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Naturalization and Romanticization of Violence in Indonesian Teen Lit *Jingga Series* by Esti Kinasih

By Aquarini Priyatna¹ and Sri Rijati Wardiani²

Abstract

Esti Kinasih is an Indonesian woman writer who writes in the teen lit genre and has a wide readership. This study discusses and problematizes her novels named *Jingga Series*, a trilogy of novels comprising *Jingga dan Senja*, *Jingga dalam Elegi*, and *Jingga untuk Matahari*. With teenage romance as a backdrop, this series leaves an impression of intense violence towards the female protagonist perpetrated by her male partner, but also by other male and female characters. We find that the novels not only naturalize male aggressiveness, but also normalizes teenage girls as victims of violence. By applying the concepts offered by Connell, Milestone, and Bourdieu, this article aims to conclude that violence is not only depicted as acceptable through continuous consolidation by hegemonic masculinity and legalized by structure and culture, but it also is depicted as manifestation of romantic love. Through the narrative built by the author, the novel further strengthens the idea of violence as an attribute of masculinity desired and naturalized in romance. The highly popular *Jingga* has the potential to sustain violence amongst teenagers, specifically strengthening hegemonic masculinity.

Keywords: Esti Kinasih, Violence, Teenage girl, Romance, Indonesian teen lit

Introduction

Teen lit, or teen literature, is a genre that consists of stories that focus on teenagers' life, targeted from the age of thirteen to seventeen, and who are commonly junior high school until early college students. Teen lit in Indonesia is very popular among teenage readers because it often tells stories that center on their problems as teenagers such as school problems, friendship, family, dream, love, competition, and the search for identity. I choose to analyze the teen lit genre because of its ability to create stories that are relatable to teenage lives in a light and easy way through their informal languages.

The novels selected centered around the lives of a teenage girl named Tari and her boyfriend Ari. The first book in the series, *Jingga dan Senja* (2010), tells the story of Tari (*Jingga Matahari*), a high school first-grader, who meets Ari (*Matahari Senja*), her senior who is depicted as a bad boy in his school. The two contrasting characters cross paths even though they do not always agree with each other, resulting in the consistent issue of violence. In this teenage romance, the female protagonist experiences fear and is intimidated by her romantic

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partner. This situation does not change much in the second book *Jingga dalam Elegi* (2011), which further tells the rocky and violent love story between Tari and Ari. To avoid violence from her partner, Tari seeks protection from other characters in the novel. The third book, *Jingga dan Matahari* (2017), temporarily ends the romance between Tari and Ari on a happier note.

With teenage romance as a backdrop, the *Jingga* series leaves an impression of intense violence towards the female protagonist perpetrated not only by her male partner, but also by other male and female characters. This article refers to the definition of violence in romantic relationships as stated by The University of Michigan Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center in Ann Arbor, as the deployment of violent tactics and physical force on purpose to obtain and maintain power in controlling a romantic partner (Murray, 2007). The violence in *Jingga* is not physical, for instance, in the form of rape, beating, sexual harassment, or pornographic acts. It manifests in the form of *gaslighting*, a form of psychological harassment that occurs in interpersonal relationships. We argue that the three teenage romance novels by Esti Kinasih present violence as a desired, naturalized, and romanticized masculine attribute.

Esti Kinasih, Teen Lit, and Her Position in Indonesian Popular Literature

Esti Kinasih is a prolific Indonesian teen lit writer. She was born in Jakarta on September 9, 1971. Her first novel, *Fairish*, was published in 2004. The novel has been reprinted ten times and was adapted into an Indonesian soap opera. Esti Kinasih was voted the most favorite teen novel writer of the 2000s (Rahmaningsih, 2014). Her other novels, such as *Cewek!!!* (2005), *Still* (2006), *Dia Tanpa Aku* (2008), *Jingga dan Senja* (2010), *Jingga dalam Elegi* (2011), and *Jingga untuk Matahari* (2017) followed the success of *Fairish*. Her latest novel *Untuk Dia yang Terlambat Gue Temukan* (2020), has been long awaited by her fanatical fans. Most of her novels became best sellers, selling more than 60,000 copies and were reprinted dozens of times (Agnes, 2016).

Her fanatical readers are gathered in a community called 'Estikinatic', which was established in 2011. Through Instagram and Twitter, they actively discuss and routinely promote their favorite writer. Her readers like her novels because "the stories are always sweet and entertaining (Agnes, 2016). Kinasih's stories are also considered fun, teenage-friendly, and not patronizing. The novel *Jingga dalam Elegi* (2011) is even on the list of "top books to read" and *Jingga dan Senja* was adapted into a comic book in 2018. Her readers are also waiting for the fourth *Jingga* novel, *Jingga untuk Sandyakala*, which is yet to be published.

