

## Reclaiming Female Subjectivity: Intertextual Transformation from Balinese *Kidung Jerum Kundangdia* to *Novel Jerum*

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### Abstract

This study critically examines the intertextual transformation from the Balinese *Kidung Jerum Kundangdia* to Oka Rusmini's *Novel Jerum* (2019), focusing on how this dialogue articulates women's emotional resistance against patriarchal constraints. It addresses a gap in understanding how traditional Nusantara narratives can be dynamically reinterpreted to foreground female subjectivity and agency. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in Riffaterre's semiotics, the research identifies the *kidung* as the generative hypogram. It traces how Rusmini's novel utilizes the shared matrix of *satya* (loyalty) while foregrounding *semara* (passionate love) as a model for emotional expression and resistance. Data, derived from close textual analysis and archival documentation of both primary sources, were analyzed through thematic content analysis and feminist discourse analysis. The findings demonstrate that *Jerum* critically reorients reader empathy towards the protagonist Ni Jerum's suppressed inner life, repositioning her as an active agent challenging societal norms. Simultaneously, the novel revitalizes core motifs from the *kidung* tradition for contemporary gender discourse. This research significantly contributes to Nusantara literary and gender studies by illustrating the dynamic reciprocity between source text and adaptation. It affirms the power of intertextual strategies within local traditions to advocate for women's emotional legitimacy and resistance, enriching the treasury of text-based gender analysis in the region.

**Keywords:** *Intertextual Strategies; Emotional Resistance; Patriarchal Nomrs; Kidung Jerum Kundangdia; Novel Jerum*

### Introduction

*Kidung Jerum Kundangdia* (*Kidung Jerum*) constitutes a classical Balinese narrative poem (*kidung*) composed in 325 stanzas of Kawi language. Its core narrative revolves around a tragic love triangle involving Ni Jerum, Liman Tarub, and Kundangdia, driven by intense rivalry and sustained conflict between the male protagonists. While inherently narrative in content, its poetic form aligns with traditional *kidung* conventions, exemplified by works like *Kidung Alis-Alis Ijo* and *Kidung Malat*. Historically, *Kidung Jerum* functioned primarily within the specific ritual context of Balinese *pancayadnya*, particularly *bhuta yadnya* ceremonies, limiting its accessibility and interpretative scope largely to ritual practitioners and a Balinese audience familiar with its performative tradition.

The adaptation of *Kidung Jerum* into a modern novel by Oka Rusmini marks a significant transformation, shifting it from ritual object to a work of contemporary Indonesian literature with expanded national reach. This process exemplifies the dynamic interdependence between traditional and modern literary forms, where traditional sources inspire new creation while modern adaptations ensure their continued relevance (Putra, 2021). Unlike prior adaptations focusing on prominent Old Javanese texts, Rusmini's intervention centers on a lesser known Balinese narrative, thereby popularizing it nationally. Crucially, her reimagining involves substantial textual innovation through a

feminist lens, foregrounding female subjectivity, experiences, and worldviews. By amplifying the voices and inner struggles of female characters within a patriarchal framework, Rusmini utilizes the novel's transformation as a vehicle to embed her authorial ideology, challenging traditional gender norms and offering a critical reinterpretation of the source material.

The position of women in traditional Balinese literature often reflects a patriarchal worldview that marginalizes female subjectivity and emotional expression. *Kidung Jerum*, as a classic Balinese narrative, presents the character of Ni Jerum as a tragic female figure trapped in feudal power, religious morality, and gender-based obedience. However, Ni Jerum's existence as an object within an oppressive system paradoxically reveals her potential as a conscious subject. She demonstrates the capacity to break free from patriarchal constraints both emotionally and narratively particularly when her story is reinterpreted in modern literary works.

This reinterpretation opens space for a renewed reading of Ni Jerum, not merely as a victim, but as an agent who voices resistance against the norms that confine her. In this context, the *Novel Jerum* by Oka Rusmini serves as a bridge linking traditional and modern literature through a mutually indebted relationship. As Putra (2021) asserts, traditional and modern literature coexist in a reciprocal dynamic: the former offers inspiration and legitimacy, while the latter provides fresh interpretations that enrich the meaning of tradition. The central issue explored in this article concerns the extent to which a traditional narrative, when reinterpreted through the lens of modern literature, can serve as a medium for articulating representations of women. The urgency of addressing this issue lies in the relative scarcity of feminist-oriented studies that engage in intertextual analysis particularly those that bridge the gap between classical Balinese literature and the works of contemporary Indonesian women writers.

