



The Discourse of Resistance Against Patriarchal Culture in Short Stories by Three Balinese Women Writers

Ni Putu Laksmi Mutiara Prameswari^{1*}, Maria Matildis Banda², I Nyoman Darma Putra³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University, Jl. Pulau Nias 13, Denpasar

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the discourse on Balinese women's resistance against patriarchal culture as reflected in short stories by three Balinese women writers. Short stories by Oka Rusmini, Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, and Devy Gita were analyzed using Sara Mills' theory of feminist critical discourse analysis and Hélène Cixous' feminine writing. This research uses qualitative methods with data collection techniques in the form of literature study. The female characters in these short stories are both positioned as objects and subjects who fight against sexual harassment, domestic burdens, and pseudo identity. However, the writer's position expresses women's rebellion who cut off her legs, decided to become a prostitute, and planned her death. The reader's position then has implications for women's independence as outlined in the short story as women who are independent in the domestic, economic and traditional fields; support the family; and take care of herself and her children after divorce. The objective of this research is to provide inspiring ideas to voice and fight for injustice due to patriarchal culture experienced by Balinese women in particular and Indonesia in general. In addition, this research is also hoped to be a comparison in depicting the insights of women writers' struggles in various different cultural narratives, especially from the perspective of the global south.

1. INTRODUCTION

Balinese women writers are active in creating literary works and proactive in raising issues of gender inequality in the context of the patriarchal culture in Bali. The works of Balinese women writers, such as Oka Rusmini, Cok Sawitri, Ali S. Rini, and Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, are not only appreciated as literary works but are also often discussed in the context of studies of social change in Bali according to patriarchal cultural values [1]. Holleman and Koentjaraningrat explained that the Balinese cultural system is identical to the patrilineal kinship system which states that the position of men is considered more important than women, making their position powerless [2].

*Correspondence author, Contact(s): laksmimp@gmail.com

However, the existence of the construction of Balinese women who are independent, tenacious, have a high work ethic and are devoted to their families make them play multigender roles as women who take care of the household, become workers and social members, and carry out religious rituals [3]. This contradiction exists in the midst of a patriarchal culture, which not only persists in people's lives but also exists in literary works. In the works of Balinese writers since colonial times, women have rarely been depicted as noble figures. They are always presented as slaves, rape victims, or hypocrites because of their caste status [4]. The various inequalities women face due to patriarchal culture have become interesting subjects to be told through short stories.

Through short stories, women's stories are told briefly, concisely and uniquely to convey the discourse of resistance against patriarchal culture, which is expected to result in legal action or at least create resistance in the public sphere [5]. The construction of Balinese women who are always oppressed in literary works is actually only seen through the eyes of male writers. On the other hand, it is said that Balinese women who study the literary work of other Balinese women writers are still quite rare. Most of the works of Balinese women writers are discussed by men, so it is the male voice that speaks on behalf of the woman rather than the voice of the woman herself [6]. Following the rise of works by women writers, female figures began to rise up against the pressure they faced [4].

Some of them are Oka Rusmini, Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, and Devy Gita who tell various discourses on women's resistance against patriarchal culture in their literary works. The short stories that are the object of this research are *Sepotong Kaki* by Oka Rusmini (2001), which tells the story of a dancer who experiences sexual harassment, and *Tarsih* by Kadek Sonia Piscayanti (2007) describes the oppression experienced by a Javanese woman who marries a Balinese man, leading her to become a prostitute due to economic pressure, and Devy Gita's *Memilih Cara untuk Mati* (2019) portrays the story of the stereotype of a widow and the economic inequality of a single mother.

The three short stories discussed earlier share a common theme: the struggle of women against patriarchal oppression. It's explained by how these narratives highlight how women have no space to voice their struggles or right to make their life choices and are constrained by societal expectations. Whether as dancers, prostitutes, or single mothers, they face relentless pressure that limits their autonomy. The various problems above are within a socio-cultural construction that positions men as dominant, while women are subordinated, marginalized, experience violence, and have to bear a double burden. The short stories above seem to be women's voices conveying a desire or hope to be free from their burdens and problems, allowing their stories to be heard in public.

Despite having the same big idea, the three short stories have differences in how the issue of patriarchy is portrayed. For instance, Oka Rusmini addresses the issue of sexual harassment, Kadek Sonia Piscayanti reveals the marginalization of women in the domestic sphere, and Devy Gita critiques the stereotype of women as single mothers. The short stories by the three Balinese women writers are rich in narratives of resistance against patriarchal culture, making them well-suited for analysis through Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse approach and Hélène Cixous' concept of feminine writing.

Prior research on Balinese women's literature has largely explored gender injustice and women's struggles in literature. Still, it has not extensively analysed the *forms and meanings* of resistance discourse against patriarchal culture in Balinese short stories. Most studies have concentrated on themes such as women's oppression [7] or intertextual feminist analysis [5] without an in-depth exploration of how Balinese female writers construct and articulate resistance in their narratives.