Noor (2015) relates that at the beginning of her writing career, Esti Kinasih did not imagine it as a long-lasting engagement since she was working as a bank employee and was financially established. Her interest and obsession with writing novels started from her love of reading and poring over story books. She was motivated to write to entertain other people while sharing her own teenage experience. As such, she decided to write in the teen lit genre.

Teen lit is a genre of fiction telling everyday stories of teenagers, commonly from the perspective of a teenage girl that becomes the main character (Djenar, 2012). The teen lit that became famous in Indonesia starting from the 2000s is not an entirely new phenomenon. The 'roman picisan' ('pulp romances') of the 1960s and the 'novel populer' ('popular novels') of the 1980s that were massively popular also included teenage and young adult literature. Such literature is characterized by the usage of light and informal language in order to tie its fictional worlds to a teenager's real-life experiences. The plots of certain Indonesian teen lit novels are modeled after Western fairy tales since those plots are desired by readers. In those tales, such as *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White*, the princess characters always become objects saved by subjects, commonly princes (Udasmoro, 2014).

Since the middle of the 2000s, the publication of popular literature in Indonesia has significantly involved women writers, a tendency that according to Budianta (2016), marks the freedom of movement for women to express their thoughts, imagination, ideas, and experiences. The phenomenon started with the publication of, among others, *Eiffel I'm in Love* (2003) by Rachmania Arunita, *Brownies* (2004) by Fira Basuki, *Cintapuccino* (2005) by Icha Rahmanti, and *Dealova* (2005) by Dian Nuranindya. This development is further followed up by the formation of communities of teenage readers that reflect an attempt to break free from established social and cultural norms (Karnanta, 2015).

In Indonesia, chick lit was a new novel whose presence began in the early 2000s. The presence of chick lit in this country began with Icha Rahmanti's *Cintapuccino* which has sold more than 40,000 copies. Until now, the authors of chick lit novels who joined the Gramedia bookstore group were 150 and 99% of them were women (Dewojati, 2010: 25). However, as the dynamics flowed, chick lit labels were no longer written on the front cover. Now it is renowned as Metropop (metro-popular) and Amore as the specific name made by the publishing company. Like chick lit, teen lit is also attributed as reading for women (Rahmaningsih, 2014), teen lit is a product of popular culture that has become a place for negotiating identity in the social space and making room for the presence of certain ideologies, such as patriarchy, to take root and grow.

As presented in Esti Kinasih's novels, violence and hegemonic masculinity are also considered thriving in contemporary Indonesian literature. This article specifically explores the issue of violence in the context of teenage romance as presented in Esti Kinasih's novels.

Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity in Romance

Violence has been a long-standing issue focused on and criticized by feminists, such as Millet (1970), Benjamin (1980), and Dworkin (1981). According to Garcia-Moreno, violence against women has severe consequences for their mental health (Appleton, 2018). According to CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*), violence against women is a violation of human rights and humanity (Eddyono, 2014). The representation of women as victims in fictions can potentially perpetuate the culture of rape and violence against women.

Women are more prone to becoming victims of violence compared to men, since most instances of violence are often caused by gender inequality manifested in power abuse, disparity, and dominance (Sari, 2017). In gender discourse in Indonesia, the desire to dominate over others is always attributed to men. This cultural construct places women as subordinates and victims of abuse. Humm (2007) concludes that violence is perpetrated by men to control women with rules and behavior assigned to them, which include their sexuality and reproductive role. However, according to Del Mar and French, the issue of violence in a romantic relationship is sometimes not considered as serious (Wood, 2001). During the second wave of feminism, discussions of violence were initiated, albeit still focusing on violence against adult women (Chung, 2005). Teenage girls experiencing dating violence was yet to receive much attention, even though according to DeKeseredy (1988), every woman can experience psychological, sexual, or physical violence (or a combination of the three) from their partner. The University of Michigan Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center in Ann Arbor defines violence in romantic relationships as the deployment of violent tactics and physical force on purpose to obtain and maintain power in controlling a romantic partner (Murray, 2007). Humm (2007) also states that violence against women encompasses diverse fields and is a product of the patriarchal culture to regulate the social institution of female bodies. In Indonesia, the passing of the bills on violence against women (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual*) is difficult to be realized due to challenges from

those believing in heteronormativity, which further reflect that part of the Indonesian society still considers violence against woman as normal.

Violence against women perpetrated by men connects strongly to the discourse of masculinity as something that men learn to express their masculinity towards women, children, and other men (Figs, 1986). As presented in various products of popular culture, men are almost always portrayed as strong, active, powerful, authoritarian, rude, aggressive, competitive, rational, and less sensitive (Milestone, 2012). Connell (2005) explains that masculinity is the issue of men's position in the society, with respect to the roles of men and women being shaped by the society. Connell uses the term *hegemonic masculinity* to define the forms of idealized masculinity that are socially constructed. What he means by hegemonic is the social influence achieved not through power dominance, but rather through regulation of personal life and cultural processes. Hegemonic masculinity recognizes multiple masculinities that vary across time, culture, and the individual. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population and women, and other marginalized ways of being a man. Conceptually, hegemonic masculinity proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women, and other gender identities, which are perceived as 'feminine' in a given society (Connell, 2005).