Although existing research has examined the role of women in *kidung* literature and in the novels of Oka Rusmini separately, there remains a significant analytical gap in exploring the dialogic relationship between the two. This study seeks to address that gap by employing an intertextual approach grounded in the theoretical framework of Julia Kristeva. Her perspective on intertextuality viewing texts as part of a dynamic mosaic of quotations and cultural dialogues

Studies on the representation of women in both traditional and contemporary Balinese literature have evolved considerably, yet they still leave critical gaps to be further explored. A similar study by Allen, (2023), for instance, in her analysis of the character Men Cobleng in Oka Rusmini's work, demonstrates that female agency can be articulated through subtle everyday practices, signaling a paradigm shift from the depiction of women as objects to subjects actively participating in literary discourse. Meanwhile, Ernanda, (2023), through a feminist critical discourse analysis of Indonesian female environmental heroes, emphasizes how resistance to patriarchal culture can be enacted through discursive strategies that highlight emotional courage and social care.

These two studies contribute significantly to the rereading of Ni Jerum both in *Kidung Jerum* and in Oka Rusmini's *Jerum* as a representation of women engaging in symbolic resistance against patriarchal structures through emotional expression. Within the context of intertextual analysis, however, there is still a lack of research that specifically traces the narrative transformation of *kidung* into contemporary novels as a practice of gender resistance. This study seeks to fill that gap by positioning *Kidung Jerum* as the hypogram and Rusmini's *Novel Jerum* as a form of critical adaptation in a mutually referential relationship. This approach aligns with Darma Putra's (2021) notion of the reciprocal relationship between traditional and modern literature as an ongoing cultural dialogue. Other intertextual research Cika (Cika et al., 2021) illustrates a form of

transformation within the story *Eka Jala Rsi* and the omission of narrative elements in its reconfiguration into a new text. These two studies demonstrate the creative processes involved in rewriting literary narratives. In line with the research conducted by Putra and Cika, Harini (Harini, 2016) identifies structural changes such as expansion, conversion, modification, and intersections between oral folklore and the novel *Nini Anteh*. Parta (Parta et al., 2021) shows that the development of the story in *Chandra Bhairawa* involves modifications that differ from the source text in terms of characters, setting, and textual functions. Asteka (Asteka, 2017), in his research, reveals both differences and similarities in the characterization within *Siti Nurbaya* and *Laila Majnun*. Intertextuality is also employed to analyze the representation of female characters in literary works by Balinese authors, as shown in the study by Artawan (Artawan, 2017).

This study offers an original perspective by analyzing *Kidung Jerum* as the hypogram of *Novel Jerum*, positioning the latter not merely as a literary reinterpretation but as a critical feminist intervention. Thematically, the article highlights the issue of emotional resistance, particularly focusing on how suppressed female emotions are brought to the surface as a form of challenge against patriarchal norms. The analytical framework employed is grounded in critical feminist theory inspired by Simone de Beauvoir, allowing for a deeper exploration of how gendered experiences are articulated within literary texts. The significance of this discussion lies in its potential to expand critical discourse on gender, tradition, and authorship within Indonesian literature especially in a context where women's narratives have historically been marginalized or silenced. This study adopts Riffaterre's theory of intertextuality, supported by Ricoeur's theory of ideology. The discussion is structured into two main parts: (1) the intertextual relationship between the *kidung* and the *Novel Jerum*, and (2) the ideology of female resistance in breaking free from patriarchal constraints. The insights offered are not only relevant to literary studies but also to other disciplines concerned with the transmediation of texts and interdisciplinary approaches.

## Method

This study is a qualitative research employing Abrams' objective approach and a library research method. The primary data are drawn from the classical text *Kidung Jerum* and the *Novel Jerum*, both of which were purposively selected due to their thematic and intertextual relevance. Data selection was conducted through close reading of the three texts to identify narrative transformations, ideological motifs, and shifts in the representation of female characters. The researcher served as the primary instrument in analyzing the texts through note-taking and thematic classification techniques. The analytical framework consists of three layers: first, an intertextual reading based on Riffaterre's semiotic theory to trace *Kidung Jerum* as a hypogram and to identify the matrix and model that emerge in its novel adaptation; second, Abrams' objective approach to explore the relationship among the literary work, its socio-cultural reality, and its audience; and third, a feminist critical reading that emphasizes the emotional agency of female characters using discourse analysis tools. The data were analyzed through the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to uncover patterns of emotional resistance and examine how the modern text critically engages with traditional narratives.

