

# Women's Cultural Practices in Madurese Novels: A Feminist Narratology Analysis

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**Abstract**—This study examines how contemporary Madurese novels construct women's cultural subjectivities through narrative context, function, and technology in the following manner. Drawing on Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory and feminist narratology, the analysis focuses on six novels that depict women negotiating kinship obligations, ritual practices, and communal ethics within a patriarchal cultural framework. The results show that narrative contexts such as temporality, domestic and sacred spaces, and ritual cycles serve as cultural grammars through which women reinterpret inherited norms rather than merely obeying them. The narrative reveals that women's agency emerges through reflective endurance, silence, and moral discernment, enabling them to influence family and community dynamics without directly challenging tradition. Meanwhile, narrative technologies, including symbolism, focalisation, and temporal fragmentation, foreground feminine interiority and transform endurance into moral authorship. This study contributes to narrative theory by demonstrating how subjectivity in non-Western literary contexts is shaped by communal ethics and religious values. It also enriches feminist narratology by highlighting culturally grounded forms of agency that rely on resilience and moral strength. Overall, Madurese fiction illustrates that transformation arises not from the rejection of tradition but from its reinterpretation through narrative.

**Index Terms**—Narrative Subject Theory, feminist narratology, Madurese literature, gender representation, Indonesian fiction

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literature functions not only as a mirror of cultural life but also as a narrative mechanism through which societies interpret themselves and preserve collective memory (Bruner, 1991; Ricœur, 1984). Within Indonesia's multilingual and multiethnic landscape, fiction plays a crucial role in articulating regional identities and negotiating the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity (Tamrin et al., 2024; Vána, 2020). Madurese literature, grounded in communal ethics, Islamic piety, and patriarchal lineage, offers a distinctive lens through which the intersections of gender, culture, and narrative representation can be understood (Hartanto & Roifah, 2020; Hermawati et al., 2024). Through literary texts, Madurese authors depict women as inheritors of tradition as well as active agents who navigate, reinterpret, and subtly challenge the cultural structures that shape their lives (Radhakrishnan, 2009; Sibanda, 2024).

Despite Indonesia's rich literary heritage, Madurese fiction remains underexplored in both national and international scholarship. Existing studies on Indonesian women's writing predominantly focus on Javanese, Balinese, or Minangkabau works, while research on Madurese literature tends to examine language, folklore, and sociolinguistic identity (Wardatin & Setiawan, 2022). The representation of women's cultural practices such as kinship, ritual, marriage, and domestic piety has received limited attention, especially from the perspective of narrative form. This gap raises critical questions about how Madurese novels construct, sustain, or transform gender ideology through storytelling and how these texts articulate the cultural scripts that shape women's identities. How do narrative structures contribute to the negotiation or reinforcement of patriarchal norms?

To address this analytical gap, this study integrates Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory with feminist narratology. Schachtner (2020) conceptualises the narrative subject as both a cultural product and a reflexive agent of self-interpretation. Her tripartite model narrative context, narrative function, and narrative technology provides a systematic framework for examining how stories situate individuals within cultural systems while simultaneously enabling internal critique. Meanwhile, feminist narratology, developed by scholars such as Lanser (2018) and Warhol (1989), emphasises that narrative choices voice, perspective, and temporality are ideologically charged and shaped by gendered power relations (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024). Combining these approaches allows for a deeper understanding of how Madurese fiction constructs gendered subjectivity through the interplay of cultural beliefs, narrative structure, and aesthetic strategy.

Accordingly, this study pursues two main objectives. First, it analyses how women's cultural practices are represented in contemporary Madurese novels, focusing on the temporal, spatial, and ritual dimensions that constitute their narrative context. Second, it examines how narrative functions and technologies such as focalisation, symbolism, and temporality shape, reinforce, or challenge patriarchal traditions. Through these aims, this study situates Madurese fiction within broader global discussions on narrative theory, feminist criticism, and postcolonial literary studies (Agboola et al., 2023; Nartey, 2021), demonstrating that regional literature can engage with universal questions of voice, agency, and identity.