Moreover, some of these studies have been conducted through a male-centric lens, where male researchers analyse women's voices [6]. This research addresses this gap by applying the feminist critical discourse analysis, which allows for examining the power structures embedded in language [8]. Additionally, Hélène Cixous' concept of "feminine writing" is employed to explore how Balinese women writers resist patriarchal norms through linguistic choices. Unlike traditional feminist approaches, which often focus on content rather than discourse, this study uniquely integrates textual positioning and language-based resistance strategies to reinterpret Balinese women's narratives.

Furthermore, Hélène Cixous' feminine writing theory is used to analyse how Balinese female writers express resistance against patriarchal culture in their short stories. Cixous' concept of feminine writing allows women to insert themselves into the text, letting others speak and write about their femininity, sexuality, and adventures [9]. Through women's language, these writers often use first- and third-person pronouns, explore themes of women's freedom through metaphors of death and naming characters, and employ rhetorical devices like repetition and satire [10].

This theory also provides a critical framework for understanding how these writers challenge traditional gender roles, emphasizing the autonomy of female voices within their narratives. However, more critical engagement with existing feminist discourse analysis literature is necessary. Hence, this research also combines feminist critical discourse by Sara Mills in its analysis. Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse analysis offers a robust framework for understanding power dynamics in literature, particularly in Western countries. In its application to this paper—which discusses the context of Bali's patriarchal culture that deviates from Western gender norms—the analytical framework is adjusted to consider the discourse of patriarchy and how women's resistance is represented in the text.

Using a combination of Sara Mills' Feminist Discourse Analysis and Hélène Cixous' Feminine Writing, this research is expected to fill the gap of previous research that only focuses on general gender oppression and also explain how Balinese women writers challenge patriarchal narratives.

2. METHODS

The selection of these three short stories—*Seotong Kaki* from *Sagra* by Oka Rusmini, *Tarsih* from *Karena Saya Ingin berlari* by Sonia Piscayanti, and *Memilih Cara untuk Mati* from *Elang yang Terbang di Hari Senin* by Devy Gita—was prompted by a literature review and content analysis process that aimed to identify texts with prominent elements in the discourse of resistance to patriarchal culture.

Using Sara Mills' feminist critical discourse analysis, the content of these stories was analyzed, examining the plots, characterizations, and settings for their representations of patriarchal power structures and how they are challenged. Through this analysis, the researcher identified key passages in each short story that feature significant elements of resistance to patriarchal oppression and assessed the object-subject positions and the roles of the writers and readers in shaping the discourse [11].

The authors of these stories were also chosen for their backgrounds, which provide valuable context to the analysis. Oka Rusmini's critique of her aristocratic background, Sonia Piscayanti's academic and family-oriented perspective, and Devy Gita's experience as a single mother all offer insightful dimensions to the research. These factors ensure that the three short stories serve as rich, relevant material for exploring the discourse of resistance against patriarchal culture in contemporary Balinese literature.

By analysing the linguistic structures and tendencies in the texts used by these three Balinese women writers, it will be possible to determine whether the authors predominantly present female characters as objects or subjects. This analysis will contribute to understanding the dominant position of women in the fight against patriarchy within these short stories.

Moreover, the researcher's role as a reader of these short story collections strengthens the positioning of women in these works. The final stage of this analysis will involve concluding all stages of analysis have been completed, allowing the researcher to determine the dominant position of women in the short stories as subjects or objects in their resistance to patriarchy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Discourse of Resistance Against Patriarchal Culture

The form and meaning of resistance against patriarchal culture in the short stories of three Balinese women writers are seen from the object and subject positions of the female characters. The stories contain discourses of (1) resistance to sexual harassment, (2) resistance to domestic burdens, and (3) resistance to pseudo-identity. These characters' struggles reveal how patriarchal norms constrain women's agency in various contexts.

Table 1. The Form and Meaning of the Resistance Against Patriarchal Culture
[Source: short stories from three Balinese woman writers]

No.	Discourse of Resistance	Short Story	Writer	Object Position	Subject Position
1	Sexual harassment	<i>Sepotong Kaki</i>	Oka Rusmini	Victim of sexual harassment.	Dancer who owns <i>taksu</i> .
2	Domestic Burdens	<i>Tarsih</i>	Kadek Sonia Piscayanti	Poor and oppressed by her husband's family.	Becoming a prostitute to fulfill economic needs and escape oppression.
3	Pseudo Identity	<i>Memilih Cara untuk Mati</i>	Devy Gita	Economic and moral inequality resulting from divorce.	Choosing to live as a single mother.

The table above also highlights the tension between individual resistance and Balinese society's deeply rooted cultural and societal expectations. These forms of resistance may not yet be revolutionary in the traditional sense, as they still occur within the limits of the existing cultural framework. However, they do indicate a complex negotiation between resistance and conformity.