## Results and Discussion

The discussion is presented in two analytical sections: first, an analysis of the hypogram, matrix, and model of *Kidung Jerum* and the *Novel Jerum*; and second, an ideological analysis of *satya* (truthfulness/loyalty), aiming to affirm authentic loyalty and strengthen female autonomy. The following presents the first part of this analysis.

## 1. Hypogram, Matrix, and Model of *Kidung Jerum* in the *Novel Jerum*

A hypogram is a term used in literary studies to refer to a text that explicitly or implicitly references another text, often by concealing or adapting certain elements from the source text. In the context of intertextuality, the hypogram functions as a form of interaction between different texts, where one text (the referencing hypogram) reflects or alludes to another (the original hypogram). The hypogram often disguises references or elements from another text in subtle ways. This may include stylistic borrowings, themes, characters, or plotlines adapted from the original.

The transformation of *Kidung Jerum* into the *Novel Jerum* reflects a broader cultural shift concerning the position of women in society. This position is both reinforced and reconstructed in the novel through the characterization of Ni Jerum as an independent and strong-willed woman. This literary transformation illustrates how the novel inherits the representation of loyalty found in the original *kidung*, preserving and further developing this ideology of loyalty as a central narrative element in the construction of *Jerum* as a modern literary work.

The presence of *Novel Jerum* in this modern era is able to provide legitimacy and confirmation to the content of *Kidung Jerum*. First, *Novel Jerum* confirms the love story of a woman named Ni Jerum is a true and sincere love for Kundangdia. *Novel Jerum* seems to emphasize that a woman also has the right to express her love for a man. Second, besides talking about love, *Novel Jerum* confirms the value of a mother's love for her child. Ni Sekar, the name of Kundangdia's mother in the novel, gives great affection and love to her child I Kundangdia. The attitude of loving children is an eternal attitude of parents to their children.

The hypogram fosters a dialogue between texts, where one text speaks to and about another. This engages readers in the interpretative process and builds intertextual relationships across literary works. Writers often utilize hypograms to create something new from existing material. By adapting elements from other works, authors can add new layers of meaning or critique the source text. Hypograms are frequently found in works inspired by mythology, classical literature, or religious texts. For instance, a novel that reconfigures characters or plots from ancient tales into a modern context may be considered a hypogram. Thus, the hypogram is a powerful literary tool that weaves relationships between texts and adds interpretive depth through intertextuality.

The matrix refers to the underlying structure or framework of a literary work that contains references, elements, or themes derived from other texts. In this context, the matrix serves as a map or guide to understanding how a text interacts with other works, providing readers with context to uncover deeper meanings. The matrix establishes connections between the analyzed text and its referential sources. Riffaterre (1978) asserts that no text exists in isolation, but rather as part of a broader network encompassing other literary works. The matrix helps readers identify these elements and understand intertextual relationships.

Within the matrix, references can take the form of quotations, symbols, themes, or even writing styles adopted from other texts. By understanding the matrix, readers can observe how such references enrich the text's overall meaning. Riffaterre argues that the comprehension of meaning in a text is not limited to its internal content, but also involves its references and interactions with other texts. The matrix acts as a tool that facilitates meaning-making, allowing the writer to create new interpretations through adaptation or reference. This may include critique, parody, or reinterpretation—all of which can be revealed through matrix analysis. The reader plays an active role in this process. Recognizing the matrix allows the reader to interpret how referential elements contribute to the text's holistic meaning. This results in a more profound and interactive reading

experience. The matrix demonstrates the complex referential nature of texts, where meaning is shaped not only by the words themselves but also by their interrelations with other texts. Consequently, readers must consider broader contexts when interpreting literary works. Overall, Riffaterre's matrix theory encourages readers to view texts as components of a larger web, wherein references and intertextual relationships generate deeper, more complex meanings. This underscores the significance of intertextuality in literary analysis and how each work contributes to a wider tradition and literary dialogue.

