of preserving the masculine power structure. In this framework, marriage serves a dual function, namely as a tool for regulating women's desires and as a reproductive mechanism for male domination. When a man meets certain physical and social criteria, he is not only considered worthy as an object of desire, but also as a dominant subject worthy of women. Maharandewi—of whom she is Syah Firman—not only represents a subordinate position in gender relations but also acts as an agent who helps perpetuate the hegemonic structure through the symbolic selection of the ideal male.

The assessment of male worthiness based on appearance and attitude reflects aesthetic standards that are not neutral, but very political. It gets rid of other forms of masculinity that do not fit into the hegemonic image. As a result, alternative or subordinate forms of masculinity lose legitimacy in social structures. In this context, *cathexis* is not only a form of emotional or sexual relations, but also an arena of symbolic production that is highly ideological. It shapes how the male body is seen, judged, and given meaning, as well as how women are taught to

desire or crave certain forms of masculinity. Desire becomes a tool of normalization and social control, making gender relations seem natural, even though they are entirely ideological social constructs. *HRD* shows how the relationship of love and desire—which seems personal—is actually part of a larger narrative about power and perpetuation of gender dominance.

Bila keinginan terlaksana, mencari pria sejati, tidak peduli ningrat atau rakyat biasa, asal cocok dengan saya sekarang saya telah menemukan, Kanda yang baik hati. Saya berserah diri, hingga kini saya, jika Kak Ahmad pergi, tidak akan tinggal diam melainkan ikut serta, Kanda suka ataupun tidak, terimalah dengan sepenuh hati. Seraya berkata demikian, Putri kepada Ahmad Raspati, sambil menerapkan ilmu, maklum wanita serba bisa ilmu Si Bondara, yang dapat mengganggu pikiran. Dan ilmu guntur, yang dapat meruntuhkan hati, ketiga ilmu arjuna kelar, yang membuat hati berbunga-bunga, kasmaran menjadikan kemarahan, berbalik sayang kepada saya (terjemahan oleh Harijatiwidjaja dan Masduki, 2000: 127).

This quote shows the affective relationship and emotional bond between women and men (Ahmad Raspati), affirming the role of men as objects of love and emotional closeness, part of the cathexis of masculinity. Ahmad Raspati, the male character, is placed as an object of affection, love, and emotional attraction by the woman (Putri). Putri expressed her willingness to go wherever Ahmad went, even without Ahmad's consent. This statement shows that women actively construct emotional relationships, even demanding Ahmad's presence in the space of affection that he created himself. In Connell's theory, *cathexis* is a part of a gender structure that encompasses how feelings of love, attraction, and desire are directed and managed in a patriarchal context. Generally, women are positioned as objects of *cathexis*—those who are loved and pursued. But in this quote, there is a reversal of

the traditional position where the man becomes the object of *the cathexis*. This indicates that the structure of masculinity can operate flexibly, but remain within the framework of a broader patriarchal social system.

Women also use the sciences (magic and affection) as a way to turn anger into love, making male characters romantic. This shows that love and feelings are the arena of gender power struggle. Although it appears to be female control over male emotions, this situation remains in a structure where masculinity remains the center of being seduced and influenced. Putri has full agency in declaring love and even takes action to bind Ahmad's emotions. However, Ahmad remains the center, whose love he wants to get. Here, the *cathexis of masculinity* becomes visible, feelings and emotional relationships are directed to strengthen the masculine position, albeit through a feminine approach.

These two texts reflect how *cathexis* work contextually within their respective cultural structures, both in terms of gender representation, social norms, and affective symbolism. In Malay culture as depicted in *HRD*, desire and love are strongly directed into the corridors of legitimate institutions, especially marriage. Attraction to objects (whether physical or symbolic such as images or male/female figures) is only considered natural if it is directed for the purpose of marriage. *Cathexis* in *HRD* is strictly regulated through social hierarchical structures and moral values, such as politeness, aristocratic status, and family honor. Desire becomes legitimate if it boils down to institutional ties, not free expression.

In Sundanese culture such as in *WAM*, expressions of love and affective desire appear more direct, emotional, and courageous, especially from the women's side. Female characters in *WAM* openly express their desires and even use magic or affection strategies to control male emotions. *The cathexis* here are more interpersonal and affective, less tied to

social legitimacy like marriage in the first place. Women are seen to be more active in expressing and directing love, which reflects Sundanese culture which in some respects gives women more agency, especially in folklore and oral discourse. Both operate within a patriarchal framework, but with different mechanisms of representation, according to local values and cultural ideologies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study proves that the hegemony of masculinity in *HRD* and *WAM* is not only evident in gender relations, but also manifested through symbolic, economic, and institutional practices that systematically place men at the center of power. In *HRD*, hegemonic masculinity is constructed as if it were natural and indisputable through the unresisting submission of women, while in *WAM*, masculinity is reinforced through more complex strategies, including power negotiations and symbols of domination such as the Java sparrow. Cathexis or desire is also institutionalized through the institution of marriage, which shows that love and affection are not neutral domains, but part of the patriarchal ideological reproduction system. Women are not only objects of domination, but also participate in affirming hegemonic values through the internalization of social norms.

These findings show that classical Malay and Sundanese literary texts not only contain aesthetic stories but also represent complex ideological constructions. Therefore, this study opens up space for more specific follow-up research, such as exploring forms of feminine resistance in more subtle traditional texts, analysing the intersectionality of gender and class in *hikayat* or comparing them with literary works from different regions and periods. This study can also be expanded to the realm of cultural adaptation and modern media, in order to see how the legacy of hegemonic masculinity ideology

continues to be reproduced or undergoes transformation in the current context.

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