

# **INDONESIAN LITERATURE IN THE 19TH-CENTURY: SUBVERSIVENESS OF READING AND EGALITARIAN RESISTANCE**

*(Sastra Indonesia Abad XIX: Subversivitas Membaca dan Perlawanan Egaliterian)*

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to reaffirm that Indonesian literature has emerged since the mid-19th century. The prevailing myth that Indonesian literary treasures only emerged in the early 20th century, particularly since the initial publication of Balai Pustaka, must be corrected. The works published since the 1850s did not merely continue oral traditions or reflect the colonial realities of the time, but also indirectly implied a symbolic dimension of response regarding intellectual life in the Dutch East Indies. The ability to read, in "Boek Saier Oetawa Terseboet Pantoen" (Syair Book or Commonly Called Pantun) published 1857, thus not only indicates nascent literacy but also illustrates the emergence of a tacit subversiveness in society, particularly within the author. This subversiveness then stimulated the emergence of thought that manifested itself as an egalitarian resistance, as implied in the book entitled "Pantoon Melajoe Sama Tjerita Aneh-aneh" (Malay Pantun and Strange Stories for People Who Like to Laugh, published 1858. This book implies a desire for equality between indigenous people and Indo people, as well as Dutch and other foreigners. This desire for equality, however, was an attempt to resist the hegemony and oppression that existed during the Dutch East Indies era.*

**Keywords:** *19th-century literature, early Indonesian literature, egalitarian resistance, poetry, subversive reading*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

One of the works adapted for junior high school students within the framework of the National Library program in collaboration with HISKI (Association of Indonesian Literature- Scholars) in 2025 is a poetry book entitled *Siti Akbari* by Lie Kim Hok published in 1884 (Suharyanto *et al.*, 2025). This fact is not only an appreciation for Lie Kim Hok who is commonly called the "Father of Chinese Malay" as mentioned in the *Data Pokok Kebahasaan dan Kesastraan* or Basic Data on Language and Literature (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa in <https://dapobas.kemendikdasmen.go.id/home?show=isidata&id=1199>) but also a clear statement that the Indonesian literary treasure has emerged in the 19th century. With this fact, the allergy to literary genealogy that long predates Balai Pustaka is expected to gradually disappear because in fact, literary works that can be categorized as modern Indonesian literature have indeed existed since the mid-19th century.

It is not only Lie Kim Hok's work that makes me worthy of giving the award to HISKI, but also because it included *Si Tjonat* by F.D.J. Pangemanann and four works by Kwee Tek Hoay in the adaptation activity. I need to mention these because there are still many literary experts who are not willing to accept their works as an integral part of modern

Indonesian literature. The rejection that has arisen so far is generally because these works were published before the name Indonesia existed and because most of the authors were of Chinese descent. In this connection, such rejection stems from two main things, namely because (1) our literary experts tend to be comfortable with A. Teeuw's statement that modern Indonesian literature was born in 1920 (Teeuw, 1967) and this statement is considered valid, and (2) Indonesian literary experts tend not to be interested in historical research, especially from the aspect of the reality of works that have actually been published.

Of course, it is encouraging that the political issue of the name Indonesia is no longer appropriate as a benchmark regarding Indonesian identity, which is beginning to be recognized, but those interested in exploring the reality of literature that has been published in Indonesia, especially before Balai Pustaka, are still few. It can be said that the view that considers the importance of including works before Balai Pustaka as part of the treasury of modern Indonesian literature is foreign researchers. These include C.W. Watson (through a 1971 article), W.V. Sykorsky (through a 1980 article), and Claudine Salmon (through her 1981 book). Writers of Indonesian literary history such as Bakri Siregar (through his 1964 book) and Ajip Rosidi (through his 1969 book) do not base their reference to the works of Balai Pustaka as the beginning of Indonesian literature, but have not or do not discuss works that were published in the 19th century. It is very likely that these two writers of Indonesian literary history have not yet obtained concrete data regarding these works.

In fact, if they had been willing to utilize previously published works—if they had been obtained—with literary quality that was naturally left in line with the intellectual developments of the time, the structure of Indonesian literary history would certainly not be as fragmented as it is today. This fragmentation is primarily based on the basic foundations of Indonesian literature and on literary assessment systems that are often unfair in terms of measurement. For example, if the benchmark for assessing a book of poetry or prose is its canonical status during the lives of literary historians, many works will undoubtedly be considered trash. Such a measurement often does not consider the "value" of a work in the past, even though it is sociologically meaningful. Therefore, this article does not use this canonical criterion but rather its context, particularly regarding the early days of modern Indonesian literature.

