

**CONTEMPLATING KARTINI AND KATHERINE'S POSTCOLONIAL
STRUGGLES IN *KARTINI* (2017) AND *HIDDEN FIGURES* (2016)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

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Degree in English Department



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MOTTO

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

(Helen Keller)



DEDICATION

To my parents, who do their best to give me a happy life

I hope this can be your source of happiness

To my grandmother, who prayed for my future

I wish you were here

To my advisor, who always finds the best words to encourage me

Thank you, Mr. Danial

To my best friends, thank you for befriending me.



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Saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, saya mengucapkan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

Yogyakarta, 3 Januari 2024
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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at comparing the struggles endured by Kartini and Katherine. Kartini comes from the eastern hemisphere, while Katherine from the west. Even when they are in a marginalized situation, Kartini and Katherine constantly pursue their dreams. Kartini and Katherine have privilege on hand, especially their brilliant minds even though with different areas of interest. Kartini fights for women rights while Katherine's mathematical ability successfully sends astronauts to orbit the Earth. However, even with privilege on hand, these women were still struggling to achieve their goals. The comparative lens identifies the struggles experienced by these privileged women, the causes, the intensity, the women's solutions in dealing with the struggles, and why they choose the solutions. This qualitative descriptive research uses narratology as a method. This research utilizes Chandra Mohanty's postcolonial feminism theory as the main theory. Additionally, to read the films the researcher uses Amy Villarejo's film theory. This research concluded that Kartini and Katherine were struggling albeit with difference in the intensities. Kartini has to deal with higher-intensity pressure in her social surroundings, such as family and relatives. Kartini has to endure physical, mental, and verbal abuses since a very young age. Meanwhile, Katherine deals with mental and verbal abuses in her adulthood. Katherine suffered less intense challenges because she mainly had to deal with a jealous colleague. In dealing with the issues in their lives Kartini and Katherine choose diplomatic ways either by speaking, discussing, or arguing. Their choice reflected their intelligence and effectiveness in dealing with problems by communication.

Keywords: *Women's Struggle, Postcolonial Feminism, Comparative Literature*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan perjuangan Kartini dan Katherine dalam menghadapi permasalahan mereka. Kartini berasal dari timur, sedangkan Katherine dari barat. Bahkan ketika mereka berada dalam situasi tersisihkan, Kartini dan Katherine terus mengejar impian mereka. Kartini dan Katherine memiliki keistimewaan, terutama dalam kecerdasan mereka meskipun dengan bidang minat yang berbeda. Kartini memperjuangkan hak-hak perempuan sementara kemampuan matematika Katherine berhasil mengirim astronot untuk mengorbit Bumi. Namun, bahkan dengan keistimewaan tersebut, para wanita ini masih harus berjuang untuk mencapai tujuan mereka. Lensa komparatif digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi perjuangan yang dialami oleh para wanita ini, mulai dari penyebab, intensitas, solusi mereka dalam menghadapi kesulitan, hingga mengapa mereka memilih solusi itu. Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini menggunakan metode naratologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori postcolonial feminism Chandra Mohanty sebagai teori utama. Selain itu, untuk membaca film-film tersebut peneliti menggunakan teori film Amy Villarejo. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kartini dan Katherine harus berjuang meskipun dengan perbedaan intensitas. Kartini menghadapi intensitas tekanan yang lebih tinggi dari lingkungan sekitarnya, termasuk dari keluarga dan kerabat. Kartini harus menanggung tekanan fisik, mental, dan verbal sejak usia yang sangat muda. Sementara itu, Katherine berurusan dengan tekanan verbal dan mental di masa dewasanya. Tekanan yang dihadapi Katherine memiliki intensitas yang lebih rendah karena ia hanya menghadapi rekan kerja yang iri. Dalam menghadapi persoalan dalam kehidupan mereka, Kartini dan Katherine memilih cara-cara diplomatis baik dengan berbicara, berdiskusi, maupun berdebat. Pilihan mereka mencerminkan kecerdasan dan efektivitas mereka dalam menangani masalah melalui komunikasi.