This is the opposite of subordination, in which violence is a key to force a certain ideal of masculinity. According to hegemonic masculinity, it can be concluded that masculinity is not an exclusively male-owned signifier, since social and cultural environments also enable women to carry attributes of masculinity. According to Milestone (2012), the traditional discourse of masculinity often refers to values and behavior that are traditionally considered as defining maleness. Milestone (2012) also states that masculinity is a male characteristic that is "*presented as strong, active, powerful, authoritative, hard, aggressive, violent, competitive and rational, and lacking sensitivity and emotions*". Wood, as cited by Fowles (1996), further elaborates that masculine characteristics include being "*active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships*". These ideas are inline with Peter McKay's perspective, as cited by Rutherford (2014), which sees men as warlike and enthusiastic in imagining wars and battles.

Talbot (2001) defines hegemonic masculinity as "a form of dominance considered normal whose concept, practice, and key relationships are rationality, heterosexuality, hierarchy, dominance, violence, and main breadwinner" and that which considers normative masculinity as inevitable (Adams, 2017). On the other hand, women are labeled as being "passive, acting as object, nurturing and caring, while ignoring and sacrificing herself" (Priyatna, 2018).

In dealing with violence, according to Wood (2001), women as victims often resort to various permissive justifications, such as "I deserve it", "He meant no harm", "He was drunk", and "It couldn't get any worse than this". These statements are found within the *Jingga* series. These statements of acceptance of violence by men line up with Nodelman (2002) who states that violence is perceived as a man's inherent nature, as is bravery, strength, and rationality. Patriarchy, according to Winarno (2003), gives space for men to treat both men and women as subordinates, with respect to their will driven by the privileges in their social environment, which include physicality, wealth, education, position, and ancestry. Those with free, unchecked, and unsupervised power have the potential of exacting violence to those who are being dominated, as stated by Lardellier, that violence always concerns the use of force against those violated, with or without consent (Haryatmoko, 2010).

In a romantic relationship, violence often becomes a tool for controlling one's partner. According to Papp et al. (2016), "*romance and control are often conflated by the media, and*

individuals may believe that certain controlling or jealous behaviors by men toward women are romantic and can be a sign of love and commitment in heterosexual relationships”.

Violence in a romantic relationship does not seem to be a taboo in contemporary novels, such as in *It Ends With Us* (2016) by Colleen Hoover, *Dreamland* (2000) by Sarah Dessen, *Bully* (2013) by Penelope Douglas, and *The Girl Who Fell* (2016) by S.M Parker. A similar tendency is also found in Indonesian novels on the Wattpad platform, particularly in stories with the hashtags “CEO” (10,000 stories), “posesif” (15,000 stories), and “bad boy” (20,000 stories) (Adisya, 2017). Often the three hashtags are used in one story. The stories often share the same plot: a rich and handsome man who is naughty/evil, restricting, and possessive falls for an ordinary woman who changes his life and character. According to Yulius, as cited by Adisya (2017), this particular romance plot is popular due to the seeming ability of the female character to change a male character from bad to good.

Blackburn (2017) states that in products of popular culture, men’s abusive and manipulative behavior is often justified in the name of romance. In her study of the *Twilight* series of novels, Taylor (2014) discusses the violence in the four romance novels by Stephanie Meyer of a relationship between a human and a vampire. While the novels correlate strongly to femininity, they are considered prolonging the power of patriarchy. The *Twilight* series was written by a woman, told by a female narrator, acted by a female character, read widely by women, and later adapted to silver screen by a woman; yet, it is filled with violence against women (Strong, 2011). Taylor states that the violence, be it verbal, physical, or emotional, occurs through the machinations of the standard conventions of romance, as previously studied by Modleski (2008) and Radway (2006). Taylor (2014) agrees with the argument put forth by Franiuk and Scherr (2012) which states that the repetition of violence during erotic and romantic scenes enforces a dangerous idea of violence as being sexy. This is represented in the consistently abusive control of Bella Swan by Edward Cullen in the series. This reflects a condition that Stark (2007) calls the “deprivation of rights and resources that violates personhood and citizenship”, even though, according to Kephart, “*the essence of romance is characterized by a marked physical attraction, strong emotional attachment between the partners, and a tendency for each to idealize the other*” (Henton, 1983).