The matrix's first actualization is called the model, which may appear as specific words or sentences. The model then develops into various variants that generate the entire text. The model's primary characteristic is its poetic nature. Thus, while the matrix functions as the engine driving textual derivation, the model serves as the boundary of that derivation. The matrix consistently manifests through variants shaped by the model as the matrix's initial realization. Kristeva (in Culler, 1981, as cited in Suarka, 2007) argues that every text is a mosaic of quotations, embodying the absorption and transformation of other texts.

In line with Kristeva, Riffaterre (1978) posits that a poem (or literary work) is a response to prior texts. This response can manifest as either a continuation or a contestation of tradition or both simultaneously. In this case, the transmediation from *Kidung Jerum* to the *Novel Jerum* can be seen as a creative continuation of tradition. From such a response, Riffaterre categorizes two types of hypograms: potential hypogram and actual hypogram. The potential hypogram is not explicitly present in the text but must be abstracted from it. It forms the core or key of the text and may take the form of a single word, phrase, or simple sentence. The first transformation of the matrix or potential hypogram is the model, which is then developed into various variants. Meanwhile, the potential hypogram is actualized through all forms of linguistic meaning, whether in the form of presuppositions, descriptive systems, or conventional associative groups. The actual hypogram manifests in pre-existing texts, including myths or other literary works (Riffaterre, 1978).

Based on this comprehensive review of hypogramatics, the intertextual analysis in this study refers specifically to the actual hypogram, as it directly relates to *Kidung Jerum* being explicitly employed as the primary source for the *Novel Jerum*.

In the preface to *Jerum*, it is clearly stated that the author drew upon *Kidung Jerum* as a foundational source for her writing. This may seem unusual, an author known for her critical exploration of Balinese culture, especially regarding female hegemony, resistance, and the struggle for women's rights, choosing a *kidung* as her primary reference. It is, in fact, an anomaly.

*Menulis ulang atau menyadur teks sastra lama adalah jalan yang menarik untuk memberikan info, tidak saja pada pelajar, tetapi pada publik sastra dan sastrawan bahwa ide menulis tidak pernah kering. Saya mencoba menyentuh karya sastra kuno tersebut menjadi bentuk kekinian, hingga lahirlah Novel Jerum ini.*

Translation:

Rewriting or adapting classical literary texts is an intriguing way to provide insights not only for students, but also for the literary public and writers that the well of writing ideas never truly runs dry. I sought to engage with this ancient literary work and reimagine it in a contemporary form, which eventually gave birth to the *Novel Jerum*.

It can thus be concluded, from a hypogrammatic perspective, that the *Novel Jerum* has legitimately adapted *Kidung Jerum* as its source text. The question that arises, however, is whether the use of *Kidung Jerum* as a hypogram implies that the *Novel Jerum* merely imitates the original narrative. Based on the analysis through mechanisms such as

expansion, modification, conversion, lacuna, and excerpting, it is evident that there are significant differences in narrative structure. These differences, however, are the result of the author's creative interpretation.

Although the author has explicitly stated that *Jerum* is adapted from *Kidung Jerum*, it is crucial to examine what model serves as the underlying motivation and ideological foundation of this adaptation. The poetic line "*tumona ring nini Jerum / kedanan ring tuas kaleson / koyangan lara kasmaran*", which translates roughly as "upon seeing Nini Jerum /the heart becomes helplessly infatuated / restless and love-stricken", contains the key term *kasmaran* (infatuation), which may be interpreted as a poetic signifier, serving as the model derived and developed from the hypogram of *Kidung Jerum*. The following is an excerpt from the introductory chapter *Kundangdya* in the *Novel Jerum*, as written by the author:

*Cinta mengubah keinginan jadi ambisi yang menggila. Cinta mengubah kemustahilan jadi kenyataan. Dan kematian pun menjadi indah karena cinta.*

Translation:

Love transforms desire into a maddening ambition. Love turns the impossible into reality. Even death becomes beautiful because of love.

The author of the *Novel Jerum* makes a clear and assertive claim that the narrative model adapted from *Kidung Jerum* is rooted in the concept of *kasmaran* (romantic affection or infatuation). Deriving from the Sanskrit root *smara*, meaning love, this term underlines the thematic matrix of both texts. If the model is understood as the first manifestation of the matrix and the matrix itself as the core of meaning, then *satya* (truthfulness or fidelity) arguably serves as the central semantic core.