Kata Kunci: *Perjuangan Perempuan, Postcolonial Feminisme, Sastra Komparatif*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Privilege is considered a significant factor in making someone's life easier. Society generally sees that achieving a dream would be easy for people with privilege. Their path is already secured, so they have nothing to worry about. They only need to focus on working towards their dreams. Peggy McIntosh (as stated in Johnson, 2006, p. 22) divided privilege into two categories: unearned entitlements and conferred dominance.

Unearned entitlements are things that must be accessible to everybody. Unearned entitlements will turn into unearned advantage when it became limited to a certain group of people. The examples are feeling safe in public spaces or working in a place where they feel they belong and are valued for what they can contribute. Meanwhile, conferred dominance is when a group given power which makes the other group marginalized. The examples of this category are when men having power over women or like when white people felt more superior to their colored fellows (Johnson, 2006, pp. 23–24).

Kartini and Katherine's privilege fall into the second category, the unearned entitlement. In *Kartini*, we see that commoner girls are not even able to read. As a part of nobility, the curious young Kartini is able to formally study until her teenage. Thus, she can read the books left behind by her brother which later help to shape her view. Katherine gets the privilege to early scholarship because of her outstanding mathematical ability. This builds her way until she becomes the first Negro female student at West Virginia University Graduate School and secured the job in NASA. Being a member of NASA is extremely prestigious in that era. Both women are intelligent in their own range of interest. Kartini's sharpness to criticize humanity and women's right and Katherine's mathematical and science intelligence were all supported by their education.

Movie as reflection of society frequently portrayed the struggle of each character's life. Including the main characters in two biopic movies, those are Kartini, from *Kartini*, and Katherine, from *Hidden Figures*. Kartini and Katherine are privileged women but they are still struggling to achieve their dreams. It shows the stigma about privilege is not entirely true. Struggling is an ability to overcome the hardship in life. As human beings, we strive to survive in our lives. That is why struggle can be easily found in our society.

Kartini and *Hidden Figures* share a common ground in which both biopic movies depicted the events in the lives of intelligent women. Kartini was born in 1879 into the nobility class of the Indonesian feudal-colonial era. She was born with the privilege because she was a daughter of the regent of Jepara. As a

daughter of a regent, other than the luxury and respect, she got more access to education and information than ordinary women in her era. Set in the 1960s segregation era of the United States, *Hidden Figures* revolves around the life of Katherine Goble. She was not born with privilege but built privilege with her intelligence. Even though she was an African-American her brilliant mind made her eligible for an early scholarship offer to the best school in Virginia and worked at NASA. However, the privilege also come with the harsh reality that they lived in a men-dominated world.

Both of them lived in a men-dominated world. *Kartini* illustrates men's domination through the seclusion state described in the movie, "The requirements of *Raden Ayu*, a woman must be secluded at home from the time she hits puberty until a nobleman came for her hand in marriage, as the first, second, or even third wife" (Bramantyo, 2017). Meanwhile, *Hidden Figures* shows men's domination through Katherine's childhood class and the Space Task Group in NASA, which mainly consists of men. The teacher and the supervisor as the leading figures in both of Katherine's groups are men. A definition provided by Johnson on the concept of a men-dominated world:

"It is a man's world" is an expression that points in part to the male-dominated character of the society that puts most power in the hands of men. In the same way, one could say, "It is a white world" or "a straight world", or "a nondisabled world." But there's more than power at work here, because privileged groups are also usually taken as the best that society has to offer." (Johnson, 2006, p. 95)

In order to understand Kartini and Katherine's struggles within the male-dominated society, this research uses postcolonial feminism theory as the tool to approach the subject. The term postcolonial is defined by Appiah (Bose et al., 1996, p. 119) as a clearing space of popular culture, which denotes neocolonialism and cultural imperialism. Neocolonialism defined by Go as "the continued exercise of political influence over a society in the absence of formal political control" (Ritzer, 2007, p. 602). Meanwhile, cultural imperialism defined by Mains in (Thrift & Kitchin, 2009, p. 322) as "a process of disproportionate influence over social practices and ideologies by one socio-political group over a politically weaker and (frequently) less-wealthy group". In other words, *Hidden Figures* falls into this category because the racial issues faced by Katherine, a black woman, are part of cultural imperialism. *Kartini* also fits into the category because Kartini lives in Indonesia where the women have to endure cultural imperialism due to Dutch colonialization rules.