From the data that can be traced, the earliest work that can be called modern because it has the author's name, is written in Latin letters, and printed mechanically, is a collection of poems published in 1857. The book written by a person named Sa-orang jang Bangsjawan is entitled *Boek Saier Oetawa Terseboet Pantoen (Syair Book or Commonly Called Pantun)*. This work is used as an object of study because besides being the first modern literary work in Indonesia, its contents also present a unique topic but also provide a signal of resistance. The topic of "reading" is very rarely found in a number of literary works in Indonesia and the world. The topic of reading in the context of very low literacy not only displays reality, but actually also becomes a symbol of resistance.

The second book used as the object of study also shows a symbol of resistance. This book is entitled *Pantoon Melajoe Sama Tjerita Aneh-Aneh Poor Orang-Orang, Njang Soekakh Ketawa* (Malay Pantun and Strange Stories for People Who Like to Laugh) by H.G.L. Although the title contains the word "pantun" as in the work mentioned previously, what the reader will encounter when reading this collection of H.G.L.'s works is not pantun as a typical form of traditional poetry and not in the form of "syair" as utilized by Bangsjawan but rather a work of free verse. By relying on these two facts, contemporary readers will indirectly be given the understanding that it seems the word "pantun" is a generic term for poetry at that time.

## **B. METHOD**

If terminology is viewed as something that remains constant throughout time, literary researchers will certainly encounter anomalous understandings. With the term "pantun," for example, today's readers are given the understanding that the term "pantun" used in the mid-19th century is actually different from the understanding that has been known, namely that this pantun consists of a stanza constructed by four lines with a-b-a-b rhyme. The first and second lines are *sampiran* (prologue), while the third and fourth lines are the content. This is the general understanding of the term "pantun." However, it turns out that such an understanding cannot always be applied even to the earliest literary works in Indonesia. In such a context, "pantun" is a form of non-prose with a specific or even free formula.

In the first poetry book, the title implies that the form of poetry "syair" in the past was also commonly called "pantun" as revealed by the word "*oetawa*" which indicates the meaning of 'in other words'. This means that any form, including syair and very possibly also "karmina" or even "gurindam" and other forms of poetry, would be called pantun at that time. Muhammad Haji Salleh (2011, p. 80) does not explicitly state this but he alludes that initially any form of literary expression eventually narrowed down to a patterned form in many tribes in Indonesia, Malaysia, and several other regions. In essence, pantun in the past is similar to the term "syair" today which is often used to name a number of forms of poetry. It is not surprising, many people are called "*penyair*" or poets even though they have never produced a work in the form of *syair*; poetry in one stanza consisting of four lines with a-a-a-a rhyme and all lines are content.

Based on these facts about "pantun", this article aims to emphasize that in understanding literary data from the early days of the development of a written literary tradition, as was the case in Indonesia at that time, it is not the current perspective that should be utilized. Likewise, the content of these poems must be understood in a different context according to the social situation that became the background for the creation of the work. Therefore, the problem of "reading", which remains a problem to this day, must be positioned differently in its meaning when readers are faced with the topic of "reading" in the works analyzed in this article. Likewise, the various topics offered by H.G.L. through his poetry and short prose must be placed and interpreted in the context when Indonesia was still

under Dutch colonial rule. The reading methodology that attempts to find answers to basic questions regarding the thematic tendencies of the two works analyzed in order to contribute to the development of science, especially literature in this case, is in line with the views of Goddard and Melville (2001, p. 1).

Based on the above explanation, it is necessary to understand that the problem of “pantun” in this context, is more of an effort to raise awareness that what readers will face is not the general understanding of “pantun” but a literary form that contains complete content. In other words, in Bangsjawan's work which consists of 80 verses of *syair*, what will be obtained is the unity of meaning from the ability to read in the context of that time, the morality that is internalized as a result of the ability to read, and the interest in learning that will continue to grow in someone who can read. In this connection, the activity of reading is basically a subversiveness that will inhabit the mind of the reader. Meanwhile, in the work of H.G.L., which in Part I consists of 10 free verses, Part II consists of 16 short prose, and Part III consists of 10 prose of varying lengths, shows the existence of a number of representations of reality that prevailed at that time. The tendency that can be detected in H.G.L.'s work is on the theme of self-definition with its various nuances. The disclosure of a number of socially contextual meanings using this close-reading research methodology is essentially the basic design (Murthy and Bhojanna, 2009, p. 32) for uncovering the mystery of these two earliest literary works in Indonesia.