According to Zoetmulder's Old Javanese Dictionary (2011), *satya* denotes sincerity and loyalty, particularly toward one's husband, king, or sovereign. It represents a moral excellence and inner virtue that is unwavering regardless of external pressures or influences. Although there appears to be a tension in determining whether *smara* or *satya* holds primacy as the matrix, strong reasons support the argument for *satya* as the narrative center. First, *satya* appears and evolves in key and pivotal narrative moments. Second, *satya* acts as the driving force of the plot, as seen in *Kundangdia*'s unwavering devotion to Ni Jerum, and vice versa. Jerum's willingness to die for her loyalty exemplifies the concept of *mati satya* (dying faithfully) and *satya wacana* (faithfulness to a vow). Third, fidelity reflects commitment and consistency, which are fundamental to building and sustaining long-term relationships. While love may fluctuate, loyalty denotes a dedication that transcends momentary emotional states. Nevertheless, love remains significant, and ideally, both values should coexist harmoniously. Thus, the correlation between *satya* as matrix and *smara* as model reflects a poetic structure that conveys the core meaning of both *Kidung Jerum* and the *Novel Jerum*.

## 2. The Ideology of *Satya* and Gender Equality in *Kidung* and *Novel Jerum*

This discussion centers on the ideology of *satya* (truthfulness or loyalty) within the framework of gender equality. The analysis employs a descriptive analytical approach, supported by selected textual quotations that serve as evidence of the presence and function of the *satya* ideology in the construction of a gender equal system. Prior to the core analysis, however, it is essential to delineate the conceptual distinction between gender and sex, drawing on insights from previous scholarly research to establish a clear theoretical foundation

The discussion of ideology in the texts *Kidung Jerum* and the *Novel Jerum* is revealed through two main aspects: the theme of true loyalty and the affirmation of female autonomy. Ideology entails thinking about the other, thinking about people beyond

oneself. To regard a certain perspective as ideological means one must be prepared to critique it, as ideology is not a neutral term (Thomson, 2014). A reading of *Kidung Jerum* through the lens of *satya* offers a transformative portrayal of female loyalty. The loyalty exemplified by the characters Jerum, Kundangdia, and his mother figure has been elaborated in earlier discussions. Jerum is presented as a courageous character, demonstrating parity with traditionally masculine traits. Such courage stems from the inherent nature of human personality, often referred to as "character" within gender discourse. Sex role inventory emphasizes that human traits are not strictly binary, but span masculine, feminine, and neutral characteristics depending on contextual factors (Lin & Jarvie, 2016).

Based on this understanding, the ideology of loyalty is formulated through Paul Ricoeur's (1984), view that ideology functions as an operation rather than a theme. Ideology operates more in the background than appearing overtly as a visible theme. In line with Althusser (1984), ideology is understood as a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to the real conditions of their existence.

In addressing the distinction between sex and gender, Fakihi (2013) provides a critical clarification. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women, while gender encompasses socially and culturally constructed roles and attributes ascribed to each sex. A persistent confusion between these terms has led to the misperception that gender roles are natural or divinely ordained. What is often construed as the "nature of women" is, in fact, a product of social and cultural construction. Gender differences are shaped through prolonged processes of socialization, reinforcement, and institutionalization, including religious teachings and state regulations (Fakihi, 2013) Building on this understanding, gender ideology must be explored at micro-level practices that reinforce patriarchal values.

### **3. Affirming True Loyalty: A Feminist Reflection**

This study offers both an overview and a reaffirmation of the presence and role of women within traditional literature. Furthermore, the discussion contributes to the broader body of research on local literature by generating new insights into the cultural representation of female loyalty within the context of Balinese society.

The cultural struggle for women's rights revolves around efforts to gain recognition, autonomy, and equality within societies that remain deeply rooted in patriarchal and traditional norms. These conventional settings are often characterized by rigid gender roles that confine women to domestic spheres and limit their access to education, leadership, and decision-making. As Murniati (2004) asserts, religious and traditional doctrines often legitimize gender inequalities, reinforcing hierarchical male dominance and rendering such power dynamics "natural."