3.1.1. Resistance to Sexual Harassment

Patriarchal culture is the root of sexual harassment against women. Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory describes the instinctive characteristics of sexual urges in men which cause sexual harassment to occur in women [12]. This situation occurs to Centaga in the short story *Sepotong Kaki* by Oka Rusmini. As a dancer with a disabled left leg, Centaga is always targeted by men who watch her. This places her in the position of the object.

"Lihat! Alangkah indahny kaki penari Legong itu. Bagaimana mungkin seorang perempuan dianugerahi potongan daging yang begitu menggurkan? Lapar. Aku lapar! Daging yang luar biasa. Lihat! Ketika kainnya terangkat, seluruh dewa menarik napas," teriak laki-laki yang lain. [13]

Translation:

"Look! How beautiful are the legs of Legong dancers. How could a woman be blessed with such a tempting piece of flesh? Hungry. I am hungry! Amazing flesh. Look! When the cloth was lifted, all the Gods took a breath," shouted another man. [13]

Women are often identified with attractive figures and are often objectified [14]. The quote above conveys that even though Centaga danced as a way to prove herself, she actually experienced harassment from the men who watched her. The man objectified Centaga by calling herself a "tempting piece of flesh". The patriarchal culture that is embodied in Balinese societal norms places women in a subordinate position as objects, while men are subjects. Mills' feminist discourse analysis highlights how language constructs power relations by positioning women as objects within patriarchal narratives [11].

Centaga's objectification exemplifies how discourse reflects and reinforces existing social hierarchies in this context. This quote shows that Centaga is reduced to a mere body for men's pleasure, which reinforces the systemic oppression of women, especially those with lower socioeconomic status. This is also supported by how they mention the word "God" as a form of the dominance of masculinity in Balinese culture.

While in the subject position, Centaga, as a dancer with *taksu* (magical spiritual powers), makes men obsessed with the flexibility of her body. Even though she is often underestimated and harassed because she has a disabled left leg, Centaga doesn't become desperate. She always trains hard to continue dancing as a form of proving herself.

Aku, Centaga, melihat dan berpikir dengan hati. Aku perempuan yang membuat lapar setiap laki-laki. Setiap gerakku, napas mereka. Keringatku mampu membungkam seluruh rasa lapar kelelahan laki-laki. [13]

Translation:

I, Centaga, see and think with my heart. I'm the woman who makes every man hungry. Every movement of mine their breath. My sweat can silence all men's sexual hunger. [13]

Centaga's unwavering commitment to dance reflects her principles, awareness, and confidence in her own abilities. She never stops dancing to silence the mouths and eyes of men who are always hungry to watch her on stage. This complexity challenges traditional notions of femininity. In Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism, the "free woman" is one who rejects passive femininity and embraces her autonomy, even in spaces where she is commodified [15]. Similar to Hélène Cixous' concept of "becoming other", which suggests embracing otherness also can be a source of power for women [16]. However, Centaga's resistance is also paradoxical because, on the one hand, she tries to reject her position as an object. Still, at the same time, it underscores the inescapability of patriarchal discourse, where even acts of defiance can be reabsorbed into systems of oppression.

3.1.2. Resistance to Domestic Burden

In a patriarchal family, cultural coercion requires women to be weak and carry many domestic burdens so that they cannot be economically empowered [17]. Another domestic burden is the unequal relationship between the husband's family due to the presence of a woman as a daughter-in-law or sister-in-law. Having the decision to marry a husband with

cultural and religious differences makes the character Tarsih in the short story *Tarsih* by Kadek Sonia Piscayanti positioned as an object. Tarsih had to bear the consequences of experiencing oppression from her husband's family, who never accepted her presence.

Masalah dapur rumah tanggaku saja sudah membuatku repot, ditambah lagi dengan mertua yang cerewet dan ipar-ipar kecil yang tak bisa diajak kompromi, aku makin merasa sendiri. Putu bukannya diam saja, sekali dua kali ia pernah menegur ibunya untuk tidak bersikap terlalu kasar padaku, namun apa jadinya, ibu mertua malah semakin membenciku. Dia tak mau bicara padaku. Sejak saat itu, aku benar-benar merindukan rumahku di Jawa. Meski kami hidup sederhana, tapi keluarga kami sangat bahagia. [18]

Translation:

My household's kitchen problems alone are making me troubled, and coupled with mother-in-law and sister in-laws who can't be compromised, I feel even more alone. Putu didn't just keep quiet, once or twice he admonished his mother not to be too rude to me, but what happened, my mother in-law hated me even more. He doesn't want to talk to me. Since then, I really miss my home in Java. Even though we live simply, our family is very happy. [18]

The domestic burden that Tarsih experiences does not only come from economic pressure due to living in poverty but also from feeling depressed because her husband's family does not welcome her. This burden comes from the mother-in-law, who does not agree with her son marrying a Javanese woman. Likewise, her in-law-sister also did not support her. They seem to be patriarchal police who are anxious and punish Tarsih, who they feel does not comply with norms. Without realizing it, they are also involved in competition between women who do not support each other [19]. Patriarchal culture has led women to become actors who perpetuate this construction. The domestic burdens experienced by Tarsih prevent her from living in happiness. Humans can feel happiness if their lives are filled with satisfaction or feelings of happiness in the social, economic and cultural fields—especially regarding marriage and work [20]. Tarsih's condition means that she cannot feel this happiness due to the patriarchal cultural construction that binds her, affecting all aspects that should make her happy.

