



Poverty and Resilience in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*: A Literature Sociological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Literary works often reflect the realities of society, particularly in depicting issues of poverty and how people survive. Through the perspective of Alan Swingewood's sociological perspective, this study examines how the themes of poverty and resilience are portrayed in two novels: Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" and Ahmad Tohari's "Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk." The main objective is to uncover the forms of life's limitations in both stories and then to compare the social portraits they depict. This research was conducted qualitatively using descriptive methods, where data were collected through intensive reading techniques and noting key points. The analysis concludes that both books equally portray the harsh realities of the underprivileged lower classes. However, the characters' survival methods differ. While *The Old Man and the Sea* showcases resilience centered on the hard struggles of an individual, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* emphasizes the resilience born of a sense of togetherness and the bonds of the local culture of its people. In light of Alan Swingewood's theory, both novels successfully capture the social situations that actually occurred during their time, proving that literature serves as an honest reflection of real life.

Keywords: *poverty, resilience, literature sociology*

Kemiskinan dan Ketahanan Diri dalam Novel *The Old Man and The Sea* Karya Ernest Hemingway dan *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* Karya Ahmad Tohari: Perspektif Sosiologi Sastra

ABSTRAK

Karya sastra sering kali cermin menjadi nyata dari kondisi masyarakat, terutama dalam menggambarkan isu kemiskinan dan cara manusia bertahan hidup. Melalui sudut pandang sastra sosiologi Alan Swingewood, kajian ini membedah bagaimana tema kemiskinan dan ketangguhan mental digambarkan dalam dua novel, yaitu *The Old Man and The Sea* karya Ernest Hemingway dan *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* karya Ahmad Tohari. Tujuan utamanya adalah mengungkap bentuk-bentuk keterbatasan hidup di kedua cerita tersebut, lalu membandingkan potret sosial yang ada di dalamnya. Penelitian ini dilakukan secara kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui teknik membaca intensif dan mencatat poin-poin penting. Hasil analisis menyimpulkan bahwa buku kedua sama-sama memotret realitas pahit masyarakat kelas bawah yang serba kekurangan. Namun, cara para tokohnya bertahan hidup ternyata berbeda, di mana novel *The Old Man and The Sea* menampilkan ketangguhan yang berpusat pada perjuangan keras seorang individu, sedangkan *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* lebih menonjolkan daya tahan hidup yang lahir dari rasa kebersamaan serta ikatan budaya lokal masyarakatnya. Jika dikaitkan dengan teori Alan Swingewood, kedua novel ini sukses merekam situasi sosial yang benar-benar terjadi pada masanya, yang sekaligus membuktikan bahwa sastra berfungsi sebagai refleksi jujur dari kehidupan nyata.

Kata kunci: *kemiskinan, ketahanan diri, sosiologi sastra*

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is not merely a matter of lacking money or material possessions; rather, it concerns how human beings survive amidst the crushing weight of adversity. In this regard, Supriatna (cited in Kadji, 2012:1) explains that poverty is a state of severe limitation—a condition that those who suffer it never desire. A community can be deemed poor only when its members face deprivation across multiple fronts—ranging from finances, education, and healthcare to the ability to earn a living—with these hardships arising through no fault of their own. In other words, the plight of the impoverished is largely dictated by external factors beyond their control, such as shrinking job markets, limited access to quality education, societal inequality, and unsupportive living environments. Interestingly, amidst such complex situations, various forms of mental resilience often emerge. This is clearly evidenced by a strong work ethic, a sense of communal solidarity, a willingness to make sacrifices, and an unyielding spirit in the face of life's trials. It is this lived reality that is frequently portrayed in literature to depict societal conditions, serving as a mirror reflecting how human beings confront suffering and persevere despite economic hardship.