In the context of popular Indonesian literature, the issue of violence against women is discussed by Faiz (2019) who studies the *Dilan 1990* novel by Pidi Baiq, a highly popular and considered phenomenal work. The novel was positively approved by the public; it was first published in 2014 and has been reprinted many times within three years. Readers are commonly of the opinion that Milea, the main female protagonist, is very lucky to meet a unique and romantic bad boy named Dilan. However, Faiz’s reading using Barthes’s semiotics finds that the screen-adapted novel presents intense violence, both physical and symbolic. This is shown through Dilan stalking Milea, his unannounced visits to Milea’s house, and his overall degrading demeanor, which Milea does not seem to realize. The perpetrators of violence often seemingly treat their targets as the best in their world. However, their promise for change requires the woman to accept and submit to what the men want (Dewi, 2020).

In romance, according to Radway (2006), the men in the novels she studied meet two standard perspectives. First, he has an exemplary and extraordinary status to become a hero. Second, he is initially evil but he gradually changes due to a lesson learned in the story. Modleski (2008) also explains that in romance, the plot often goes like this: a young, inexperienced, “ordinary” looking woman meets a handsome and rich man, who is usually ten or fifteen years older than her. Due to a variety of causes, the male characters usually belittle, demean, antagonize, and even brutalize women, which further causes confusion to the women. In the end, the male characters express their feelings towards the women, which the women accept, and the misunderstanding is resolved.

Men as main characters in romance have to follow the image that their readers desire (Michaels, 2007). According to Harzewski (2011), men in romance do not always have to be a “Mr. Right” or a “Prince Charming” for the women, since as in real life, men can be a “Mr. Wrong”, “Mr. Maybe”, or “Mr. Not Right”. According to Wood (2001), the cultural construct of this genre is apparent; women are instructed to make men happy and men are instructed to dominate and consider women as inferior to them. On the other hand, Priyatna (2018) states that:

“even though film [or romance novels] operates in spaces of traditional heterosexual values, the platform still has the potential to become feminist. Romance provides a space for women to connect their experience to the real world. [...] women can articulate their repressed voice in their experienced world through the represented world [...]”.

In keeping with its formulation, romance is often set within a space in which a woman experiences a social issue, such as change of social class, loss of privilege, or sudden loss of wealth, which requires her to get away from friends and family to recover from a trauma or to find himself waking up from a coma (which may take place in a villa or a castle). The story is built upon a series of obstacles to go through so that the man and the woman fall in love, despite class, ethnic, or racial differences and their stubbornness that initially makes them hate each other (Gill, 2006: 490). This narrative courses through adversity, separation, and later reconciliation which brings about the change in characters from a tough man to an emotional one by confessing his love to the woman, an act which brings about the recovery of a new social identity for the woman (Pearce & Stacey, 1995). No matter how complicated the conflicts are in romance, a happy ending is mandatory. Below, I offer a discussion of how violence is naturalized and romanticized through the analysis of a variety of narrative techniques in the teenlit romance *Jingga dan Senja*.

Naturalized and Romanticized Violence in Teen Lit by Esti Kinasih

Tari, the female protagonist of the *Jingga* series, is a fifteen-year-old teenage girl starting her first year in high school. In the beginning, she is presented as a cheerful, friendly, and assertive character. Long-haired Tari always wears orange-colored accessories. Her character name, and feminine appearance attract the attention of her male seniors, particularly Ari. Their approach toward Tari is depicted as intense, aggressive, and leading to violence.

The more the plot moves forward, the more it reveals explicit binary gender stereotypes. Ari is masculin, active, and strong, while Tari is his exact opposite: feminine, passive, and weak. These constructs are shown through passive behavior and “woman-specific”, such as “hiding” (p. 19), “crying” (p. 23), “curling up deeply” (p. 19), “shivering” (p. 25), “left behind” (p. 23), “not strong enough to climb a fence” (p. 24), and “submissive” (p. 26). Conversely, Ari is portrayed as being a subject, doing things in active voice, such as “taking [one’s] hand” and “pulling” (p. 22), “catching the weight of [one’s] body” (p. 25), and “grabbing” (p. 21). From those traits, it is apparent that myth-making is attempted.

Tari’s friends think that her second encounter with Ari, yet another incidental occurrence, was so cool. And romantic; more romantic than tales or movies.

“That’s crazy! It is so much more exciting than Korean movies. It gives me chills”, sighed Devi (pp. 19-20).

The quotation above shows that from the perspective of a teenage girl like Tari, the relationship between her and Ari represents an idealized romantic relationship, expressed through the adjectives “very cool”, “romantic”, and “exhilarating”. Ari is portrayed as a Prince Charming who is always ready to protect and save her partner, while Tari is depicted as an ordinary girl who is lucky to be fancied and protected by Ari. This further displays how men are positioned as superior to women, who serve as potential objects of domination. Tari is stuck in an unequal relationship and is a potential victim of violence.