Consequently, women are subjected to negative stereotypes that restrict their agency and personal development, while behaviors that deviate from gender norms are heavily stigmatized. The female body, and the right to exercise choice over it, is frequently marginalized—women are often expected to maintain appearances to please men, and their presence may be perceived as lacking inherent value. As Oktaviani et al., (2020) note, such restrictions are a result of male-imposed constructs, placing disproportionate burdens on women. Traditional texts often reflect and reinforce this hegemony by prescribing behavioral norms, such as how a woman should dress, serve her husband, and accept polygamous arrangements.

Beauvoir (2016) famously critiques this condition, arguing that womanhood is objectified and subjected to exploitation much like nature, with dignity granted not inherently but bestowed by men. Literary texts such as *Stri Sasana* and *Tantri*

*Nandakaharana* reiterate this ideology by instructing women to be submissive, forbidding anger toward co-wives, and normalizing the acceptance of polygamy. These texts seem to validate the notion that women lack autonomy and are expected to endure psychological subjugation.

*Ento krana da mambahang idep angkara/paleh-paleh di ati/sipatin baan sastra/eda kadurus kangkang/madune buka sakitin/...//* (geguritan *Stri Sasana*)

Translation:

Thus, let not resentment take root, nor division dwell within the heart; let wisdom through literature be your guide. Do not act in excess, lest your co-wife suffer pain.

*Yan ring werddha tan wruh ing laku dꦂꦁꦒꦶ nitya bwat wiwil tan tūt ring buddhi ning laki mupawada drowika néng madu* (*Tantri Nandakaharana*)

Translation:

In old age, when one lacks discernment in behavior driven by envy, at odds with the husband's will bitterness may arise, manifesting in scorn and jealousy toward the co-wife.

The presence of doctrinal teachings that encourage harmonious conduct among co-wives positions women as obedient subjects who conform to literary prescriptions. Readers of traditional literature often overlook or dismiss these seemingly negative elements, when in fact such passages embed ideological messages intended for their audience. As illustrated in the excerpt above, it is likely that the text was authored by men who sought to normalize and legitimize polygamy through literary instruction. A narrative framed within literature carries far greater impact than a mere spoken command. The call for women not to harbor envy or resentment toward their co-wives serves as a legitimizing discourse for continued devotion to a polygamous husband.

Furthermore, texts such as *Stri Sasana* and *Tantri Nandakaharana* not only reinforce the practice of polygamy but also depict idealized female behavior. The former emphasizes that a woman must uphold virtuous conduct: “*bikase makada dadi pitresnan/tidong gobane karih*”, goodness is the cause of love, not merely a beautiful face (*Stri Sasana*,41). Similarly, *Tantri Nandakaharana* promotes the ideal that a woman should cultivate both knowledge and ethical behavior. The most praised trait in a woman within this text is loyalty (*susatya ginung*) and an understanding of her husband's will (*wruh ngamong pranana kakung*).

Between the prescriptive and didactic dimensions reflected in these texts, *Kidung Jerum* presents a diverging portrayal. The role of the female character in this work contradicts the behavioral guidance of the aforementioned texts. The author of *Kidung Jerum* offers a representation of a woman who defies doctrinal marital submission (*kepatibratan*) and instead exercises *satya* loyalty to the man of her choosing. Ni Jerum, who is married without love (merely *turida*) by Liman Tarub, exemplifies the deeply embedded patriarchal system in society. As a woman, Ni Jerum is powerless in the face of an unsolicited proposal that she is expected to accept and bear for the rest of her life. No room is given for negotiation or refusal Ni Jerum stands as an inferior figure under the superiority of Liman Tarub. A similar theme appears in the *geguritan Basur*, in which Ni Sokasti is proposed to by I Gde Basur on behalf of his son, I Tigaron. Despite repeated attempts to secure the marriage, Ni Sokasti refuses, asserting her agency and right to choose. In contrast, Eng Tay in *Geguritan Sampik* is pressured by her own family to accept a marriage proposal, despite her lack of affection for the suitor. Having previously disguised herself to study in a male-dominated environment, Eng Tay is ultimately subdued by patriarchal expectations. Though married to Subandar Macun, whom she never loved, Eng Tay remains loyal to Sampik and chooses to join him in death.