### ***C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION***

#### **1. Subversiveness of Reading**

The phrase “subversiveness of reading” can be divided into two, namely “subversiveness (as a result of) reading” and “subversiveness (in) reading”. The first has the meaning that through the activity of reading, the reader’s mind or insight is very likely to be subverted by what is read. Not only the reader is affected by subversiveness but also the listener, if the reader recites it aloud or also for the benefit of others. In the past, when reading ability was still limited, many people paid others to read important news or announcements. This kind of thing was often done by traders who were still illiterate or rich people who were unable to read and write, for example, by hiring readers who were asked to read aloud. Second, “subversiveness (in) reading” is closely related to the term “reader as doubter” (Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, 2009, p. 21). Doubting or skeptical readers are usually defined as those who read with a critical approach or who want to question many aspects of what they read. This type of reader's activity is usually based on an intellectual goal or a desire to question a problem by testing their knowledge through reading. What this type of reader gains or hopes for is the emergence of critical and synthetic thinking.

In relation to the poetry book analyzed here, the intended “reader” can be anyone who is expected to be willing to listen to the teachings given. However, if listened to more closely, this book seems to depict a dialogue between the narrator and young people in general, as revealed in the first line of the 6th stanza which reads /Dengerken hë semua orang moeda/

(listen up, all you young people). From this line, we can get the idea of a direct address to young people that reminds us of the customs in works of oral tradition. This fact confirms what Giddens (2014, p. 6) said that there is still continuity that occurs in modern works.

The direct greeting is already felt from the second verse. While the first verse reads:

- 1 Bismillah itoe moela dikata  
Rahman den rahim kedoewanja serta  
Mengarang sair tjeritta  
Dengen pitoeloeng Toehan kitta

(Bismillah, which is the beginning of the word  
Mercy and compassion accompany  
Composing stories in poetry  
With the help of our God)

Has not yet greeted the reader because this stanza is an opening that contains a kind of intention and gratitude to the Creator. This opening stanza reminds us of the characteristics of ancient manuscripts, which show similarities in the opening sections. This leads to an understanding of the continuity of creativity from oral or handwritten traditions to machine-printed works. Meanwhile, the second verse of the poem in this book directly addresses the reader and reminds the reader of the imperative sentence model to the interlocutor even though there is no direct object addressed, unlike in the first line of the seventh verse. This seventh verse reads / Know by you the nature of humans / which clearly addresses the object, "you". The tendency to address the interlocutor like this is reminiscent of traditional works that are read or performed before an audience with strong interaction between the performer and the audience. To be clear, even though there is no object addressed, it can be concluded that this second verse addresses the object.

- 2 Djikalaoe membatja lagoe lagoeken  
Njaringken soewara djangan tahanken  
Hoeroepnja djangan dipatoekerken  
Soepaija birahie ijang mendengerken

(When reading, sing it.  
Raise your voice, don't hold it in.  
Don't swap the letters.  
So that the listener will enjoy it)

From this second stanza, besides the issue of greeting which once again can be said to be a representation of the still existing traces of oral tradition, what is interesting is that the reading activity put forward by the author is not in order to subvert one's own thoughts but also that of others, namely "ijang mendengerken" (those who listen). By paying attention to the fourth line, it is clear that what is mentioned in the first, second, and third lines is intended /Soepaija birahie ijang mendengerken/ (so that the listener will enjoy it). Such a formula is intended so that there are parties who are fascinated and is a depiction

of the life of oral tradition. It is not the primary meaning but the comfort or pleasure in listening to the "song" of what is read, which is represented by "soepaija birahie" (so that one likes it) which can be interpreted as 'so that one is fascinated.'

This reading formula continues with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th stanzas. In the 3rd stanza, the complete text reads:

- 3 Mambatja djangan sambiel bitjara  
Pasehken lidah njaringken soewara  
Segala ijang mendenger soepaija goembira  
Kedalem hatinja soepaija misra

(Don't read with talking  
Fluent your tongue and make your voice louder  
Everyone who hears it will be happy  
Into their heart to be intimate)

Emphasizing feelings of pleasure in the listener is still the main concern. It is stated, if joy arises, /Segala ijang mendenger soepaija goembira/ (all who listen to be happy), their hearts will surely be open to receive the next teaching or advice so that they can get meaning or significance, /Kedalem hatinja soepaija misra/ (into their hearts so that they are intimate).