From the perspective of a teenage girl in the novel, Ari’s possessive attitude towards Tari is considered positive, masculine, and “sweet”, manifestations of protection and commitment of a man towards his partner. Ari’s masculinity is also signified through his tendency to favor physical fights, as shown in the quotation below:

“There was this one time Ari got surrounded outside of school. Some boys stopped him on his way and beat him up real good. You know what? Once he got back on his feet, he came to them, one by one. He got one in the school restroom, when that boy was alone there. He visited another when that boy was home alone. Ari dragged him to the porch and beat him up there. He stopped three other boys on the road, and then...
Nyoman stopped talking, trying to recall some details, while his friends stared in awe (p. 32).

The glorification of Ari’s character and masculinity is also confirmed by what other characters say. As shown in the quotation above, Ari becomes a school legend because he is brave, good at fighting, and able to always retaliate against his enemy’s attacks. The teenage girls who are awestruck and staring in amazement upon hearing the story shows how much they appreciate the violence that Ari practices as a natural expression of masculinity and dominance that is confirmed by the people in the same school.

As the main setting of *Jingga*, the school is Ari’s “playground” and conversely for Tari, it’s a warzone or *discomfort zone*. This term is proposed by Matas (2013) to depict a physical and mental space for victims of violence who have to survive a harsh condition. In school, Tari experiences gaslighting, a psychological form of torture in interpersonal relationships, not only from Ari, but also from other men, such as Ata and Angga.

What had happened this afternoon crossed Tari’s mind. After Ata forcefully kidnapped her and dragged her into the bus -and she agreed to it with a heavy heart, because Ata seemed to threaten her in an unexplainable way- Ata took her. Until she reached home, and saw Mama (p. 22).

The quotation above is narrated through Tari’s focalization. By focusing on Tari, the author invites readers to identify themselves with Tari, to be able to directly experience the events that Tari goes through. This can be considered as a positive attempt from the author to show that abusive and manipulative treatments from a trusted man can mentally disturb their partner, even more so when such violence takes place in public spaces (in school and on the bus). This particular event in the novel implies that violence against women is not seen as something wrong or embarrassing, since the public either does not care or accepts it a banal occurrence.

Normalization of violence is also shown through the relative silence of other characters, including Tari’s teachers and friends, which further confirms and accepts the acts of violence. This happens in spite of the sequence of events in which Ari repeatedly transgresses and

violates rules, such as when he violates the teacher's authority in class. As such, not only does the school become Ari's playground, it also becomes his territory. Everyone in the territory, including the girl he is attracted to, has to follow his will. In Bordieu's perspective as discussed by (2010), this is considered a coercion of a system of symbol and meaning towards a certain group of people, so much so that it is considered valid. This legitimization further establishes and preserves the power relations that cause the success of the violence.

There was nobody that could help her. All of Tari's friends could only watch helplessly. Two people who could help, Oji and Ridho, just let it slide. Their argument was simple. Any boy could fall for any girl, and could attempt to get to know the girl in any way possible (p. 204).

This silence and lack of intervention from both teachers and friends to help the intimidated teenage girl further displays how patriarchy works. The last two sentences in the quotation above affirms the general perspective of "*Semua laki-laki berhak menyukai perempuan mana pun yang disukai* (Men has the right to like any women they are attracted to.)", and by extension, this means that they are free to do whatever they want, including coercion and violence. "Having the right" in this context means a strong subjectivity and entitlement manifested by Ari in dominating Tari, his subordinate. This means that Tari has to accept that the man accepts no rejection and his will has to be fulfilled. These principles meant to control and dominate women are tolerated by culture, so much so that it can be categorized as cultural violence.

In the novel, most acts of violence occur in school, a public space. Normatively safe spaces such as the basketball court (p. 32), the classroom (p. 118), a parking lot (p. 78), a staircase (p. 264), a corridor (p. 225), a storage room (p. 277), and the cafeteria (p. 39) even turn into the locations of bullying against Tari. It is in school that the male characters intensely commit acts of violence through causing disturbance, manipulating, abducting, destroying property, holding hostages, threatening and publicly humiliating female characters to show their ownership of the protagonist's body. Within the text, these acts do not always correspond to physically sexual acts, but it could be argued that these acts can mentally hurt and intimidate the protagonist.

The acts of violence against women happening at school also comprise insults. Female characters seem to be prohibited to develop due to relationship barriers. The statement "*Lo cuma boleh sama gue! Dengar nggak lo?!*" ("You can only be with me, you understand?") (pp. 153, 219) is uttered by Ari more than once. This aggressive statement, according to Ari, is evidence of love and immense sense of ownership. In some ways, this is similar to Ari stalking Tari as indicating his desire to always be with her. Nonetheless, all these acts of violence in romance are not based on jealousy or desire as Radway suggests, but rather on the tendency to keep the object of affection within his hedged territory.