The significance of this study is both theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, it extends Narrative Subject Theory into the Southeast Asian context by showing that narrative subjectivity is shaped by kinship, religion, and communal responsibility (Ricoeur, 1984; Schutz, 1997). It also contributes to feminist narratology by arguing that resistance in non-Western contexts often manifests through endurance, reinterpretation, and moral intelligence rather than overt rebellion (Jabeen, 2020; Mohanty, 2006). Empirically, this study positions contemporary Madurese fiction as a vital yet understudied archive of women's cultural memory, demonstrating its significance in Indonesia's evolving discourse on gender representation (Setini et al., 2020).

Thus, Madurese novels function not only as cultural mirrors but also as mediators that preserve ancestral wisdom while reimagining it through women's experiences. Through the combined lenses of narratology and feminism, this study affirms literature's role as a site of negotiation, where storytelling becomes both an act of remembrance and an instrument of transformation (Lanser, 2024).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Narratives have long been recognised as fundamental to both human cognition and cultural expression. Bruner (1991) argues that storytelling functions as a central mechanism through which individuals organise experience and construct shared cultural meaning. Ricoeur (1984) extends this perspective through his concept of narrative temporality, proposing that time becomes intelligible only when it is configured within narrative form. Schutz (1997) further emphasises the socio-cultural dimension of narrative by showing how individual experience acquires meaning through a collective horizon of understanding. Taken together, these foundational insights affirm narrative as both a literary mode and a cognitive-social process that enables societies to interpret themselves and sustain cultural identity (Váňa, 2020).

Feminist theorists have advanced these ideas by demonstrating that narrative structures are shaped by gendered power dynamics. The emergence of feminist narratology marked a methodological shift from formalist models to ideological readings of narrative form. Lanser (2018) introduced the concept of *fictions of authority*, arguing that narrative voice, reliability, and the distribution of focalisation are never ideologically neutral but embedded within hierarchies of gender, class, and social authority. Similarly, Warhol (1989) highlights how narrative strategies such as address, irony, and focalisation operate as gendered discursive practices. These insights reveal that storytelling conventions can both reproduce and subvert patriarchal ideologies (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024; Nartey, 2021). Thus, feminist narratology offers critical tools for analysing how narrative forms participate in the politics of gendered representation.

Building on these developments, Schachtner's (2020) Narrative Subject Theory reconceptualises the narrative subject as both culturally produced and reflexively engaged in meaning-making. Her tripartite model consists of narrative context which situates subjects within temporal, spatial, and ritual settings narrative function, which explores how stories produce social meaning and identity, and narrative technology, which encompasses formal devices such as symbolism, perspective, and temporality through which ideology is encoded. This framework provides a systematic means of examining how cultural norms shape narrative form and how narrative practices enable individuals to negotiate these norms from within (Kurzynski, 2025). When integrated with feminist narratology, the model facilitates analyses that attend simultaneously to cultural structures, gendered power, and aesthetic strategies.

Recent scholarship underscores the importance of contextualising feminist narratology across diverse cultural settings. Studies of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian narratives demonstrate that gendered agency must be interpreted within culture-specific belief systems, moral frameworks, and ritual practices (Agboola et al., 2023; Jabeen, 2020; Wu et al., 2022). In African ecofeminist fiction, spirituality and ecological symbolism serve as vehicles for articulating female agency (Alharbi, 2022; Richter Reimer, 2023). In Middle Eastern narratives, religious symbolism frequently functions as moral critique (Abboud, 2025; Yahyapour & Karimi-Motahhar, 2021), while in South Asian literature, domestic spaces operate as political arenas in which women contest cultural expectations (Goswami, 2020; Iyer, 2021). These context-sensitive readings highlight the need for feminist narrative theory to attend closely to the cultural institutions within which gendered meaning is produced (Rodrigues, 2025; Thuy Hanh, 2024).

In Indonesia, gender-oriented literary criticism has expanded in recent years; however, it has largely emphasised sociological themes rather than narratological structures. Research on regional literatures particularly Javanese, Balinese, and Sasak often focuses on thematic issues such as women's subordination, moral resilience, and spirituality (Rauf et al., 2025; Setini et al., 2020; Tamrin et al., 2024). In contrast, scholarship on Madurese literature remains limited, tending to examine proverbs, oral narratives, and linguistic expressions as forms of cultural heritage (Masduki, 2022). While valuable, these studies seldom address the formal mechanisms through which narrative structures shape gender representation. Consequently, little is known about how Madurese fiction constructs women's subjectivities through narrative voice, temporality, symbolism, and focalisation within patriarchal cultural frameworks.