A literary work is a creative manifestation that brings to life a world shaped by diverse elements—including the author's attitude, background, and steadfastness of spirit (Arifin, 2019:30). Such works do not emerge in a vacuum; they are shaped by the author's attitudes, worldview, experiences, background, and determination in conveying the ideas and realities they wish to present. Literature conveys an understanding of life in its own unique way (Ahyar, 2019:7). Through their creations, writers often reveal their perspectives on life, their core values, and their feelings regarding the various issues facing society. Literary works are diverse in nature, as they can be created by anyone—each author bringing unique ideas, thoughts, and concepts shaped by their own creativity and perspectives. This diversity has given rise to various forms of literature, one of which is the novel.

The novel stands out as a literary form capable of depicting human life in depth through plot, characters, and setting, while addressing social issues that mirror the realities of society. According to Sumardjo (cited in Ariska, 2020:14), the novel is a highly popular literary form worldwide. It is the most widely circulated and published form of literature, owing to its extensive reach within the community.

The popularity of the novel is evident in the vast number of works published, traded, and read by people from all walks of life. Novels possess broad appeal through stories capable of deeply portraying human existence—capturing emotions, conflicts, and social issues that resonate with everyday life. Among the many novels available, certain works powerfully represent social realities, particularly those concerning poverty and the human struggle for survival. Two such examples are Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea* and Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. Both novels present the lives of ordinary people confronting the pressures of existence, economic hardship, and the struggle to maintain hope and survive amidst adversity.

These two renowned novels—Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea* and Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*—both depict the lives of the underprivileged as they grapple with poverty, deprivation, and the arduous effort to survive under the strain of socio-economic conditions. Although the stories stem from vastly different cultural backgrounds, both Hemingway and Tohari succeed in bringing to life characters who demonstrate extraordinary resilience in the face of life's trials. The points of convergence and divergence in how these authors capture social reality make a comparative literary analysis of these two works a compelling subject for deeper study.

In the realm of literary studies, comparative literature occupies a space between the appreciation and the critical analysis of a work. This approach moves beyond the rigid dissection of textual content to consider the various external factors that shape the work itself.



In this regard, Bassnett (cited in Suyadi, 2018:87) explains that comparative literature is essentially the study of texts that transcend cultural boundaries and operate across disciplines, focusing on the interconnections between literary works despite their separation by distance and time. Since the two novels under study originate from distinct cultural contexts, it is unsurprising that they present divergent perspectives, life philosophies, and social portrayals. These cultural differences are clearly shaped by geographical factors and the historical moments in which the stories were written. Consequently, these spatial and temporal dynamics lend a unique quality to each author's depiction of human survival.

This research model is highly flexible, as any theoretical framework may be employed provided it is relevant to the research object and objectives. For this reason, scholarly works in this field are often simply termed "studies" or "inquiries." Damono (Suyadi, 2018:86) observes that comparative literature is an approach within literary studies rather than a discipline that generates its own unique theories. This underscores the fact that comparative literature lacks a single, binding theoretical formula; instead, it adapts various other literary theories to meet analytical needs. As a result, researchers enjoy full freedom to select the analytical lens best suited to dissecting the works being compared. The essence of comparative literature lies in how we deconstruct two or more works to trace their points of convergence, differences, relational patterns, and mutual influences. Guided by this perspective, the present study examines Ernest Hemingway's **The Old Man and the Sea** alongside Ahmad Tohari's **Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk** through the framework of comparative literature, integrated with Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature perspective.

The relationship between sociology and literature is inherently intimate, as both share a common focus: capturing the human experience and social dynamics. The distinction lies in their modes of engagement; while sociology dissects societal structures through a rigorous scientific approach, literature brings social reality to life

through narrative weaving, characterization, and emotional conflict. In this vein, Purnamasari (2017:143) notes that the sociology of literature is a field of study that unravels the intricate connections between fictional texts and the real world—examining how factors such as the author's background, ideology, economic circumstances, and environmental context contribute to the work's creation. This approach allows us to bridge literary aesthetics with external realities while simultaneously observing how a book chronicles the spirit of its times. Although various scholars propose different frameworks for the relationship between literature and society, this study specifically centers on the ideas of Alan Swingewood. The primary reason for this choice is that Swingewood's concept of the sociology of literature explicitly positions literary works as honest reflections or mirrors of actual social life.