The 4th stanza still provides a good reading framework. In full, this stanza reads as follows.

- 4 Mambatja hendak amat amattie  
Sahingga selse maka berhantie  
Didalem sepatah kata beberapa artie  
Den ijang mendenger simpoel dihatie

(Reading should be done carefully.  
So when you finish, stop.  
In a single word, there are several meanings.  
And the listener concludes in his heart.)

Several verses quoted (verses 2, 3, and 4) show the use of the imperative suffix /-ken/, which implies a suggestion or command. The reader, in this case, is expected to pay attention to the importance of reading clearly so that what is said can be properly understood by the listener and there is no misunderstanding. Similarly, the use of the word "djangan" (don't) suggests things that should be avoided when reading to others. Meanwhile, from the reader's perspective, by listening to a clear reading, it is hoped that enthusiasm or desire will arise to continue listening to what is being read. If the listener is in a comfortable mood, there will undoubtedly be enjoyment in listening and a greater possibility of being able to draw the right conclusions. The meaning or significance of the message of the *syair* can be well absorbed by the listener.

If the listener is able to draw conclusions, it is hoped that a critical attitude will emerge, by at least providing correction for incorrect presentations. In relation to oral traditions, this kind of critical attitude is hardly expected on the assumption that the storyteller usually knows better and does not want any disputes. This aspect that provides space for a critical attitude is new because it is directly offered by the narrator. This kind of statement can be seen in the 5th stanza, which still uses an ending that refers to a 'command'.

5 Mambatja dia hendak pahamken  
Segala lapalnja angkao ingetken  
Hoebaija hoebaija akoe pesenken  
Djikalo salah djangan diijemken

(Read to understand  
You remember everything  
Pay attention I ordered  
If it's wrong, don't ignore it)

This is a call to action on the importance of reading as a new skill in a society that is beginning to learn about reading and writing skills. Then, when reading the sixth stanza, it becomes clear why the communication in the second, third, fourth, and fifth stanzas is instructive, as it is a kind of guidance given by a father to his son and other young people.

6 Dengerken h  segala orang moeda  
Inilah pengadjar darie pada aijahenda  
Wadjib die toeroet olleh anenda  
Sekelijan itoe simpen didalem dada

(Listen to all young people  
This is the teaching of your father  
Must be followed by everyone  
Keep it in your heart)

By examining a number of stanzas in the early part of this poetry book, especially stanzas 2, 3, 4, and 5 which emphasize the importance of reading activities, this book has provided a picture of the reading situation in the mid-19th century and the importance of reading skills for self-development. Self-development or self-actualization that is subversive, secretly stimulates the reader's reason (Vonnegut, 2008), especially those related to daily behavior. General everyday human nature (stanza 7) such as the inappropriateness of being shy or fearful because it is not liked by people (stanzas 8 and 9) and becomes an obstacle in various activities (stanzas 12 and 13) will cause humans to be like trash and useless (stanza 16). The stanzas just mentioned are limited to the description of general nature.

## 2. Reading Practice: Subtle Subversiveness

Bangsjawan's work, *Boek Saier oetawa Terseboet Pantoen* begins by emphasizing the importance of reading correctly. As a theme, "reading" is rarely featured by any author. This reality seems to stem from the simple understanding that reading is a common

practice in society. However, in colonial times, reading was not something that could be considered everyday. In a context where education was still difficult for everyone, such as in the Dutch East Indies, reading was rare, but on the other hand, it could manifest as a kind of subversive step. Unfortunately, the low literacy rate meant that the subversiveness of reading was hampered or remained obscure. Meanwhile, the subversiveness that occurred was not limited to one person but could occur in many. Both the reader and the listener were equally likely to be subverted.

Regarding the subversiveness of reading, it was also emphasized by American author Percival Everett, whose novel *James* won the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In his speech at Wesleyan University (2025), he asserted that "reading is the most subversive thing you can do." There may be a slight difference between the subversiveness of reading in a low-literacy situation and the context of Everett's speech, but essentially, the subversiveness arises in the mind of the reader. In the colonial context of Indonesia, the invitation to read conveyed in Bangsjawan's work is more of an invitation to understand the colonial situation more intelligently by being able to obtain information through reading. Bangsjawan seems to believe that by reading, the ability to face the times will be easier compared to being unable to read, which means being unable to know or even predict what will happen.