Tarsih's decision to become a prostitute is a complex negotiation between choice and coercion. Although her decision puts Tarsih in control of her financial survival and how she fulfils it, her decision is still shaped by economic desperation and patriarchal constraints. When compared to Centaga, who seeks to reclaim her body through dance, Tarsih is trapped in a system that forces her to commodify her body. So, it can be said that Tarsih's agency here is limited by patriarchal capitalism, which makes the choices she makes seem to be her autonomy. When, in fact, it is a structure that has been formed to offer limited choices.

Aku memang menjadi perempuan celaka dan terluka. Aku tersuruk-suruk di lembah hitam dan nista ini, tapi tak seorang pun menggangguku. Kini ejeklah sepuasmu! Aku takkan mendengarmu! Toh dari sini aku bisa mendengar anak-anakku telah bersekolah tinggi, Putu bisa membeli rumah terpisah dari keluarga, semua berkat uang kiriman dariku, si perempuan celaka ini. Walaupun mereka belum tahu apa pekerjaanku. Dan itu urusan nanti. [18]

Translation:

I have indeed become an unfortunate woman. I was stumbling into this black and disgraceful valley, but no one bothered me. Now, mock me as much as you like! I won't hear you! After all, from here, I can still hear my children are in school, and Putu was able to buy a house separate from his family, all thanks to the money I sent as an

unfortunate woman. Even though they don't know what my job is. And that's a matter for later [18].

Tarsih's choice to leave her husband's house and decide to become a prostitute is full of rational choices. With rational economic choices, she made careful considerations when choosing to become a prostitute [21]. Tarsih prostituted herself consciously, and it was her own choice. He chose this choice because of a compulsion driven by economic factors to meet her living needs. By becoming a prostitute, Tarsih can help her husband's treatment and send her children to school.

3.1.3. Resistance to Pseudo Identity

In social construction, women are considered to have a pseudo-identity because they are considered the second sex. The injustices experienced by women made them not prioritized in decision-making—both in the family and political environment. One of the examples is that there is a tendency to demean and underestimate the role of women in all aspects of life [22]. Devy Gita discovered this through the short story *Choosing Memilih Cara untuk Mati*, which discusses the struggle of being a single mother. The greater economic inequality between divorced women and men places Aku's character in an object position.

Namun, bagi laki-laki, setelah bercerai tidak akan ada masalah yang berarti. Masyarakat tidak akan mencela mereka. Tidak akan bergunjing di belakang mereka. Mereka bebas bersolek dan menggandeng wanita lain untuk dijadikan istri. Mereka bebas pergi ke mana saja melakukan apa saja tanpa pandangan sirik-biang gosip yang bertebaran bagai paku yang disengaja ditabur bengkel tambal ban nakal. Menyakitkan. Mengempeskan. [23]

Translation:

However, for men, after divorce there will be no significant problems. Society will not criticize them. They don't gossip behind their backs. They are free to dress up and take other women as wives. They can go anywhere and do whatever they want without facing the envious, malicious gossip that spreads like nails intentionally scattered by a careless mechanic. Painful. Deflating. [23]

Leopold's (2018) research regarding the consequences of divorce, which took samples from German society, suggested that the economic impact of divorce is greater for women. When men divorce, they are more likely to improve their standard of living. Meanwhile, divorced women find it difficult to achieve economic recovery because they have responsibility for child custody and have little chance of remarrying [24].

The data above proves that even in developed countries, divorced women are always at a disadvantage compared to men. On the other hand, if seen in the regional context in Bali, which adheres to a patrilineal system, women who divorce are also, of course, very disadvantaged. It is not just an economic issue but also a moral issue. Male hegemony, which makes women disadvantaged in various fields, shows the unequal dominance of women as the second sex [25].

When a Balinese woman marries, She must bid farewell and follow her husband's family. When they divorce, they are thrown away because they cannot return to their own home; they are not accepted in their husbands' families or even in society. This makes Aku's character have to assume a pseudo-identity when she gets divorced. Meanwhile, in the subject position, Aku's character is told to annul the various methods of death she had planned. She dropped her intention to kill herself after realizing her responsibility to take care of her child by herself, leading her to look for a new way to survive. Aku's decision to

stay alive is an affirmation of her own subjectivity. In existentialist feminism, what Aku does is an achievement of freedom, which is determined by how individuals define themselves regardless of external pressures such as societal expectations [15].