The plight of Eng Tay mirrors that of Jerum: both are bound to men they do not love, yet remain faithful to their true partners, exercising agency grounded in personal conviction. Both characters exemplify the strength of individual female subjectivity and demonstrate their capacity to fight for self-determination. Across several classical texts, female characters assert control over their bodies and choices through acts of *satya* toward their lovers. They prefer to die faithfully (*mati satya*) with the hope of eternal union rather than submit to kings or male victors. *Satya* thus emerges as an ideological foundation underpinning female courage and resistance against coercion. This illustrates that women possess the fortitude to assert control over their own lives.

Based on the explanation, from the *Kidung Jerum* and *Novel Jerum*, a picture of a brave woman emerges who breaks out of the patriarchal shackles. As a brave figure, Ni Jerum shows her loyalty and love for Kundangdia, even having to risk her life which results in death (*masatia*). *Masatia* as a concept of loyalty is the greatest form of sacrifice from a sense of love and devotion to a partner. The body is meaningless when compared to a sense of love (*turida*). The character Jerum, in particular, rationally exercises agency over her body and choices, despite societal condemnation for her “deviant” behavior. In her perceived disloyalty (*mitya*) to Liman Tarub, she demonstrates unwavering loyalty to Kundangdia, even at the cost of her life. Her act of resistance against injustice represents a fight for personal rights and autonomy: *mati satya lan wong bagus*, dying faithfully with the beloved.

Jerum’s bravery and assertiveness inspire the characterization in the *Novel Jerum*. Ni Jerum, as a central figure, offers a model for female empowerment through rational agency. The novel adaptation emphasizes three prominent female characters who represent independent thought and action, liberated from externally imposed ideals. Two of them embody an ideology that elevates emotion over material wealth. Ni Jerum, for instance, is indifferent toward her marriage to the wealthy merchant Liman Tarub, while Ni Sentil likewise chooses a modest life despite her husband, Ki Pohon, being a rich merchant. Their attitudes provoke tension with other women who aspire to such privileged positions. This depiction is not exclusive to the novel but also subtly present in *Kidung Jerum*, though it requires deeper interpretive engagement.

Another figure, Ni Sekar the mother of Kundangdia represents the image of a single mother who deeply loves and cares for her son. Ni Jerum and Ni Sentil, meanwhile, demonstrate personal integrity and independence from social norms. Their simplicity in conversation reveals principled convictions. Ni Jerum’s resilience and decisiveness stem from being orphaned. Living alone, she becomes emotionally indifferent and surrenders her fate to the collective decisions of the village community.

*Aku sudah menyerahkan hidupku pada apapun yang diputuskan warga desa*

Translation:

My life is no longer mine, I have yielded it entirely to the will of the village.

This excerpt illustrates how Ni Jerum has never experienced personal autonomy since the death of her parents. Her existence as a village woman is marked by a strong personal principle, as reflected in her words: “bukankah hidup harus terus berjalan?”, “Isn’t life supposed to go on?” This principle distinguishes Ni Jerum as more resilient compared to her peers. She navigates life through her own lens, even though everything in her world is dictated by the decisions of the villagers. In other words, she believes that nothing is better than the collective will of her community. Such intervention has led Ni Jerum to surrender entirely to fate: “biarlah waktu yang mengurusku”, “Let time take care of me.”

This condition places Ni Jerum in a situation of gender injustice, where her experiences reflect a form of violence. According to Murniati (2004), violence is a

behavior or act that occurs within human relationships, experienced by one party as a burdensome, distressing, unpleasant, or unfree situation. This form of violence causes harm physically, psychologically, or spiritually to the victim. Ni Sentil, portrayed as a subordinate character, is given the narrative space to express that being a woman from a well-off and respected family does not necessitate adorning oneself with lavish clothing or jewelry. Ni Sentil chooses to live simply, presenting herself as she is, with her main priority being the care of her child and family.

Despite her modest appearance, Ni Sentil is often advised by other women to beautify herself in order to remain attractive to her husband. They instill fear in her, suggesting that if she fails to maintain her looks, her husband might seek out a more physically appealing woman. However, such external pressure does not sway her. Ni Sentil remains firm in her bodily autonomy and her right to choose. For her, a woman maintains dignity even without adornment

*apa hanya perhiasan mahal yang membuat perempuan jadi cantik?.*

*apakah perempuan baru terlihat bermartabat jika memakai perhiasan mahal?  
aku ingin menunjukkan bahwa tanpa perhiasan mahal pun, perempuan bisa terlihat bermartabat.*

Translation:

Is it only expensive jewelry that makes a woman beautiful?  
Does a woman only appear dignified when adorned with luxury? I want to show that even without lavish jewelry, a woman can still embody dignity.