"You go home with me. Now."

That was all that Ata said. Very brief. His grip on her hand forced Tari to both struggle and submit. Behind her, Fio could only stare pitily as she could do nothing to help (p. 19).

Through the imperative sentence "*Lo pulang bareng gue. Sekarang.* (You go home with me. Now.)" from the quotation above, it seems that aggressive and authoritative acts by male characters are irrefutable due to their protective motivation. The character Ata, whom Tari sees as a protector, shares the same behavior with his twin, Ari, in aggressively and abusively treating Tari. This situation agrees with Beynon's idea (2002) that culture has given an

opportunity for men to represent masculinity by becoming rulers, leaders, and decision makers for women. In reference to Priyatna (2018) who cites the discourses of sexuality offered by Hollway (1998) and Caldas-Coulthard (1996), the sequence of events in the *Jingga* series represents the have/hold discourse. Ata acts as if he protects Tari from Ari, just as Ari always impedes Tari's movements to protect her from Angga.

This was no longer mere terror. This was terror leading to death threats. This was not direct violence, but this could lead to heart attack. Ari did not want to wait for too long. [...] Today, two days after receiving the threatening text from Ari, Tari sat silent in her empty classroom... (p. 1)

The violence in the form of "heart attack" mentioned above leads to "murder" through psychological torture in the form of threats, but verbal and written (in SMS, in the novel). Extreme jealousy, possessiveness, and insecurity are considered expressions of love from the male characters. In his position as a romantic partner, Ari constantly asks Tari to keep him posted about whatever she does (p. 299). He also checks his partner's cell phone without her consent (p. 260). These repeated acts represent men's violation of women's private space. Ari's coercive acts against his partner's body are also depicted through hand pulling and forcing Tari to hug him when riding on his motorcycle (p. 134). This possessiveness seems to be tolerated by the public as affirming that those are the right ways for a man to not lose his romantic partner. All these misogynistic practices affirm the male dominance of women represented through control of her body and her belongings.

In a different context, the normalization of violence is also depicted through "tawuran" or brawls involving students of rivaling schools in all the three novels in the *Jingga* series, an act often normalized as juvenile delinquency. Even though the brawls usually involve only boys, in the *Jingga dan Senja* novel, the female protagonist is also involved as both the cause of the fight or a victim of the fight.

Suddenly from the intersection came SMA Brawijaya students, their sworn enemies, who ran towards them while shouting and hurling rocks. Everything turned into chaos. The Airlangga students close to the school gate ran back inside the school. Those far from the gate could not return and ran panicking in all directions. Screams and shouts are heard from all over the place. [...]

Tari and Fio stood close to each other, looking pale. Both were stuck in a strategic place, the sidewalk between school and the intersection, right in the middle of what was to be a battleground (pp. 33-34).

The quotation above shows what brawls between schools look like, a phenomenon frequently occurring in big cities, such as Jakarta. The brawls are often triggered by issues considered to be simple, such as contesting for a potential (female) romantic partner in the case of Ari and Angga in the novel series. The quotation above also suggests that women are often the victims of these fights among men. Oesman (2010), citing Berkowitz, posits that these student brawls that rely on men's physical strength are strongly related to aggressive behavior, both physical and symbolic, committed to hurt others through acts of, among others, throwing stones and using sharp weapons, such as knives. This further implies that in a social context, the violence committed by men is seen as a consequence of masculinity that does not limit his movements, which further sets apart from femininity (Nodelman, 2002). The brawl sequences that are so repeatedly depicted in the *Jingga* series that they become a natural, inseparable part of the

characters of Ari and his friends, a reflection of how violence has been tolerated in the patriarchal framework of the society.

As if to further add to the problems in this teen lit romance, the violence that Tari experiences comes not only from men, but also from other women, such as Veronica and her friends who intimidate Tari by yelling at her and ripping her clothes in front of other students. This group of women consider Ari a property within their territory that is snatched by Tari. As Boyer (2008) suggests, violence in school is not gender-exclusive, since women also commit violence in school. Like men, women are enabled to act violently, particularly in the context of intrasexual competition. In *Jingga*, the group called The Scissors verbally and physically intimidate Tari, due to the social capital of mob mentality and higher social class. The cause of the violence by teenage girls against other teenage girls, as Lagerspetz & Björkqvist (1994) and Osterman et al. (1998) state, is none other than the competition to gain men's attention, in which the victims are often suffer from exile, spread of rumors, manipulation, and physical violence.

“And did you know this is grade twelve territory? Ha!?! You can't just set foot here as you wish. Don't think that because Ari is chasing after you, you can chase him here. You think this school is only for you two, and the others are statues?”
Tari remained silent. Vero started further down. [...]
Her five fingers strengthen their grip on Tari's hair, making Tari bite her lip even stronger” (p. 195).