Theoretically, Kartini and Katherine's path in achieving their dreams should be easier with privilege on hand. However, achieving their big goals was not as easy as it looked. They are still struggling with many things along the way. Their ability to deal with these struggles is what makes them admirable. The root of this research is the gap between society expectations about people with privilege with the struggle depicted in Kartini and Katherine's lives. This gap between expectation and reality leads the researcher to explore Kartini and

Katherine's struggles. The researcher uses Chandra Mohanty's postcolonial feminism theory and Amy Villarejo's film theory to explore the issues.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of study above, this graduating paper is going to answer the following questions:

1. What were the struggles these privileged women faced, and what caused the struggles?
2. How do they overcome the obstacles?
3. Why do they overcome the obstacles in such a way?

1.3 Objectives and Significance of Study

From the research questions above, the objectives of this study are to find the answers as below:

1. Classifying the types and causes of the struggle in Kartini and Katherine's path to achieve their respective dreams.
2. Describing the complexity of Kartini and Kathrine's journey to overcome the obstacles.
3. Finding the reason behind why Kartini and Katherine prefer to overcome the obstacles that way.

This research is expected to contribute in the literature discussion especially when it is related to the application of comparative study to movies. For other researchers, this research could be a reference in how to apply postcolonial

feminism theory into their research and what improvement can be explored from this research. For general readers who are interested about literature research, this research may not be flawless, but still can be a brief illustration on how literature research is done.

1.4 Literature Review

The movie *Kartini* has been used as an object of research in Indonesia. The topics raised by previous researchers were diverse. Patriarchal society has been researched several times (Karkono et al., 2020; Marsya & Faladhin, 2019; Mustofa et al., 2019; Situmorang et al., 2021). The other topic is feminism (Aulia, 2022; Minanlarat et al., 2018; Muchtar & Hayati, 2022; Yusniar & Utami, 2022) and equality issues (Fahmi, 2020; Pradanri, 2018; A. Putri & Nurhajati, 2020). The other topics are not related directly to literary research, such as the linguistic aspects (K & Suyata, 2019; Maisaroh et al., 2022; Rizky & Puspitorini, 2019), moral values (Maya Rujita Sembiring, 2019; Novida & Yuhafliza, 2020), and the construction of the characters with the costume (Sintowoko & Sari, 2022), and mood cues (Sintowoko, 2022).

Hidden Figures may be less frequently seen as a research object than *Kartini*, but it has been a favorite mainly related to issues raised in the research, such as discrimination (Ikawati, 2018; Irianto & Permatasari, 2022), racism (Febriani & Arianto, 2020; Suarnaningsih et al., 2020; Yastanti et al., 2021), and representation (Frühwirth et al., 2021; Ikhsano & Jakarudi, 2020; Monica et al., 2018; Wijaya et al., 2018). The other topics are related to feminism, such as the

audience response of working women (Sari & Zainuddin, 2023), patriarchal culture (Panuntun & Chusna, 2021), and women in male hegemony (Liao & Wang, 2022). The non-literary related topics are semantic analysis (T. L. Putri & Yuwita, 2021) and audience response toward STEM in movies (Yıldırım et al., 2021).

The only comparative research that was done before used *Kartini*, but it used a Korean movie *Kim Ji Young: Born 1982*, as the other object of comparison. The research was done in Indonesian by (Muchtar & Hayati, 2022) with the title *Marginalisasi dan Subordinasi terhadap Perempuan dalam Film Kim Ji Young: Born 1982 dan Film Kartini: Suatu Kajian Sastra Bandingan*. This study used descriptive-qualitative method with comparative literature review. The approach used in this study is a feminist approach. The strength of this research is the focus of research is specific with marginalization and subordination. Something that has not been covered in this research is the cultural value in modern South Korea and the Indonesian colonial era. The cultural values and belief has a strong influence over treatment towards women.