To address this gap, the present study positions itself at the intersection of feminist narratology and regional literary studies. By applying Schachtner's tripartite model to Madurese novels, this study moves beyond thematic description toward a formal analysis of how narratives serve as sites of cultural negotiation. The integration of narrative context (temporal, spatial, ritual), narrative function (identity formation and resistance), and narrative technology (symbolism, focalisation, temporal structure) provides a comprehensive basis for examining how local cultural ethics shape the representation of women (Lanser, 2018; Ricœur & Pellauer, 2013; Schachtner, 2020). This theoretical approach illuminates how Madurese fiction articulates culturally grounded forms of agency and contributes to broader conversations on gender and narrative in Southeast Asian literature.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design grounded in feminist narratology. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables the in-depth interpretation of meanings, symbols, and cultural values embedded in literary texts elements that cannot be captured through quantitative procedures (Creswell, 2009). Within this design, a feminist narrative orientation provides a critical lens for examining how gendered experiences are constructed, negotiated, and communicated through narrative forms (Lanser, 2024; Warhol, 1989). Madurese novels are therefore treated not merely as artistic artefacts but as cultural texts that reflect and reinterpret social ideologies.

The research corpus consisted of six contemporary Madurese novels selected through purposive sampling to reflect variation in authorship, narrative perspective, and cultural setting: *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]* (Ramadhany, 2019), *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* (Masyari, 2023), *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]* (Joe Mawar, 2022), *Tanjung Kemarau [The Dry Cape]* (Julian, 2017), and *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]* (Julian, 2023). The selection criteria included: (1) publication within the last decade, (2) representation of women's cultural practices, and (3) thematic relevance to kinship, ritual, and local ethics. The corpus also ensured proportional representation of both male and female authors, enabling comparative insights into gendered authorship within Madurese literature.

Schachtner's (2020) Narrative Subject Theory served as the analytical framework. Rather than reiterating the theoretical foundations, this study operationalised the model through three analytical lenses: (1) narrative context, which identifies temporal, spatial, and ritual settings shaping women's experiences; (2) narrative function, which examines how characters' thoughts, actions, and relationships reflect cultural meanings and social expectations; and (3) narrative technology, which analyses focalisation, symbolism, temporal structure, and other narrative devices that encode gender ideology. The integration of feminist narratology further guided the identification of how these mechanisms reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms.

Data were collected through close reading and systematic annotation. Each novel was read multiple times to identify narrative segments depicting or implying women's cultural practices. Textual data were then coded deductively based on categories derived from Schachtner's model and inductively to allow new patterns to emerge (Schutz, 1997). Coding categories included domesticity, kinship obligations, ritual performance, moral reasoning, narrative perspective, symbolism, and expressions of endurance or resistance. The coding process was conducted manually by the researcher and reviewed by two colleagues specialising in Indonesian literature to enhance clarity and consistency.

Data analysis was conducted in three iterative stages. First, narrative excerpts related to women's cultural roles were identified and grouped. Second, these excerpts were categorised into thematic clusters, such as domestic space, ritual practices, spiritual reflection, and negotiation of authority. Third, each cluster was interpreted using the dimensions of narrative context, function, and technology, supported by feminist narratology, to determine how narrative form articulates gendered meaning (Ricœur, 1984; Ricœur & Pellauer, 2013). This multilayered process ensured that the analysis addressed both cultural and structural dynamics within the narratives.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed methodological triangulation, peer debriefing, and cultural validation. Triangulation was achieved by integrating narratology, feminist criticism, and ethnographic literature on Madurese culture. Peer debriefing involved consultation with two senior scholars in Indonesian literature, who reviewed the coding scheme and thematic interpretations. Cultural validation was conducted by cross-checking textual interpretations with established ethnographic studies on Madurese kinship, ritual, and gender norms. These strategies strengthened the credibility, dependability, and cultural accuracy of the findings.