The quotation above depicts the violence committed by a group of Tari's high school seniors. The group thinks that their junior has been guilty of snatching Ari, the school idol. This act of violence in which seniority is considered superior has been ignored to the point of becoming a “tradition” normalized as an act of “educating” juniors. Even though it has a similarly undermining potential, according to Zahn (2008), this kind of violence is often not taken seriously, since “feminine violence” is not considered systematic and does not play an important role compared to the violence committed by men. This shows that dominant women have no place, unless in certain spaces, in the territory that adopts patriarchy, like in schools. This reality is also portrayed in the novel, which positions women who commit violence as the losing side and are humiliated by the male protagonist, further placing masculine dominance at the highest level of the hierarchy.

Despite being categorized as easy reading, *Jingga* clearly presents uneasy relationships and the gender imbalance in a romantic relationship. Instead of winning the love of the girl in “good” and “normal” ways with love and tenderness as is common in romance, Ari as a male character expresses his feelings through intense dominance, arrogance, and intimidation. The role of the female protagonist is annihilated and considered insignificant by the male protagonist.

“You're looking to die!” [...] For Ari, committing physical violence against women is absolutely forbidden. But for verbal violence, the limits are very biased.
Ari would place a girl in a boy's position if he thought the girl was too stubborn. After uttering his threat, Ari lifted his chin back up.
“You have three days, starting from today” (p. 2).

The quotation above shows that Ari demands his partner to be submissive and follow his will. When the woman acts stubborn or dissenting, as shown above, Ari is willing to place the

woman in a position equal to men in the sense of making the woman his rival or enemy that can be physically punished. Dissenting women in the perspective of patriarchy seem to ask for inhumane treatment and do not deserve forgiveness, or in the novel's words "*Lo cari mati*" (You're looking to die.). Dissenting women are seen as inappropriate and violate their social constructs as feminine, weak, and submissive. The impact of Ari's threat above is Tari feeling further intimidated and no longer daring to protest.

As cited by Saunders (2004), Radway states that in an ideal romance, the story focuses on the personae that later develop into a relationship between the male and female protagonists. Female protagonists are commonly portrayed as innocent and lacking in romantic experience, but having a strong motivation to hone her nurturing capacity. On the other hand, male protagonists that are initially hard, angular, and dark, at some point will develop into becoming full of love and tenderness towards the female protagonists. In the *Jingga* series, this development in Ari's character is long-winding and complicated, so much so that it takes him three books to end this development in an otherwise simple story.

Tari's realization of violence, dominance, and possessiveness of the men around him leads to her rationalizing all of these as the good that attempts to protect her. She starts imagining the violence she experiences as something romantic and ordinary in a relationship. She considers the violence she goes through as a manifestation of love and protection from the men around her.

But only after several steps, Tari came to him and hugged him from behind. Ari's back was a little wet. Tari's tears flowed, wetting Ari's shirt.

To the girl he dragged into the warzone. To the girl whom he forced to stand beside him, but whom ultimately came to support him voluntarily. To the girl for whom he promised happiness... (p. 241).

The female protagonist in romance often internalizes the principles above as manifestation of love (Chaudhuri, 2015). Even though she realizes that she has participated in the subjugation of herself, she often feels obliged to stay in a relationship with somebody who abuses her, even though it is apparent that the relationship is merely between the victim and the perpetrator of violence. This agrees with Fraser (2004) stating that teenage girls embrace the role that their society gives them, that it is acceptable for men to dominate a relationship and for women to be controlled by men. Even though they are often portrayed as uncomfortable with men's treatment toward them, they ultimately accept and comprehend this treatment. Tari seems to give off hope that men's violence will ultimately end once the perpetrator is given love and compassion by the victim, even though she has experienced violence and does not have the space to defend herself. If a woman follows her own will to fight or to avoid a man, she will be considered unnatural due to her aggressiveness, deeming her an unattractive object of intimidation.

Throughout the story, Tari represents an object that is guarded, watched, and bullied by the male characters. Narratively speaking, she is passive, mostly silent, and her role diminished. She doesn't even have the right to reply or to answer questions. "*Lo nggak cerita ke siapa pun, kan?*" tanyanya dengan suara pelan. "*Nggak, Kak.*" Tari menggeleng (p. 85).

He pulled Tari with quite a force, until her body collided with his. "Stop struggling if you don't want me to act rude!", he hissed. Tari turned cooperative. Not only was it because Ari's eyes scared her, but also because they reached the second floor of the south building, where the grade twelve classrooms were (p. 110).