The colonial period was an era when opportunities for the colonized population were severely limited and even closed in various ways. Likewise, with regard to education, only a small number of colonized people were given the opportunity to attend school. Meanwhile, the schools themselves were established by the Dutch East Indies government more as a means of achieving pragmatic goals and merely as an implementation of the liberalism that was beginning to be implemented (Penders, 1975, p. 33). From the existing graduates, it was hoped to obtain cheap administrative labor; employed for the benefit of the colonial power. From these educational institutions, indirectly, a generation that could read and write emerged, albeit in limited numbers. Those who could read and write naturally needed reading material. This then gave birth to a generation that began to broaden its horizons, even if only to the extent of being "believing" readers (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2009, p. 21). Moreover, their listeners would simply enjoy or listen. The critical attitude that usually emerged from "doubting" readers (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2009, p. 21) was still something that was not common at that time.

Reading is one of the skills, along with writing, listening, and speaking, acquired through educational institutions. In a context where educational opportunities were still scarce during the colonial era, language skills other than "speaking" were also limited. The ability to read, typically acquired through participation in education, is reflected in this collection of poems by Bangsjawan. Several stanzas illustrate the benefits of reading, as this activity provides a wealth of knowledge. If someone possesses good knowledge or understanding, they will earn the respect of others. The 24th stanza of the following poem, in verse form, illustrates this.

24 Telah sampe dengan sentosa  
Elmoenja lebih lagie perkasa  
Mendjadie moelija sanentijasa  
Angkau terpoedjie ampoenja bisa

(It has reached extraordinary heights  
His knowledge is even more powerful  
He has become eternally honored  
You are the most respected because of your abilities)

The triggering theme of the verse above is actually "reading," which results in the acquisition of knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge signifies the development of rationality, which aligns with the central theme of Habermas's view (Ewert, 1991, p. 346) in modernity, as reading has become a social practice in society. Reading itself was revealed as an important aspect during the colonial period, albeit at a low level, in keeping with the circumstances of the times. Those who cannot read face a sense of backwardness. Not only will they be left behind by the times but they will also experience an unhappy fate. Life is not just about eating and drinking, but also about keeping up with existing progress. Below is a verse that illustrates ignorance and its consequences.

37 Hidoep didoenija boekan nya boekan  
Djangan koe kira minoem den makan  
Istimiwa moe ada pedoedoekan  
Djikallo bodo mendjadie keroesakkan

(Living in this world is special  
Not just for eating and drinking  
It is important to have a position  
If you're stupid you'll be in trouble)

As stated in the final line of the 37th stanza, ignorance will hinder a person from carrying out their social practices. Ignorance, generally stems from an inability to acquire knowledge. The source of this obstacle to acquiring knowledge is of course the inability to read. Due to a lack of understanding, especially ignorance of the rules or legitimacy according to Habermas's claim (Cukier, 2004, p. 241) due to obstacles in reading, all a person will get is futility or a meaningless life. Life is clearly not just for "drinking and eating" but must have a clear position or status as Habermas claims (Cukier, 2004, p. 241) which is only possible if a person can read. It is also a truth that life must be more than just eating and drinking because reality shows that honesty or sincerity alone is not enough. Many strategies or tips must be applied so that a person can survive and enjoy life.

Utilizing these claims, *Book Saier Oetawa Terseboet Pantoen* is positioned as a work that signifies a modern attitude because it has been operating in the proper communicative actions. The operationalization of these four validity claims can be applied not only to the exemplary stanzas but to almost all stanzas. In relation to reading ability, what is explicitly

and implicitly in the stanzas in this book of poetry is essentially intended as a practical ability. Through reading, things that were previously unknown in form or essence will gradually be revealed. What can then be obtained through this reading activity can simply be described as the acquisition of knowledge that can be technical or pragmatic. At the level of rationality that has been obtained such, what is emerging is no longer instrumental but rather a communicative rationality that suggests a potential humanity that is equal.