According to Swingewood (Afifah, 2022:3), there are three main pillars for analyzing a work through the sociology of literature: viewing literature as a reflection of its era, examining the author's creative process, and considering the work's relationship with history. This study focuses specifically on the first pillar of Swingewood's theory: the notion of literature as a reflection of the times. This perspective posits that a work of fiction serves as a portrait of societal life in a specific era, honestly recording social phenomena—ranging from the grip of poverty, absurdity, and conflict to the arduous human struggle for survival. By employing the analytical lens of comparative literature, a juxtaposition of these two novels reveals both the common ground and the stylistic differences between authors of distinct cultural backgrounds as they depict the struggles of the marginalized. Furthermore, this study aims to enrich the field of the sociology of literature—particularly through the application of Alan Swingewood's theories—and to reinforce the understanding that literary works are not merely leisure reading, but a medium for social reflection capable of capturing an authentic portrait of human life.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive method to examine poverty and resilience in the novels *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari through a comparative literature lens. The descriptive method is commonly used in social research (Razak, 2017).

The data sources are the 2001 second printing of *The Old Man and the Sea* (110 pages) and the 1982 first printing of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (174 pages). The research data consists of textual excerpts—words and sentences—that illustrate the core issues in both novels. Data collection was carried out using reading and note-taking techniques. Data analysis involved stages of reading, classification, analysis, description, and interpretation, followed by the formulation of preliminary conclusions regarding the research findings.

RESULTS

The analysis identified and described various excerpts representing poverty and resilience in *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, utilizing Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature perspective. Subsequently, information from the novels was interpreted, linked to the theory, and examined through a comparative literature approach. The study identified relevant sources to broaden the understanding of poverty and resilience as discussed in the literary analysis. Poverty in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk** by Ahmad Tohari

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, poverty is depicted through the life of the character Santiago, who lives with economic limitations, food scarcity, and humble living conditions. The novel demonstrates that poverty is not merely a lack of material possessions but is also evident in the way the character survives amidst conditions of extreme scarcity.

Data 1

"The boy left. Earlier, the two of them had eaten without a lamp on the table; Santiago then

took off his trousers and prepared to sleep in the dark. He rolled up the trousers to serve as a pillow, using a newspaper as padding inside." (Hemingway, 2015: 14)

This excerpt illustrates poverty, as Santiago's life is depicted as extremely simple and marked by severe limitations. He lacks adequate living essentials, even resorting to using his trousers as a pillow and a newspaper as extra bedding while he sleeps. Furthermore, the fact that he eats without a light reveals the lack of amenities in his home. This situation reflects the character's inability to adequately meet his basic living needs.

Data 2

"That was all that would fill his stomach for the entire day, and he knew he had to drink it all. He had long since lost his appetite and never brought a packed lunch. There was a bottle of water in the bow of the boat, and that was enough to satisfy his needs for the day." (Hemingway, 2015:16)

This excerpt represents poverty, as the character Santiago is depicted living on very limited sustenance. While working at sea all day, he relies solely on coffee and a bottle of water, bringing no other food.

Data 3

"Perhaps I could, too. But I make it a point never to borrow money. At first, you just borrow. Later on, you end up begging." (Hemingway, 2015:39)

This excerpt represents poverty because Santiago is in such dire economic straits that the topic of borrowing money is a reality close to his life. His words demonstrate a deep understanding of the hardships of living in want. Nevertheless, he maintains his dignity by striving not to depend on others.