Kutengok lagi bocah mungil yang kini meringkuk kedinginan. Kuselimuti dia dengan hati-hati. Aku takut dia terbangun dan mulai merengek. Pukul dua dini hari dan aku belum memilih cara yang pas untuk mati. Hanya memandangi minyak tanah dan korek api di sebelah TV. [23]

Translation:

I looked again at the little boy who was now curled up in the cold. I covered him carefully. I'm afraid he might wake up and start whining. It's two in the morning and I haven't decided on the right way to die. Just stare at the kerosene and matches next to the TV. [23]

According to Cixous, the view of death is not the end of life but rather the beginning of a life with unlimited freedom. Ultimately, women can interpret life and death differently or according to their wishes [10]. This perspective aligns with the character “Aku”, who has suicidal tendencies to survive amidst the various pressures she experiences as a widow. Aku’s character creates a choice to become a new self, namely as a single mother who takes care of her child alone.

3.2. Expressions of Women's Rebellion in Short Stories

Freedom of expression in writing literature can be seen from the position of writers expressing rebellion in their writings. The writer's background is based on the writer's livelihood, professionalism in their authorship, and what society she aims for [26]. Oka Rusmini, who is a journalist, often criticizes social problems, thus positioning herself against sexual harassment of women. Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, an academic and activist, positions herself to fight for subaltern women affected by poverty and domestic burdens. Devy Gita, who is an educator and single mother, filed a lawsuit against society's stereotypes of divorced women. These short stories imply a setting in Bali, so the target society is the Balinese people.

These three Balinese women depict expressions of rebellion, which can be seen from how the female characters fight against their oppression and losses experience. They both are told as marginal and subordinate women. For example, (1) Centaga cuts off her leg, (2) Tarsih decides to become a prostitute, and (3) Aku plans to die. This conceptualizes that women are others or figures who tend to be weaker than men. However, through Hélène Cixous's thoughts on feminine writing—by letting other languages speak, it can actually be a great power for women to become the subjects of their writing [16]. On the other hand, applying women's language in these short stories opens up space to celebrate women's choices that break free from men's subjective norms.

The act of rebellion they engage in above represents the only available path, as they have no other options due to the labelling imposed by society. What they do may be seen as an expression of desperation and an attempt to assert their identity. This can be analogized to the figure of Medusa, who laughs after being decapitated by Perseus [27]. In ancient Greek mythology, Medusa was a beautiful woman who was deemed dishonourable due to her alleged enticement of the gods. She was cursed by Athena, transforming her face into something terrifying and her hair into serpents. Anyone who gazed into Medusa's eyes would turn to stone. Perseus, a brave man who received gifts from the gods, was tasked with destroying Medusa. After her head was severed, Medusa did not die; instead, she laughed, her beauty remaining evident despite her demise.

According to Cixous, after centuries of female repression—where women were made to feel guilty for their emotional experiences and their bodies—it is now time for women to create their own power. Cixous urges women to create or reclaim the means by which they can tell their stories in a way that truly represents themselves. This is what happens to Centaga, Tarsih, and Aku. Through their anti-logocentric weapons, they are able to uphold the principle that women also have their own choices and can engage in direct resistance against those who deem them absurd and demean them.

Table 2. Expressions of Women's Rebellion in Short Stories
[Source: short stories from three Balinese woman writers]

No.	Discourse of Resistance	Short story	Writer	Writer Position (Expression of Rebellion)
1	Sexual harassment	<i>Sepotong Kaki</i>	Oka Rusmini	Cutting legs.
2	Domestic Burdens	<i>Tarsih</i>	Kadek Sonia Piscayanti	Become a prostitute.
3	Pseudo Identity	<i>Memilih Cara untuk Mati</i>	Devy Gita	Planning death.

As a woman who was often abused, Centaga had a desire for death by cutting off her legs as an expression of rebellion against patriarchal culture. She cut off her leg in a desire for freedom—that without a disabled leg, she would never stop dancing. She is confident in her own abilities.

"Inikah potongan daging milik laki-laki itu? Di sinikah laki-laki itu akan bercermin tentang kebesaran, seperti Ken Arok yang berusaha mengungkap rahasia hidupnya lewat kaki Ken Dedes? Aku tak ingin memakainya lagi!" Centaga berkata penuh geram. Lalu, dengan penuh perasaan, dipotongnya kaki kirinya. Darah menetes. Centaga mengusap seluruh tubuhnya yang telanjang dengan darahnya. Matanya terpejam. Memanggil para dewa. "Aku telah kenakan busana tari dari darahku, lengkap dengan bunganya," guman Centaga sambil meletakkan potongan kaki-nya di atas dulang kayu. Lalu, potongan kaki itu dia taburi bunga-bunga. Dia usapi dupa wangi. Sebuah upacara suci dimulai. Centaga mengelilingi potongan kakinya. Centaga menari. Terus menari. [13]

Translation:

"Is this the man's piece of flesh? Is this where the man will reflect on greatness, like Ken Arok trying to reveal the secrets of his life through Ken Dedes's feet? I don't want to wear it anymore!" Centaga said angrily. Then, with intense emotions, she cut off her left leg. Blood dripped. Centaga wiped her entire naked body with her blood. Her eyes were closed. Calling the Gods. "I have worn a dance costume covered with my blood, complete with flowers," muttered Centaga as she placed her severed feet on a wooden tray. Then, she sprinkled the cut leg with flowers. She rubbed in the scented incense. A sacred ceremony begins. Centaga surrounds the leg pieces. Centaga dances. Keep dancing. [13]

The quote above conveys that Centaga's otherness becomes a strength to fight oppression. Cutting off her legs was an expression of rebellion from Centaga, who often experienced sexual harassment. Centaga believes that even with one leg, the dance will continue to emit a flow of *taksu* from the Gods. Cutting off her legs is a metaphor that she will never stop dancing despite all her limitations as a form of self-actualization.

On the other hand, the expression of rebellion in the short story *Tarsih* contains a discourse on the injustice of Javanese women marrying Balinese men. This short story also contains a discourse on poverty that occurs among migrants in Bali. This makes Tarsih reluctant to fulfil her family's economic needs. Tarsih is forced to prostitute herself rather than be trapped in the hell of poverty and the shackles of her husband's family, who doesn't like her.

Tapi, lambat-laun, aku tak tahan pada kondisi di rumah Putu. Apa pun yang kulakukan, tak pernah bisa dianggap benar. Sedikit-sedikit salah, sedikit-sedikit aku menuai omelan panjang. Batinku menjerit. Kalau miskin saja mungkin aku masih bisa bertahan. Tapi ini sudah melarat fisik, batin pun tak dibiarkan damai. Deraan cacian, makian, gunjingan yang tidak-tidak seolah tak henti menyayat-nyayat hatiku. Aku minggat dari sana, aku benar-benar jengah dituduh sebagai perempuan pembawa celaka. Sakit hatiku tak terperi lagi. Di sepanjang perjalanan aku berlari sambil meraung-raung, dan kututup telinga dengan tanganku yang keras dan legam. Tapi kata-kata perempuan celaka itu terus berdengung di telingaku. Perempuan celaka! Perempuan celaka! Perempuan celaka! [18]

Translation:

But slowly, I could not stand the conditions in Putu's house. Whatever I did, it could never be considered right. Every little thing was wrong, every little thing I reaped a long scolding. My spirit was screaming. If I were poor, maybe I could still survive. But this was already physically destitute, my spirit isn't allowed to be at peace. The relentless abuse, curses, and gossip seemed to continuously slice my heart. I ran away from there; I was really fed up with being accused of being a woman who brought misery. My heartache was unbearable. Along the way I ran while wailing, and I covered my ears with my hard, black hands. But the words of that wretched woman kept ringing in my ears. unfortunate woman! Wretched woman! Wretched woman! [18]

The text above discusses Tarsih's inability to endure the pressure she experienced in her husband's family. All her projections of feeling fine when she moved to Bali collapsed instantly. It is because she was not accepted by her husband's family, who did not approve of interfaith and intercultural marriages. In this condition, rather than being trapped in a vortex of poverty and destitution, Tarsih chose to leave and prostitute herself in order to meet her economic needs. Tarsih said several times that she was a "wretched woman". Repetition in Hélène Cixous's female language is used to emphasize and clarify the meaning conveyed [28]. What was said by Tarsih shows a repetition of how stressful it is to live as a woman who is forced to prostitute herself.

On the other hand, the short story *Memilih Cara untuk Mati* expresses the discourse of rebellion through the character Aku, a divorced woman who becomes a single mother. Divorced women have to endure problems of customs that do not favour women, the stereotype of the widow, and moral and economic inequality compared to men.

Pulang menanggung malu, lalu pulang ke mana? Ke rumah orang tua tak kuasa. Di sana tak sanggup rasanya melihat orang tuaku yang sudah renta menerima hujatan dari saudara-saudaranya tentang betapa mereka tidak mampu mendidik anak perempuan mereka menjadi patuh. Menurut dan diam saja walau perlakuan suami sudah tak tahu diri. Kan perempuan seharusnya hanya manut saja, terima-terima saja, sabar saja. Laki-laki punya wanita simpanan itu sudah biasa. Perempuan dimadu juga bukan hal tabu. Begitulah pemikiran saudara-saudaraku di kampung. Pemuja patriarki sejati. Di sana perempuan tidak ada arti. Apalagi bagi perempuan yang dicerai suami. Seperti tidak punya harga diri. [23]

Translation:

Returning home is ashamed, where else should I go? To my parents' house is not an option. I couldn't bear to see my parents' receiving insults from their relatives about inability to educate their daughter to be obedient. Just obey and keep quiet even though your husband's behavior is no longer self-aware. After all, women just simply comply, accept, and be patient. It's normal for men to have mistresses. Women being cheated on is also not taboo. Such a mindset of my relatives in the village. A true devotee of patriarchy. Women have no value there, especially for women who are divorced by their husbands. It is as if they have no self-respect. [23]

The quote above conveys social criticism of the stereotype of the widow, which is rooted in society. This short story expresses rebellion against a series of oppressions that women are borne by custom after divorce. Customs become a way of life where women are often tasked with maintaining them. This has a big influence on the lives of Balinese women. When they violate traditional rules, they will be considered as destroying the family structure [29]. When married, a Balinese woman completely becomes the property of her husband's family. After divorcing, their relatives' families may not accept them back. Another impact that arises is related to the woman's family, who are made the target of society for failing to educate their children. Not to mention the stereotype of the widow who is considered a threat to married men.