Having reached this stage, reading becomes not only a communication practice, which certainly comes in various forms and levels, but also a kind of capital for "resistance." Of course, resistance during the colonial period could not be carried out in a frontal and balanced manner due to existing limitations, but rather through intellectual awareness. However, due to the still highly discriminatory educational situation in the mid-19th century, awareness in the realm of reasoning was still low. Given this reality, existing resistance could only be carried out through literary works. While in Bangsjawan's *syair* book, "resistance" is an effort to reduce ignorance and instill good morals, H.G.L.'s work is more about depicting everyday resistance concerning oneself and one's social environment.

### 3. Elegant Resistance

The work of H.G.L. which was published in 1858 must be declared a work that "resists" or "rebels" its era because the poetry and prose collected in it show almost no traces of literary tradition. For the prevalence of publication in 1858, the work of H.G.L. has truly presented a work that can be said to be beyond its time. In the poem entitled "Ako" (I, me), for example, H.G.L. not only showing courage in expressing oneself by choosing the word "ako" (I, me) but also displaying a form of poetry that really went against the poetry tradition at that time. Referring to oneself as "I" was not common at that time. Even in 20th-century poetry, only Chairil Anwar dared to use "I" in his poems, without additional information. Pay attention to the poem entitled "Ako" which is on page 10 in his book, below.

#### **Ako**

"Ako maoe!  
"Ako bisa! Ako moesti!"  
Itoe Ako  
Di seboot seriboe kali; --  
Ako itoe  
Bijaro di gondol setan:  
Tjoemah setan  
Njang bolih bilang begitoe.

(I'm  
"I can do it!  
"I can do it! I can do it!"  
It's me

Said a thousand times; --  
It's me  
Let the devil take you away:  
Only the devil  
can say that.)

The anthology of H.G.L.'s works consists of 10 free verse poems with varying stanzas, 16 short prose pieces, and 10 longer prose pieces. There are poems that resemble *pantun* or *syair*, but they are not actually poems with that form or pattern. Therefore, all of H.G.L.'s poems are referred to as "free verse" because none of them exhibit a specific poetic formula. With the label "free verse," H.G.L.'s works can be said to reflect freedom of expression or are also called "resistance" because they are not bound by traditional poetic forms. H.G.L., thus, has built his own poetics. Both in form and content, H.G.L. does not depend on a particular formula. By the standards of that time, the mid-19th century, this fact shows an achievement that can be said to be deviant because the tradition that confined it was patterned forms of poetry such as *pantun* or *syair*.

There are some poems that resemble patterned shapes, but are not. The following is a picture of the poetic "rebellion" of H.G.L. apart from the "Akoe" (I) already quoted. In the first poem entitled "Oeler-Api" (Fire Snake), there are 4 stanzas, each stanza consisting of 4 lines with rhyme a-b-a-b// c-d-c-d// e-f-e-f// g-h-g-h. At first glance, this poem has a pattern but the form is not a rhyme or a poem. The second poem, entitled "Nonah Loewies" (Miss Luis), only consists of one stanza. There are eight lines with the rhyme /a-a-b-b-c-c-d-d/ which cannot be referred to one of the poetry patterns. The third poem is entitled "Anakh Ketjil" (Little Child) which consists of 3 stanzas. The first stanza consists of four lines, the second stanza consists of four lines, and the third stanza consists of eight lines. Although there are similarities in rhyme in some lines, overall this poem does not show a specific rhyme pattern. Next is a poem entitled "Kasiman" (Kasiman) which consists of one stanza with seven lines in it. Like the previous poem, in this poem there seems to be rhyme but it does not refer to one of the poetic patterns. The rhyme is /a-a-b-b-a-a-a/. The next poem is quite long in title and gives the impression of not being a title because it seems like a dialogue. The title of this poem is "Di Tanjakh, Mengapa Trakh Tjienta Nonah-Nonah? Saja Menjaoot" (Asked, Why Not Love Ladies, I Answer), consisting of seven stanzas whose pattern resembles a *pantun*. However, this poem is not a *pantun* because it does not have a *sampiran* and *isi*. Then there is a poem entitled "Toekang-Kebon" (Gardener) which consists of three stanzas with four lines in each stanza. Its form resembles a *pantun* but is not a *pantun* because all the lines consist of *isi* and there is no *sampiran* and *isi*. The poem entitled "Boeroeng-Dharanja Anakreon" (The Dove of Anakreon) consists of four stanzas with an unequal number of lines, namely 8-8-21-7. The poem entitled "Soerat Kepada Soedara Goewa, Sakhsoedahnja Dapet Kabar Kawinnja" (Letter to My Brother, After Receiving News of His Marriage) consists of 6 stanzas with different lines in each stanza. Finally, the poem entitled "Nonah Betjara" (Miss Speaks) consists of three stanzas without rhyme. What is unique about this poem is its form of dialogue.