Data 4

"The image of *Dukuh Paruk* is further defined by the remarks of outsiders who are fond of saying things like, 'Don't perpetuate such squalor like the people of *Dukuh Paruk*.' Or, 'Hey, children, go bathe. Otherwise, pus will run from your ears and you'll get scabies on your legs, just like the kids from *Dukuh Paruk*!'" (Tohari, 1982:6)



This excerpt represents poverty as a social stigma that has become deeply ingrained and is voiced by those outside Dukuh Paruk. The word "squalor" (kemelaratan) directly refers to the villagers' impoverished state, while the description of children suffering from skin diseases and discharging ears serves as tangible physical evidence of chronic poverty resulting from a lack of access to adequate sanitation and nutrition.

Data 5

"It was not merely jealousy. Nor was it the hurt of knowing I could not possibly win the contest due to my destitution and the fact that I was only fourteen years old." (Tohari, 1982:29) Rasus utters these words as part of a resolute and honest train of thought. The character explicitly uses the word "destitution" to acknowledge that poverty is a tangible barrier preventing him from participating in the *bukak-klambu* ritual. Ahmad Tohari demonstrates that in an impoverished society, even human relationships are measured by money, and the destitute automatically lose their voice and agency.

Data 6

"Sakarya's house was nothing more than a dilapidated shack with woven-bamboo walls. Its roof leaked in places, and the yard was barren, devoid of any vegetation." (Tohari, 1982:18)

This excerpt illustrates poverty, as the state of Sakarya's home is depicted as extremely simple and substandard. The fragile bamboo walls and leaking roof reveal the economic limitations faced by the people of Dukuh Paruk. Furthermore, the dry, barren surroundings of the house reflect a life defined by scarcity.

Personal Resilience in the Novels *The Old Man and The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari

Personal resilience in *The Old Man and The Sea* is portrayed through the protagonist Santiago's struggle against failure, loneliness, and the harsh realities of life at sea. The protagonist maintains his spirit, conviction, and fighting spirit despite living amidst limitations and immense pressure.

Data 1

"But who knows? Every day is a new day. It is better when things go well. But I would rather be ready. Then, when good fortune comes, I am fully prepared." (Hemingway: 2015:21)

This excerpt demonstrates personal resilience because Santiago retains the conviction and drive to keep trying, despite repeated failures. He does not rely solely on luck; instead, he believes that effort and preparedness are paramount. This attitude reveals the character's ability to face life's pressures without losing hope. Although his life is arduous and his catch uncertain, he remains positive and continues to work diligently. The resilience in this passage is evident in his ability to maintain his spirit, control feelings of despair, and persevere in the face of adversity.

Data 2

"But today marks eighty-five days, and I must do my very best." (Hemingway, 2015:28)

This excerpt illustrates personal resilience through Santiago's persistence in continuing to go to sea despite eighty-five days of failure. Such a situation could easily cause one to lose hope, yet Santiago persists in his efforts rather than surrendering to his fate. The resilience shown here is reflected in the character's ability to keep rising and enduring amidst prolonged hardship. He remains determined to do his best, even though the possibility of failure persists. This unyielding attitude demonstrates mental strength and a resilient fighting spirit in the face of life's hardships.

Data 3

"He rested, sitting on the boat's mast and sail—areas untouched by his feet—and tried not to think of anything; he simply endured." (Hemingway, 2015:85)

This excerpt demonstrates personal resilience, as Santiago persists in the face of an arduous struggle at sea, even as his body grows weary and the situation becomes increasingly difficult. He strives to withstand pain, thirst, and exhaustion while keeping his spirit from collapsing. The character does not surrender to his suffering; instead, he continues to struggle with composure

and patience. The resilience shown here is evident in his ability to maintain self-control and endure—both physically and mentally—under extremely harsh conditions.