3.3. Implications of Women's Independence in Short Stories

The implication of independence in the short story is placed in the reader's position. It is seen from the writer's background as a researcher who is a woman, comes from the Balinese tribe, and studies gender and feminism. The implications of independence emphasized by three Balinese women writers in their short stories are (1) independence as Balinese women in the domestic, economic and customary fields, (2) independence to provide for their families, and (3) independence to support themselves and their children because they are single mother.

Table 3. Expressions of Women's Independence in Short Stories
[Source: short stories from three Balinese woman writers]

No.	Discourse of Resistance	Short story	Writer	Reader Position (Implications of Independence)
1	Sexual harassment	<i>Sepotong Kaki</i>	Oka Rusmini	Independent in the domestic, economic and customary fields.
2	Domestic Burdens	<i>Tarsih</i>	Kadek Sonia Piscayanti	Supporting the family.
3	Pseudo Identity	<i>Memilih Cara untuk Mati</i>	Devy Gita	Taking care of herself and her children after divorce.

After marriage, Balinese women are labelled as having three roles (triple roles), namely domestic, economic and traditional-religious roles. This is because women in Hindu philosophy are seen as Goddesses who symbolize the character of Goddess Durga (nurture), Goddess Laksmi (prosperity), and Goddess Saraswati (knowledge). The view that Balinese women are similar to Goddesses or Gods is also considered a strong individual who can always complete the demands of these three roles [30].

"Di sini setiap perempuan adalah lelaki. Bekerja adalah sembahyang dan menari," Ibu berkata sangat lirih, lalu menggendongku erat-erat seraya mengulang kata-kata itu, berkali-kali. Bagiku, mata perempuan itu adalah Kali Badung, satu-satunya sungai yang membelah jantung Kota Denpasar, dan secara fisik tidak bisa dilepaskan dari kota itu. Kali Badung juga identik dengan kehidupan rakyat, karena di sepanjang tepinya, timur dan barat, melepas peluh tanpa keluh untuk menghadapi anak-anak mereka. Sebuah sungai tempat para perempuan biasa bercengkerama di pagi hari. Ikan-ikan berloncatan, kepiting bersembunyi di tepi sungai. Tapi kadang aku takut berendam di kali itu. Kata seorang peneliti Prancis, Sarah Mourchella, di kali Badung hidup semacam belut kecil yang bisa merampas keperawanan. Makhluk kecil itu suka sekali masuk ke dalam semak-semak tubuh perempuan. [13]

Translation:

"Here every woman is a man. "Work means praying and dancing," said mother very quietly, then held me tightly while repeating those words, many times. For me, the woman's eyes are like the Kali Badung, the only river that divides the heart of Denpasar City, and physically cannot be separated from that city. Badung River is also synonymous with people's lives, because along its shores, east and west, shed their sweat without complaint to support their children. A river where women gathered in the morning. The fish leap, and crabs hide along the river bank. Yet, sometimes I'm afraid to bath in that river. According to a French researcher, Sarah Mourchella, in the Kali Badung lives a kind of small eel that can steal virginity. This little creature really likes to get into the bushes of women's bodies. [13]

The text above is identical to a metaphor in women's language, which symbolises freedom to voice women's interests far from censorship [10]. Centaga said that her mother's eyes were like "Kali Badung", which was the centre of city civilization as a representative of Balinese women who never complained about their destiny and obligations. "River" is interpreted as a woman, and "eel" is a man, which means women must be economically independent because they are the providers of water springs. This meaning suggests that women should not depend on men (little eels) who rob women of their virginity (potential and talent), which makes them independent.

Another implication of independence can be seen in the character Tarsih, who chooses to work as a prostitute to meet her family's needs and to pay for the treatment of her sick husband. Tarsih, who comes from a poor family on the island of Java, is often pushed into a corner by her in-laws' mother and in-law's sister, which makes her reluctant to be economically independent.