The free form that emerges from H.G.L.'s poems indicates that his work is the only free verse anthology published in the mid-19th century because all the poems found during that period are formulaic; if not in the form of *syair*, then the form of *pantun* appears. This fact directly indicates a different and progressive step for the time. So far, the domicile and identity of H.G.L. are unknown, so assumptions closer to reality are difficult to determine. However, seeing the fact that the book was published by a publisher in Leyden, the Netherlands, it is likely that H.G.L. once lived in the Netherlands. However, from the content of his poems, especially from the choice of words used, it is most likely that H.G.L. lived in Central Java because the expressions are quite strong Javanese nuances. Therefore, if only H.G.L.'s identity could be known, the possibility of linking the stylistic and thematic tendencies of his works would be more traceable..

Thematically, as in terms of form, there are no identical themes between one poem and another, but some are close to similarity. In his poems, there are themes regarding the myth of the fire snake, the habit of dancing whenever hearing music, the importance of the right example or advice, strong self-esteem, often mistaken appreciation, poor communication, naughtiness, and the importance of congratulations. Themes that show similarities, for example, are poor communication between two people in the two poems. In relation to these themes, it is clear that H.G.L.'s works differ from most poetry or literary works of that time, which generally tell stories about kingdoms, heroes, or myths.

H.G.L.'s works clearly demonstrate freedom, especially stylistically, which also clearly implies the influence of developments in the times that are not directly cognition of the acquired reading and writing skills. The creative freedom manifested in the form and content of H.G.L.'s works indicates that the author has utilized his rationality in responding to the dynamics of the times. Not only limited to poetry, in his prose H.G.L. also shows his rationalistic response. In addition, H.G.L.'s courage to present ideas and manifestations in works that do not follow patterns, shows an awareness of progress, which also means representing the modern dimension as an influence of developments at that time. Below are just examples of H.G.L.'s courage to raise themes that tend to be considered taboo, even until now.

## 1.

**Ada satoe toewan, njang beloom lama bolihnja kawin, pegi di dapoor sekali, di mana biniekhnja betool baroe bediri deket kwali. Toewan djiendjit pegi pelan-pelan sama dija, lantass tjioom di batang-leher. Njonjah djoembool, marah-marah, dhari di tjioom sampikh kaget; tapi lakiekhnja menjaoot: »Akoedjangän kokh goesari; kowe takh kirakhken si Koki.»**

(A newly married man went into the kitchen. His wife was standing near the pot. The man slowly approached her on tiptoe. He then kissed her neck. The wife was shocked and furious. Her husband simply replied, "Don't be angry with me; I thought you were our cook.")

In form and theme, this short prose piece resembles flash fiction. As a piece of prose, it's surprising that such a work was published in 1858. If not a "resistance," what else could it be called?

### ***D. CONCLUSION***

The two works discussed in this paper, when understood within the concept or framework of linearity and the chronology of their emergence, can be said to be in the stage of institutional transformation, as mentioned by Giddens (2014, p. 2). In this stage, the movement occurs from the creation of material objects to a more information-centered system. Through the activity of reading, information and communication become a key to enlightenment for readers. However, the acquisition of new information or communication does not automatically give rise to discontinuity. As emphasized by Giddens (2014, p. 6), there is actually continuity between traditional and modern life and not all of it is broken.

Meanwhile, the publication of a poetry book in relation to the colonial situation cannot ignore the theory regarding the relationship between the work and the author, the work with the reader, and the work with its social environment. A literary work, from Plato's time to the end of the 20th century, "is a social product, and the thoughts and feelings found in literature are conditioned and shaped by the cultural life created by the society" as concluded by Jadhav (2014, p. 658). This statement underlies this paper which explains that the work being studied is a social product that cannot be separated from the creator or author or its readers, as well as the existing social situation.

However, these two works show a special feature because traces of traditional literature are not clearly visible, except in the form of syair utilized by Bangsjawan. From the aspect

of the theme, these two works truly provide awareness that through literature, signs of renewal and resistance can emerge as a result of thoughts that have been subverted by the ability to read. In relation to works published in the 19th century, Watson's view (1971, p. 427) that states that early works published before Balai Pustaka are valuable and important works and it would be a shame if not discussed, has found its correlation.

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