### IV. RESULT

#### A. Contextualizing Madurese Women's Narratives

The representation of women in contemporary Madurese novels consistently reflects the cultural intersections of kinship, Islamic devotion, and patriarchal lineage. Across the corpus, women are depicted as central figures who sustain familial and spiritual continuity while negotiating the moral constraints imposed upon them. The narratives show that cultural expectations shape women's experiences through ritual obligations, communal morality, and the spatial configurations of Madurese life.

In *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* (Masyari, 2023) and *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]* (Ramadhany, 2019), everyday domestic rituals preparing offerings, maintaining ancestral houses, and observing family protocol become spaces where women reinterpret moral duty through emotional intelligence rather than passive obedience. Scenes

in which protagonists pause before family gatherings, reassess their responsibilities, or silently reject particular cultural demands illustrate how moral agency often emerges through reflective hesitation rather than confrontation.

Similarly, in *Tanjung Kemarau [The Dry Cape]* (Julian, 2017), the dry landscape becomes an extended metaphor for endurance, binding women's emotional labour to environmental scarcity. The protagonist's repeated returns to the family courtyard, despite personal suffering, demonstrate how women embody cultural continuity while simultaneously negotiating personal autonomy. Collectively, these patterns confirm that Madurese fiction constructs a gendered cosmology in which spirituality, social order, and endurance function as interrelated values that shape women's lives.

#### B. Narrative Function: Identity, Resistance, and Continuity

The findings indicate that narrative function in Madurese novels operates as a cultural mechanism through which women negotiate identity and power. Across the corpus, endurance appears not as passive submission but as a strategic form of moral resilience. In *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]* (Julian, 2023), for example, the protagonist's refusal to retaliate against injustice constitutes a deliberate ethical stance; her silence becomes a moral argument rather than a sign of powerlessness. Through reflective internal monologues and controlled emotional responses, women claim interpretive authority over their experiences.

In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]* (Joe Mawar, 2022), the male narrative perspective unintentionally reveals the fragility of patriarchal norms. Women's loyalty, sacrifice, and spiritual labour narrated through a male lens form the moral foundation on which men depend. Several scenes show female characters quietly correcting male decisions, guiding ritual processes, and interpreting religious expectations. These narrative functions expose a structural paradox: although patriarchy assigns women secondary social roles, the narrative framework positions them as primary sources of moral knowledge.

The findings also show that silence frequently functions as a form of narrative control. Women withhold speech during ritual disputes, family conflicts, and moral dilemmas, creating interpretive gaps that prompt readers to recognise unspoken tensions. This silence acts as a counter-narrative an indirect form of resistance through which women maintain cultural harmony while subtly challenging dominant authority. Thus, ritual and kinship structures operate not only as constraints but also as interpretive systems that women navigate to assert moral and emotional agency.

#### C. Narrative Technology

Formal narrative strategies including symbolism, focalisation, and temporality are central to how Madurese fiction constructs women's subjectivities. In *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]*, floral imagery serves as a symbolic device that conveys cycles of suffering and renewal. The motif of the selir flower, described as both delicate and enduring, mirrors the protagonist's oscillation between cultural confinement and inner resilience.

Temporal fragmentation also features prominently across the corpus. In *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, shifts between ancestral memory and contemporary conflict highlight intergenerational patterns of endurance. These temporal movements illustrate how women interpret cultural obligations by continuously re-evaluating inherited memories.

The manipulation of narrative voice further reveals ideological tensions. In *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]*, the alternation between third-person narration and first-person reflection creates a dialogic structure that exposes the instability of patriarchal authority. This dual narrative position illuminates women's negotiation between cultural obedience and emerging self-recognition.

#### D. Cultural Semiotics and Gendered Space

Spatial and ritual settings in Madurese novels operate as cultural semiotic systems that encode gender expectations. Domestic spaces such as the *taneyan lanjeng* (extended family courtyard) function as both protective environments and sites of surveillance. Scenes in *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* depicting women moving between the kitchen and courtyard during ritual preparations show how space regulates gender roles while providing opportunities for introspection.

Sacred spaces mosques, prayer rooms, and gravesites serve as narrative thresholds through which women articulate spiritual agency. In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]*, a woman's quiet recitation of prayers during a family dispute redirects the moral tone of the scene, revealing how spiritual authority can transcend social hierarchy.

Natural spaces, particularly the sea in *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, symbolise both exile and renewal. The protagonist's walks along the shoreline reflect her contemplation of loss and her reorientation toward moral clarity.