As shown by the quotation above, Tari is portrayed as having to repress her disagreement and anger to prevent her relationship from being too complex, which will further complicate her. This occurs since culturally, women are constructed to become “passionate and patient”, as argued by Priyatna (2018). Dissenting or angry women can be considered “mad”. Anger and protest are understood as violating the threshold between what is normal and what is abnormal for a woman. Instead of showing her anger, a female protagonist is often portrayed as accepting and forgiving her romantic partner.

In numerous sequences of events, Tari consistently attempts to justify her situation and the violence she goes through by saying, for instance, “*Ari sebenarnya baik* (Ari is actually a good person.)”. By denying her own suffering, she contributes to the normalization of her partner’s rude and aggressive behavior.

Because Tari once experienced it when Ari’s good side crept out from his more active and dominant bad side. Perhaps because she once experienced Ari’s help. Perhaps because she once experienced his protection. His hand holding hers, his soft glance, his worry tucked in between his sharp speech tone, and behind his often rude exterior, this boy had his own standard of decency (p. 37).

The above shows that Tari as a victim attempts to rationalize Ari’s treatment towards her. She naturalizes and even romanticizes the possessive and aggressive treatment as manifestation of commitment and loving. After violence occurs in this complicated and unhealthy relationship, reconciliation may happen during which the woman attempts to make sense of the violence. However, as argued by Priyatna (2018), not only is masculine transgression often considered forgivable, if not acceptable, but it also is considered to be part of a man’s “nature”. Apology, regret, and promise for change from the perpetrator often result in forgiveness from women and perpetuate the cycle of violence (Chung, 2007; Fraser, 2004). Violent acts are then seen as gestures of compassion, and Tari as a victim, is convinced of a reward of peaceful and happy life with Ari, the perpetrator.

Tari was thankful. Everything came back to normal, even though it was not perfect, even though it needed a process... One thing is for sure, everyone was pleased. Everyone was relieved. All her burden was lifted, turning a black heart white. And sincerity, slowly but sure, embraced every soul that had been once lost (p. 280).

The quotation above reveals how male dominance of women is perpetuated not only by violence in an abusive relationship, but also by women’s self-repression since their culture always places men as being right. From this analysis of the *Jingga* series, I argue that Esti Kinasih prepared Ari as Mr. Right for Tari from the very beginning. Despite her bad temperament, he is portrayed as a hero that protects Tari and is willing to sacrifice for her. However, the series’ narrative depicts Ari more appropriately as Mr. Wrong through her bad boy character.

The author’s bias towards Ari has been apparent from the beginning. Ari stands out as meeting the criteria of a formulaic romance protagonist: young, handsome, and financially established. Besides those features, his indifferent and mysterious demeanor adds to her attractiveness. “*Ia adalah biang onar di SMA Airlangga. Penyandang sederet predikat buruk dan pelanggar sederet peraturan*” (p. 9). Ari is portrayed as having dignity and honor as a socially crucial source of power. Textually, he meets the standard of maleness in romance with

his physique, wealth, social class, and accommodative environment. When the owner of a symbolic capital (men) makes use of his power, he will face the weaker owner (women), in which the weak will be dominated by the strong. This dominance is a form of violence that is often ignored, resulting in voluntary adherence to norms to maintain the existing value system.

In the end, as Priyatna (2018) states, “men [...] are healed, transformed, forgiven by their partners who are “willing to sacrifice”, “full of compassion”, and “understanding”. By portraying the relationship between a man and a woman as represented in the novel, violence can be considered and accepted as normality. As such, this situation further cements violence and hegemonic masculinity as men’s nature and as an expression of romancing in a romantic relationship.

Conclusion

This article has shown that masculinity is portrayed as naturally aggressive and difficult to control. Conversely, femininity is portrayed as passionately and patiently nurturing. The situations that naturalize violence are portrayed through an oppressed female protagonist and a dominant and aggressive male protagonist. This teen lit series still communicates the patriarchal belief that male protagonists are heroes and dominant characters in literary texts while female protagonists are placed in an inferior position and become willing victims of violence. As a required indicator of romance, the story has a happy ending, which further indicates that Esti Kinasih as the author approves of the discourse of violence against teenage girl characters, since the violence is considered a manifestation of romancing in a romantic relationship. In other words, in the *Jingga* trilogy, violence is glorified as a desired and attributed condition by women, so much so that the text itself can be considered masculine.

The highly popular *Jingga* has the potential to sustain violence amongst teenagers, specifically strengthening hegemonic masculinity. It can be argued that consuming these books will contribute to the wide internalization and acceptance of violence. The books further maintain that men are natural leaders in romantic relationships with the higher power to control them, while women merely respond and participate in the relationship plan that men have decided on. Through this article, we remind the reader of the importance of literacy, the ability, and sensibility to identify various forms of violence in society, such as those depicted in fiction. A literary study with a feminist perspective can promote gender awareness, particularly of violence against women.

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