This research has several differences from the previous research described above. This is the first to do comparative research in English that combines both movies as the object of material. This research uses postcolonial feminism as the theory. The previous research mainly focused on marginalization and subordination around Kim Ji Young and Kartini's life. Meanwhile, this

research focuses on the struggle of Kartini and Katherine Goble in their journey on achieving their respective dreams.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Postcolonial Feminism

After exploring postcolonial feminism theory, this research settles to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial feminism thoughts as the main theory. (Mohanty, 2003, p. 18) stated that the approach applies not only to the First and Third World but also to "third-world scholars writing about their own culture." It implies that the theory acknowledges the existence of common binary opposition for First and Third World. The theory is not exclusive for the western scholar. It accommodates everyone who wants to study about postcolonial feminism. Even for the third world scholars who want explore about their own cultures. Mohanty also stated in her book:

The term 'colonization' has been used to characterize everything from the clearest economic and political hierarchies to the production of a particular cultural discourse about the 'third world.'² However sophisticated or problematical its use as an explanatory construct, colonization almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a discursive or political suppression of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question. (Mohanty, 2003, p. 18)

Chandra Mohanty's postcolonial feminism from her essay "Under Western Eyes" is a reflection of her thoughts on the hegemony

of third world women by western feminist writers. She considers that the term “women” as an object of research is a generalization of the view that third world women are weak and oppressed. That view affects the idea of women in reality. She stated it is important to realize that we all share the same suffering so there is no need to raise a binary opposition between white western feminists who see themselves as independent and third world women who they see as weaker. Although women share their suffering, they do not always have the same form of problems. Each case is unique and cannot be generalized. Mohanty’s postcolonial view encourages the scholar to look deeper into the history and context of each problem. This will result in the fact that women have their own personalities and opinions and are not just monolith build by the Western feminist. Chandra Mohanty gives readers the freedom to apply her thoughts on research related to women who are categorized as third world regardless of their ethnicity or country.

Instead of strictly following the provided variables in Mohanty essay, the researcher takes her essay as an inspiration to build a more specific variable to explore this research. The variables for this research are gender inequality, strictly structured society, and social gap. The exclusively personalized research variable is needed to specifically answer the research questions. Therefore, to create a border within the

discussion because the object itself is extremely rich and has many potential issues that could be discussed.

1.5.2 Film Theory

This research uses Amy Villarejo's film theory to analyze the screenshot of the film attached in the discussion. Specifically from the book *Film Studies: The Basics*. Villarejo (2007) mentioned that there is a similarity between film and language, both obeying rules. Language follows grammar while film follows cinematic conventions. Villarejo described film analysis as a study "through a taxonomy of its form and an examination of its rule." Scholars need to learn about the language of film analysis to give a meaningful description about a film. (2007, pp. 24–27)

Villarejo (2007) introduces four key areas of film analysis. Those are *mise-en-scene*, cinematography, editing, and sound. *Mise-en-scene* is everything that presents on a shot. It consists of six smaller parts which are setting, lighting, costume, hair, make up, and figure behavior. Cinematography or the camerawork consists of framing, angle, focus, movement, and compositing. Editing consists of five types: cut, dissolve, fade, wipe, and iris. Meanwhile, sound consists of three: speech, music, and noise (2007, pp. 28–52). This research will focus more on the *mise-en-scene* and cinematography because the analysis will be applied to pictures.

1.6 Research Method

This section covers the methodology of this research. The methodology consists of the type of research, the data sources, the data collection technique, and the data analysis technique.

1.6.1 Type of Research

As descriptive qualitative research, this research employs a method of narratology, which uses all the discourses, practices, and signs in the story relevant to the postcolonial struggle to be data. This research also uses the concept of focalization as the operating approach. By using this concept the power relation between ‘who sees who’ in the story can be revealed. The focalization is not only applied in the terms of discourse, as text, but also in terms of the context or in this case in the visual context.

1.6.2 Data Source

The main data used in this research are the films that also work as the object of the research: *Kartini* (Bramantyo, 2017) and *Hidden Figures* (Melfi, 2016). The additional resources are books such as *Feminism without Borders*, *Feminist Thoughts*, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, *Privilege, Power, and Difference* 2nd edition.