Sentil did not feel anxious or afraid when she chose not to adorn herself, for to her, it was not jewelry but loyalty that determined a woman's worth in the eyes of her husband. "tapi aku setia padanya", "kalau setia, dia pun pasti setia": "But I am faithful to him," she said. "If I'm faithful, he will surely be faithful too." Such was Ni Sentil's commitment to fidelity believing that her own loyalty would be reciprocated by her husband. Even though she had resolved to remain faithful to her husband, Ki Pohon, she was often haunted by doubts wondering if her husband, who had sailed for months, could truly remain untouched by other women. Nevertheless, Ni Sentil remained firm in her belief that fidelity begets fidelity.

From the perspective of gender equality, however, Ni Sentil represents a woman whose agency is constrained by her circumstances. Her unwavering loyalty became the foundation for maintaining the family in the absence of her husband's support. She cared for their son, Liman Tarub, with complete devotion. Ni Sentil thus represents the image of a woman shaped by patriarchal expectations shouldering the entire burden of domestic responsibilities without aid from her husband. Such steadfastness in fulfilling her marital role, though seemingly a matter of personal choice, is in fact a subtle internalization of patriarchal intervention disguised as marital duty. The ideology of loyalty is not only embedded in the character of Ni Sentil and Ni Jerum but also in Ni Sekar, the mother of Kundangdia. Her loyalty, however, is not directed toward a husband or social expectation, but fully and unconditionally to her son. She devotes herself entirely to loving and raising Kundangdia, embodying a maternal fidelity that surpasses all else.

*/.../Amerih belaning matia/kawula tegeh asayut/ karaning kari agesang/wet Ida maring tuwanku//*

Translation:

/ ... / do loyalty even if you die / worship offerings / as long as you are alive / just want to be with my master

*Kundangdya merasa bahwa kesetiaan sang bunda adalah nyawa kehidupannya.  
Perempuan itu adalah jantung dan darahnya, zat yang menumbuhkannya jadi sosok lelaki matang.*

Translation:

Kundangdya felt that his mother's loyalty was his life. She is his heart and blood, the substance that grows him into a mature man

The quotation of Jerum's song above emphasizes the loyal attitude of Kundangdia's mother who always prayed and begged for Kundangdia's safety. Even though his mother already knew that Kundangdia died with Ni Jerum. The quote from the *Novel Jerum* above also emphasizes the attitude of Ni Sekar, Kundangdia's mother. The transformation of *Kidung Jerum* into the *Novel Jerum* continues the ideology of loyalty, which is not only loyalty to lovers, but also affirms loyalty to children. Based on this presentation and discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation is not only in the form of *kidung* into the novel, but also in the realm of ideology, especially the ideology of loyalty. The transformation of the ideology of loyalty develops in the *Novel Jerum*, as a form of affirmation of true loyalty.

*Kalau setia, dia pun pasti setia*

Translation:

If one is loyal, surely the other will be loyal as well

This was Ni Sentil's response when confronted by the villagers' persistent questioning. Their exchange gradually centered on a matter of principle: loyalty. Ni Sentil demonstrated her resolve to remain loyal to Ki Pohon—expressing profound fidelity to him as her husband, and to Liman Tarub as her son. Her unwavering loyalty to her husband became a source of inner strength, fostering her independence in managing domestic responsibilities, sustaining the household, and nurturing Liman Tarub.

## Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis, the *Novel Jerum* is a literary work that directly adapts the traditional *Kidung Jerum*. The matrix of *satya* (truthfulness or loyalty) is present in both texts, with *smara* or romantic love serving as the model. The interconnection and intertextual bond between these two works reinforce Darma Putra's assertion that traditional and modern literature are mutually indebted. The ideology of *satya* representation in the *Novel Jerum* affirms a notion of true loyalty rooted in the original *kidung*. Moreover, the portrayal of female autonomy emerges as a crucial theme, symbolizing a form of liberation from patriarchal constraints.

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