Data 4

“The audience held their gaze, unblinking, as Srintil rose. Guided solely by instinct, Srintil began to dance. Her eyes were half-closed. Sakarya, standing beside Kartareja, watched his granddaughter’s movements intently. He wanted to prove his words true: that the indang ronggeng—the spirit of the ronggeng—had taken up residence within Srintil’s body.” (Tohari, 1982:9)

This excerpt illustrates a form of resilience in Srintil that arises from within herself, rather than from external advantages such as facilities, education, or material support. Amidst an impoverished hamlet devoid of resources, Srintil rises and dances, relying entirely on her instincts. The audience’s reaction—holding their gaze without blinking—attests to the reality of Srintil’s resilience and its recognition by the villagers. This represents the most fundamental form of resilience: the ability to stand tall and even shine precisely when there is nothing else to rely on but one’s own inner strength.

Data 5

“I turned around. I could not forget that I was a soldier, even without a rank. Thus, I had to cast aside all hesitation. My stride was firm and sure. I, Rasus, had found myself.” (Tohari, 1982:74)

This excerpt stands as the most definitive statement of Rasus’s resilience throughout the novel. In this single, brief paragraph, Rasus affirms three things simultaneously: he accepts his identity as a rankless soldier, he casts aside his doubts, and he acknowledges that he has become whole. Rasus’s journey—from an orphan in an impoverished hamlet to this pivotal moment—is a testament to a resilience that was not achieved overnight; he endured poverty, the loss of Srintil, and alienation.

Data 6

“Rasus realized that life in Dukuh Paruk was not easy, yet he continued to work hard and strive to change his destiny.” (Tohari, 1982:102)

This excerpt demonstrates resilience through Rasus’s refusal to surrender to harsh living conditions. Despite hailing from an impoverished environment defined by limitations, he remained determined to improve his life. Rasus persisted in his efforts and hard work to secure a better future. The resilience in this passage is evident in the character’s fighting spirit—his drive to endure, rise up, and confront life’s challenges without losing hope.

DISCUSSION

Poverty in the Novels *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari

Poverty is not always depicted directly through a lack of money or low income; it can also be reflected in living conditions characterized by severe limitations and a lack of decent well-being. In Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, the poverty of the character Santiago is evident in his simple, constrained daily life. He lives with minimal amenities and insufficient food supplies, relying on his fishing catch to meet his basic needs. These conditions demonstrate that poverty relates not only to economic aspects but also to limited access to the basic necessities required to sustain human life. This aligns with the view of Fatyan (2025:900), who states that poverty is a situation of severe limitation that occurs beyond the individual’s own volition. The limitations Santiago faces are not a chosen lifestyle but the result of economic conditions that place him in a vulnerable position. He must adapt to a life of scarcity and continue living despite being unable to fully meet his various needs. Furthermore, the lack of food provisions serves as another indicator reinforcing the representation of poverty in the novel.

The absence of food demonstrates the difficulty of meeting even the most fundamental needs. This situation illustrates how poverty impacts an individual’s quality of life, specifically regarding the fulfillment of daily essentials. In this context, poverty manifests not merely as an economic issue but as a social reality that restricts an individual’s ability to live a decent life. This



analysis aligns with Ramadhani (2019:621), who asserts that the failure to meet food and housing needs is a form of poverty representation within society. The food scarcity Santiago experiences serves as evidence that he lives in conditions far removed from well-being. Thus, poverty in *The Old Man and the Sea* is represented through the various life limitations experienced by the protagonist—particularly his inability to meet basic needs—thereby illustrating the reality faced by the lower class, who must struggle to sustain their lives.

The poverty depicted in Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* manifests not only as economic hardship but also as a severely low quality of life for the community. The term "destitution" directly characterizes the impoverished state of the Dukuh Paruk residents, while the portrayal of children suffering from skin diseases and festering ear infections serves as tangible evidence of the community's poor health conditions. These circumstances indicate that poverty has persisted for a long time, affecting various aspects of the residents' lives. This aligns with Aimon's view (cited in Ramadhani, 2019:622) regarding the importance of focusing not only on natural resources but also on enhancing human resources to improve the community's quality of life. Thus, the poverty in Dukuh Paruk reveals a low quality of human resources resulting from limited access to the basic necessities required to sustain the community.