#### E. The Interplay of Context, Function, and Technology

The synthesis of narrative context, function, and technology reveals a coherent model of gendered subjectivity in Madurese fiction. Across the six novels analysed, women emerge not as passive inheritors of tradition but as interpreters of cultural meaning. Their agency is enacted through reflective endurance, moral critique, and subtle negotiation rather than overt rebellion.

Madurese fiction conceptualises transformation as an internal process that unfolds within the boundaries of tradition rather than in opposition to it. These findings highlight literature's role as a space in which cultural continuity and ethical innovation coexist.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. *Reinterpreting Narrative Contexts*

The results demonstrate that narrative contexts particularly temporality, spatial structures, and ritual practices function not merely as settings but as cultural frameworks through which women negotiate meaning in Madurese fiction. This is consistent with Bruner's (1991) notion that narrative structures shape human meaning-making and cultural interpretation. Time in these novels unfolds cyclically, marked by ritual sequences and domestic rhythms that reinforce expectations of continuity in women's lives. Yet this temporal structure becomes a site of reinterpretation when protagonists pause, delay, or symbolically interrupt routine cultural practices, signalling internal negotiation rather than uncritical obedience. This aligns with Ricoeur's (1984) view that narrative temporality allows individuals to reconfigure inherited meanings through reflection.

Spatial contexts such as the *taneyan lanjheng* similarly reveal how women move within communal boundaries while reassessing their roles. These spatial movements resonate with Fu's (2022) argument that spatiality is relational and influences how individuals interpret cultural belonging. When characters shift between domestic and sacred spaces, narrative space operates as a symbolic threshold: women remain culturally embedded, yet these liminal spaces allow them to reinterpret and redefine their relationship to tradition. Thus, narrative context emerges as a dynamic arena through which women reinterpret the cultural logics that shape their identities.

### B. *Narrative Function as Cultural Negotiation*

The narrative function of these novels shows that women's identities are constructed through moral deliberation and reflective engagement rather than overt resistance. Such subtle negotiation aligns with Mohanty's (2006) concept of culturally embedded feminist agency, where women resist through reinterpretation rather than rupture. While patriarchal principles inform the fictional worlds, the heroines negotiate these norms through endurance, selective silence, and layered moral reasoning strategies that resonate with Jabeen's (2020) findings on resilience as an ethical feminist response in non-Western contexts.

This dynamic is illustrated in *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]*, where the protagonist's restraint becomes an ethical intervention that guides the narrative's moral direction. Rather than confronting patriarchal authority directly, she reframes cultural expectations through introspection and relational sensitivity. The narrative structure foregrounds women's interpretive labour, demonstrating that gendered agency emerges through weighing moral obligations, reinterpreting cultural teachings, and maintaining harmony while subtly redirecting power.

The findings also reveal that women's subject positions are shaped by the tension between communal morality and individual agency. Similar tensions are observed in Proudfoot and Kay's (2023) analysis of autonomy and communal expectations, which shows how women's ethical decisions often arise within culturally prescribed boundaries.

### C. *Narrative Technology and the Feminist Aesthetic of Endurance*

Narrative technologies including symbolism, focalisation, and temporal layering play central roles in articulating a feminist aesthetic of endurance. Symbols such as salt, drought, or cyclical floral imagery embody cultural values of perseverance and moral clarity. This echoes Richter Reimer's (2023) observation that ecofeminist symbolism often encodes ethical resilience within cultural narratives. These symbols do not merely ornament the plot; they structure the reader's perception of women's emotional resilience and provide interpretive cues for understanding their struggles.

Focalisation deepens the representation of feminine interiority. The shifting narrative perspectives mirror Lanser's (2018, 2024) claim that narrative voice and focalisation are ideologically charged and shape interpretive authority. Temporal fragmentation, particularly in *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, juxtaposes ancestral suffering with contemporary decision-making, revealing how women draw on intergenerational memory to navigate present dilemmas. Such temporal layering resonates with Kurzynski's (2025) discussion of multi-layered narrative experience as a cognitive and affective process.

Collectively, these narrative technologies transform endurance from a cultural requirement into an aesthetic mode through which women assert interpretive agency, demonstrating that narrative form itself operates as a medium of feminist expression.