Kuakui bahwa aku sedikit kecewa mendapati kenyataan bahwa di Bali, ternyata kondisi keluarga Putu jauh dari pengertian keluarga yang berkecukupan. Putu yang tidak bekerja dan membawa tiga orang anak seolah menjadi beban bagi keluarganya. Apalagi Putu adalah anak laki-laki satu-satunya yang diharapkan mampu menjadi tulang punggung keluarga. Aku juga tak bekerja, sehingga kloplah predikat sebagai beban keluarga itu. Sesungguhnya, Putu sudah mencoba mencari kerja. Tetapi pekerjaan macam apa yang tersisa di kota kecil itu? Semua pekerjaan membutuhkan modal. Jika bukan modal uang, sedikitnya modal keterampilan. Akhirnya, ia bekerja sebagai tukang bangunan. Aku pun lama-kelamaan tak tahan di rumah. Tatapan ipar-iparku dan ibu mertua seperti memaksaku untuk bergerak. Sindiran mereka, gosip-gosip yang mereka ciptakan, seolah menuntun tangan dan kakiku untuk bekerja dan bekerja. Sungguh, untuk berleha-leha di rumah mertua yang kondisinya memperhatikan, aku malu. Asal tak bersantai di rumah, cukuplah untuk menghindari tatapan sinis dan sindiran yang menusuk hati. [18]

Translation:

I admit that I was truly disappointed to find that in Bali, Putu's family's condition is far from the definition of a well-off family. Putu, who doesn't work and has three children, seems to be a burden on his family. Moreover, Putu is the only son who is expected to be the breadwinner. I also not working, which fit with the label of being family burden. In fact, Putu has tried to find work. But what kind of jobs are available in that small town? All work require capital. If not money than at least skills. Eventually, he ended up working as a construction worker. Overtime, I couldn't bear staying at home. The gazes of my mother-in-law and sister-in-law seemed to force me to move. Their insinuations and gossip seem to guide my hands and feed to constant work. Indeed, I felt ashamed to relax in the home of my in-laws, who is in a state of concern. It was enough to avoid the cynical looks and piercing remarks, just to prevent myself from lounging around the house. [18]

The quote above explains the cultural discourse resulting from cultural differences between families, which is a source of endless conflict. This short story also contains the poverty discourse, not only about cultural differences. Poverty has made a woman helpless in all aspects. Moreover, not having the skills makes it difficult to get a job. According to Julia Suryakusuma's research regarding *Ibuisme Negara* (State *Ibuism*) (1988), marriage in Indonesia for women has become the norm for obtaining a social license. In the limited number of jobs, the only way out is through marriage, which is also an economic reason for the poor. Marriage is an economic alliance because married men and women tend to work in the same sector or similar types of work [31].

This is in accordance with the problem faced by Tarsih. She and her husband come from poor families and consider marriage a way to meet economic needs. However, Tarsih had to fall into a spiral of increasingly deeper poverty. Moreover, finding work with the status of migrants who do not have skills is very difficult. This is what made Tarsih decide to become a prostitute as a form of free choice in order to be free from the shackles of domestic oppression and to fulfil the economic needs of her family.

In the short story *Memilih Cara untuk Mati*, the character Aku, who is economically independent after a divorce, clearly demonstrates independence. As a single mother, she has to bear her own life and that of her only child.

Aku tidak sanggup. Uang di tabungan pun tak lagi cukup. Honor sebagai penulis lepas tidak bisa dijadikan pegangan hidup. Ke mana lagi lari selain mati? Bukan surga yang kuharapkan, aku hanya ingin mati dengan tenang. Meninggalkan dunia yang memberiku begitu banyak penderitaan dengan senang. Untuk apa hidup? [23]

Translation:

I can't take it anymore. The money in savings is no longer enough. The pay from freelancing is not enough to live on. Where else can I turn to death? It's not heaven I hope for, I just want to die peacefully. Leaving the world that gave me so much suffering with sense of relief. What is the point of living? [23]

The quote above discusses the economic demands of divorced women. These economic demands mean that Aku's character must be independent in the economic field. She worked hard as a freelance writer even though she felt his salary was insufficient to meet her and her children's needs. These economic pressures make Aku's character have a desire to die rather than live with scarcity. However, it is the desire for death that makes Aku's character decide to stay alive and start a new life as a single mother, which puts her in an absurd condition.

According to Albert Camus, absurdity can actually be interpreted as a human process towards the deepest meaning of life. The authenticity of someone who survives in absurdity is the tenacity to continue to struggle in her life so that he becomes a learner in the life he

has [32]. This way of surviving in absurdity (*modus vivendi*) is applied by the character Aku who continues to live in various stereotypes that shackle her. Instead of dying after a divorce, she chose to live with the life choices she created herself. She works as a freelance writer to provide for herself and her child.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood how Balinese women writers depict women's resistance to patriarchal oppression, positioning them as objects and subjects in their struggle against sexual harassment, domestic burdens, and pseudo-identities through short stories that portray the state of Balinese women in reality. Despite these characters facing harassment, economic hardship, and social oppression, they also assert agency through dance, prostitution, and single motherhood-although their resistance remains entangled in systemic constraints. Analyzing these narratives through feminist literary criticism challenges conventional notions of agency and highlights the complexity of women's resistance, particularly in the context of Balinese society. In addition, this research is also hoped to be a comparison in depicting the insights of women writers' struggles in various different cultural narratives, especially from the perspective of the global south.

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