The prevalence of disease among the children indicates that the Dukuh Paruk community lacks adequate access to healthcare, sanitation, and a decent living environment. The poverty experienced by the community is not merely a matter of low income; it also encompasses limited access to facilities that could improve their well-being. This situation reflects Suharto's perspective (cited in Ramadhani, 2019:622), which posits that a lack of access to basic needs—such as healthcare, education, sanitation, clean water, and transportation—is a manifestation of community

poverty. Consequently, poverty in this novel is portrayed as a structural issue that comprehensively affects the community's physical and social conditions, leaving them to live in an environment far removed from standards of health and prosperity.

The impact of this poverty extends beyond the fulfillment of economic needs, influencing the social and psychological lives of the characters as well. The poverty enveloping Dukuh Paruk places Rasus in a position of severe limitation, particularly regarding his efforts to protect his loved ones. Such constraints demonstrate how poverty can diminish an individual's ability to make choices and control the direction of their own life. This situation aligns with the assertion that poverty impacts not only an individual's economic circumstances but also their capacity to determine the direction of their lives (Baihaqy, 2025:296). Furthermore, the condition of a community living in deprivation and lacking the readiness to face life's various challenges reflects Monica's view (Baihaqy, 2025:295) that such vulnerability is evident among the poor, who live without adequate support or preparation to handle unforeseen situations while fulfilling their social responsibilities. Thus, poverty in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is represented not merely as a lack of material resources but also as a condition that fosters social vulnerability and limits the ability of both individuals and the community to lead better lives.

Personal Resilience in the Novels *The Old Man and The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari

Santiago's steadfast attitude in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea* demonstrates an ability to confront pressure and challenges without losing his way in making life choices. Despite facing various demands and expectations from his surroundings, the character persists in upholding the decisions he deems most aligned with his own desires. This capacity to endure difficult situations reflects a personal resilience that enables an individual to continue functioning optimally even under stressful conditions. This aligns with the views of Connor and Davidson, who define resilience as an individual's ability to endure and

function positively in stressful or challenging situations (Connor & Davidson, 2003:76). Resilience is evidenced not only by one's ability to face adversity but also by the capacity to maintain one's convictions and the life goals one seeks to achieve.

This capacity is also closely linked to the self-confidence Santiago possesses when facing life's various challenges. As noted by Apriyani (2023:163), personal resilience and self-belief influence an individual's ability to resolve problems and achieve life goals. With self-belief, an individual is better equipped to overcome obstacles, stand firm in their convictions, and take appropriate steps for their future. The resilience Santiago demonstrates not only aids him in coping with social pressure but also serves as the foundation for the courage to make independent life choices. Ultimately, this illustrates that every individual has the right to determine their own path in life without having to fully submit to the pressures or expectations of others. The resilience displayed by the character represents a form of struggle to maintain autonomy over oneself.

The audience's reaction—holding their gaze without blinking—demonstrates that the resilience shown by Srintil in Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is genuine and acknowledged by the villagers. The villagers' admiration for Srintil stems not only from her talent as a *ronggeng* dancer but also from her ability to endure the various hardships that have marked her life. Despite economic constraints, social pressures, and the burdens imposed by the traditions surrounding her role, Srintil has managed to live with steadfast resilience. This recognition by the community demonstrates that her resilience is not merely an internal experience but is visibly manifested in her actions and demeanor toward others; this aligns with Kasim's (2019:235) view that personal resilience distinguishes individuals who can persevere through life's twists and challenges from those who fail to do so and see their lives fall into disarray. Such a perspective underscores resilience as a crucial factor in determining how an individual responds to the challenges they face.