1.6.3 Data Collection Technique

The process of data collection started with the researcher reading both films. The researcher notices that postcolonial and feminist movement as the similar themes of the films. The researcher collects all data in the form of symbols, practices, and discourse that appear in the films.

In order to figure out the best approach to see the issues, the researcher reads the books and articles related to postcolonial feminism and the issues discussed in both films. The books come from digital library such as internet archive that allows readers to borrow the book online. On the process, the researcher finds the most suitable theory, Chandra Mohanty's postcolonial feminism from her essay "Under Western Eyes" in her book feminism without borders. From Mohanty's theory the researcher builds the research variables.

1.6.4 Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis consists of the following steps. First, the data which consists of the symbols, practices, and discourses are categorized based on the previously prepared variables. The variables are gender inequality, strictly structured society, and social gap. Data that does not contain the variables is excluded from further analysis process. The data that passes first examination will be categorized into three parts that answers the research questions: the problems and it cause, Kartini and Katherine's reaction toward the problem, and the reason behind their

action in handling the situation. For every data the researcher also close read the details portrayed in each scenes including the *mise-en-scene* and cinematography which the researcher uses Amy Villarejo's film theory to read the meaning behind the *mise-en-scene* and camera movement.

1.7 Paper Organization

There are four chapters in this graduation paper. An introduction in the first chapter explains the reason behind the study's creation. Synopsis and intrinsic elements of each film are provided in the second chapter. The research's findings and discussion covered on analysis in the third chapter. The conclusion of the final chapter provides the concluding remarks to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

1. Privilege does not guarantee an easier path to achieve a dream.
2. Whether born with privilege or build a privilege, it is true that women still have to struggle along the way.
3. The types of the struggles in Kartini and Katherine's lives are strictly-structured society, gender inequality, and social gap with the people around them.
4. Kartini has to deal with higher-intensity pressure in her social surroundings, such as family and relatives. In contrast, Katherine suffered less intense challenges because she mainly had to deal with a jealous colleague.
5. The challenges come in verbal, mental, and physical form for Kartini, while Katherine does not suffer physical abuse.
6. The gap in challenges faced by both women may come from the era and culture.
7. The social hierarchy in Katherine's life is more complex. The hierarchy is divided into both sex and race. A woman of color's place is in the lowest part of the hierarchy. However, in the end, she is treated as an equal by her white colleagues.

8. Around Kartini's life, the evident hierarchy only divided man and woman. Kartini achieved her dream of providing education for women around her, but she failed to get a higher education in the Netherlands. No matter how hard Kartini tries, society does not give equal opportunity.
9. In dealing with the problem, both women showed their intelligence and resilience by showing that they are effective communicators.
10. They relied on diplomatic ways like speaking, discussing, or arguing with other people because women naturally avoided physical confrontation.
11. The choice is identical to present daily life. It is better to solve problem by discussing to find the best solution because by discussing it will deliver the message to the other person.

4.2 Suggestion

From this research alone, future researchers will probably point out an explorable gap in this research. Furthermore, due to the novelty of the combination of *Kartini* and *Hidden Figures* as a comparative research object, this research has much potential for exploration through different lenses. The example of changing lenses is like changing the topic from women's struggles to psychoanalysis or many other theories. The struggles of Kartini's sisters,

Kardinah and Roekmini, and Katherine's friends, Mary and Dorothy, can be explored. From there, future research can find similarities between the two films.

There are different family dynamics in Katherine and Kartini's lives. Kartini received support from her father and an older brother. Meanwhile, Katherine has more people on her side. These differences undoubtedly have distinct effects on their journeys. The men in each film are also intriguing to explore and compare. There has been research about the men in *Kartini* as victims of patriarchal society. However, there is no similar research on the topic of *Hidden Figures*. It is interesting to see how both films show that in a culture that marginalizes women, there are two types of men. The more common ones are toxic and conservative men. They tend to consider the marginalization of women to be part of tradition. They tend to think of marginalization toward women as what it is. Although they are smaller in number, some supportive men are seen as weird by other men around them.

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