### D. *Moral Agency and the Philosophy of Cultural Feminism*

The results support the claim that Madurese women's agency is grounded in moral reasoning rather than antagonistic resistance. This culturally embedded agency aligns with Tang's (2024) reading of virtue ethics, where moral integrity emerges from relational and culturally informed ethical practices. Ethical concepts such as *sabar* (patience) and *ikhlas* (sincerity), which the protagonists reinterpret as guidance for navigating expectations, parallel broader discussions of moral endurance in Southeast Asian and Islamic ethical studies (Pamungkas et al., 2023).

In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]*, spiritual devotion becomes a lens through which female characters assess and influence men's moral failures. Their authority emerges through insight, care, and spiritual labour, functioning as epistemic resources for confronting injustice echoing Herissone and Kelly's (2025) model of hermeneutical agency as a differentiated form of interpretive power. This mode of agency reinforces a culturally specific feminist ethic, demonstrating that transformation in Madurese literature arises through moral intelligence and relational sensitivity.

Thus, Madurese novels articulate a philosophy of cultural feminism in which women enact change by reframing the ethical meanings of tradition rather than dismantling it.

#### *E. Authorship, Dialogism, and Theoretical Implications*

The interplay between male and female authors in Madurese fiction creates a dialogic field in which multiple ethical perspectives coexist. Such dialogism aligns with Bakhtinian perspectives on multi-voiced narrative and recent feminist narratology discussions (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024) that highlight the ideological stakes of narrative plurality. While male authors often portray women as stabilising moral forces, female authors extend this portrayal by foregrounding women's introspection and interpretive autonomy.

The findings also extend Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory by showing that narrative contexts in non-Western settings incorporate culturally specific dimensions such as ritual cycles, communal ethics, and religious devotion. This corresponds with Manning (2021) and Stumbitz and Jaga (2020), who emphasise the need to account for local epistemologies when analysing gendered subjectivity in global South contexts. Likewise, feminist narratology is broadened through the observation that agency in regional literature often emerges through endurance, care, and moral clarity rather than rupture or confrontation consistent with Mohanty (2006) and Sarwar (2023) on culturally rooted feminist ethics.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that Madurese novels transform narrative structure into moral and cultural inquiry. Women's stories reveal that agency is enacted through reflective engagement with tradition, affirming literature as a space where cultural continuity and ethical innovation unfold simultaneously.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined how contemporary Madurese novels articulate women's cultural subjectivities through the interaction of narrative context, narrative function, and narrative technology. The findings demonstrate that women's agency in these narratives emerges not through overt resistance but through reflective negotiation within the moral and ritual systems that structure Madurese life. Temporality, spatial arrangements, and ritual practices operate as cultural grammars that both constrain and enable women's interpretive agency, allowing them to redefine duty, endurance, and emotional integrity from within their traditions.

At the level of narrative function, the novels show that women exercise authority by navigating the tension between communal morality and personal authenticity. Through silence, moral discernment, and relational sensitivity, female characters reinterpret cultural teachings and influence the ethical direction of their families and communities. The analysis also highlights that narrative technologies such as symbolism, focalisation, and temporal fragmentation function as aesthetic strategies that foreground women's interiority and transform endurance into a form of moral authorship.

Theoretically, this study contributes to narrative scholarship by extending Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory into the Indonesian cultural context, demonstrating that subjectivity in non-Western narratives is shaped by kinship, ritual, and communal ethics. It further enriches feminist narratology by showing that agency in regional literature often manifests through culturally embedded forms of resilience, reflection, and moral intelligence rather than through rupture or confrontation.

Empirically, this study positions Madurese fiction as a significant yet underexplored archive of women's cultural memory in Indonesia. These novels illustrate how storytelling becomes a space of negotiation in which tradition is preserved, examined, and subtly transformed. Through their reflective engagement with inherited values, the women portrayed in these narratives demonstrate that cultural change often unfolds within the rhythms of everyday life.

In summary, Madurese novels affirm the role of narrative as a form of cultural philosophy. By transforming lived experience into ethical reflection, they show that transformation does not necessarily arise from breaking tradition but from reinterpreting it. The voices of Madurese women in these works reveal that the most enduring forms of agency are often enacted quietly through thought, care, and moral clarity.

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