Srintil's resilience is manifested in her ability to endure and navigate life despite facing various pressures that threaten to destabilize her; thus, her resilience serves not merely as a means to cope with adversity but as a source of strength that enables her to sustain her existence and determine the direction of her life. This underscores the fact that women possess full agency over the choices and time involved in living their lives (Aulia, 2025:346). In other words, the resilience Srintil demonstrates can be understood as a manifestation of a woman's capacity to remain steadfast in the face of challenges while upholding her right to choose her own life path. A comparison reveals that both novels portray poverty as a social reality shaping the characters' lives. However, the poverty experienced by Santiago in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* differs from that experienced by Srintil in Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. Santiago's poverty is individual in nature, stemming from dwindling catches that leave him in a state of material scarcity—living in a simple shack and lacking basic daily necessities. Conversely, Srintil's poverty in **Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk** is part of the collective poverty of the Dukuh Paruk community; it involves not only material deprivation but also limited access to education and life opportunities, alongside the profound influence of tradition on the community's way of life. Consequently, Srintil's life is heavily shaped by her surrounding socio-cultural conditions, meaning her struggle involves contending not only with economic hardship but also with the customary and environmental pressures that mold her life's trajectory. According to Widyaningrum and Hartarini (cited in Fariztina, 2025:45), comparative literature enables the analysis of literary works from various historical periods and the examination of their similarities and differences across regions, while taking cultural, social, and historical aspects into account. The differences in resilience between the protagonists of *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* highlight the unique character traits shaped by their distinct life settings. Santiago faces challenges—



namely poverty, physical limitations, and the harshness of the sea—with resilience manifested through his persistence, courage, and an unyielding spirit during his physical struggle. In contrast, Srintil confronts social and cultural pressures as well as internal conflict stemming from her status as a *ronggeng*; her resilience is evident in her ability to maintain her identity while navigating various societal demands. These findings align with the view of Sari and Dewi (2024:43), who state that comparative literature is a field of study examining different literary works by comparing their similarities and differences with other works. Through the lens of comparative literature, the differing forms of resilience exhibited by the two characters can be understood as representations of life experiences shaped by their respective social and cultural environments.

CONCLUSION

The novels *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari both depict poverty and resilience as reflections of the social realities faced by the lower class. These representations are illustrated through three excerpts regarding poverty and three regarding resilience in each novel. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, poverty is portrayed through the life of Santiago, an elderly fisherman living a simple existence, while resilience is evident in the protagonist's fighting spirit and refusal to give up. Meanwhile, in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, poverty is represented through the impoverished and underdeveloped state of the Dukuh Paruk community; resilience is manifested in social solidarity and the community's ability to preserve traditions amidst social and political pressures. Viewed through the lens of Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature, both novels demonstrate that literary works mirror the social realities of their times; thus, literature functions not merely as fiction but as a medium representing the social conditions of human life.

Comparative literary analysis reveals similarities between the two novels in their representation of poverty and resilience. In both

works, poverty is depicted as a social reality that shapes the characters' lives and influences how they navigate their daily existence. Furthermore, both Santiago and Srintil demonstrate resilience as the capacity to endure and persist in the face of various hardships and life pressures. These similarities highlight how both authors portray the human struggle against life's limitations and underscore the importance of a fighting spirit in sustaining life amidst adverse conditions.

Alongside these similarities, the novels also exhibit differences in their representation of poverty and resilience. Santiago's poverty is individual in nature, stemming from the economic constraints he faces as an aging fisherman with a dwindling catch, whereas the poverty in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is collective, affecting the entire community and linked to limited education, restricted life opportunities, and the powerful influence of tradition. Differences are also evident in the forms of resilience displayed by the characters. Santiago demonstrates resilience through physical struggle, courage, and persistence in the face of the harsh marine environment, whereas Srintil displays resilience through mental and emotional strength while confronting social and cultural pressures as well as internal conflict. These differences illustrate how distinct life experiences, social environments, and cultural backgrounds give rise to different forms of resilience in each character.

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