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# Ideological Refraction in Translation: Textual Construction of Kartini in English and Malay

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**Abstract**

***Background:***
This study investigates the ideological refraction of Kartini's epistolary identity across two seminal translations: Symmers' English *Letters of a Javanese Princess* and Balai Pustaka's Malay *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*.

***Methodology:***
Employing Martin and White's Appraisal Framework, comparative analysis of textual divergences across three narrative phases between the two translations reveals contrasting characterological constructions. The Dutch source is acknowledged as context but not used as a fidelity benchmark, making this a comparison of target-text constructions rather than a source-target shift analysis.

***Findings:***
Symmers' translation textually constructs a figure legible as a tragic victim to be pitied, privileging Appreciation over Affect and encoding Kartini as patient. Balai Pustaka's translation textually constructs a legible figure as a foundational martyr to be emulated, migrating from Appreciation to Affect and reconfiguring suffering as active labor. These constructions invite divergent readings that align with colonial and nationalist interpretive traditions respectively, though Balai Pustaka's status as a colonial-government publishing institution complicates any simple attribution of nationalist intention to the translators themselves.

***Conclusion:***
Translation thus constitutes not secondary representation but a site of discursive production: the English and Malay translations offer divergent textual resources for remembering Kartini, shaping how she is positioned within competing cultural imaginaries.

***Originality:***
By deliberately bracketing the question of fidelity to the Dutch original, this research pivots towards refraction as its governing optic thus advancing the claim that translation is the primary mechanism through which Kartini's historical identity has been fissured and canonized into two discrete figures conscripted to serve opposing cultural and political imaginaries.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study investigates how a single historical figure is refracted into starkly divergent, and in key respects conflicting, canonical figures through different translation traditions. The case examined is Raden Adjeng Kartini, whose epistolary corpus was translated into English (1920) and Malay (1922), producing two starkly divergent canonical constructions. Canonization is never a neutral process. Which texts, which authors, and which voices preserved, celebrated, and transmitted to future generations are always the outcome of selection, negotiation, and often contestation. Within literary and cultural studies, canonization has long been understood as an institutional mechanism driven by education, criticism, and publishing that privileges certain works while marginalizing others. Yet what is less frequently examined is the role of translation in this process. The present study focuses on the textual dimension of canonization, how translation constructs a figure that is subsequently available for canonization, while acknowledging that full canonization also involves reception, education, and institutional mediation beyond the textual level.

Far from a neutral conduit, translation functions as rewriting, a practice endowed with the capacity not merely to transmit but to *transform* its object (Lefevere, 1992). As Lefevere contends, translation operates as a mechanism of ideological refraction: the source text is bent, filtered, and reconstituted to align with the expectations, value systems, and discursive conventions of the receiving culture. Within this paradigm, the translator assumes a role far exceeding that of linguistic intermediary; they emerge as a gatekeeper of canonization, negotiating which texts, and which authors, are rendered legible, palatable, and ultimately worthy of preservation within a given cultural imaginary (Venuti, 1995). Consequently, a translated text frequently discloses more about the ideological architecture of its destination than about the semantic intentions embedded in its origin. This convergence of canonization, refraction, and translation carries profound social implications. It determines whose stories enter collective memory, which historical figures are mourned or emulated, and how power asymmetries are reproduced or resisted across linguistic borders. The urgency of investigating this nexus is particularly acute in post-colonial contexts, where the transfer of meaning is inextricably bound to asymmetrical power relations, competing political teleologies, and the contested labor of identity construction (Niranjana, 1992; Robinson, 1997). Understanding how translation refracts canonized figures is therefore not a narrow technical concern but a pressing critical task for any scholarship attentive to the politics of cultural memory.


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The social dimensions of canonization, refraction, and translation have received sustained attention across several decades of translation research. In the 1990s, scholars such as Lefevere (1992), Venuti (1995), and Hermans (1996) fundamentally reconfigured the field by demonstrating that translation is never neutral but always embedded in power relations, institutional agendas, and cultural gatekeeping. The 2000s saw further elaboration of these insights, with Niranjana (1992, 2002) and Wolf (2007) theorizing translation as a site of ideological negotiation, while Pym (2006) shifted the analytical focus from texts to mediators, asking who translates, for whom, and with what social effects. By the 2010s, research had consolidated around concepts such as cultural memory and postcolonial rewriting (Brodzki, 2007; Mukherjee, 2013), and into the 2020s, scholars continue to refine the social-orientated paradigm on how translation participates in canon formation and the construction of collective identities (Qi et al., 2022). What unites this trajectory is a decisive break with fidelity-based criticism: the primary concern is no longer whether a translation is faithful to its source, but rather how translation refracts its object to serve specific cultural and ideological purposes.

The convergence of canonization and translation has been examined through various sociological lenses that foreground the institutional and ideological mechanisms shaping which texts achieve cultural legitimacy. Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and cultural capital have been productively applied to analyses how translators and publishers operate within structured social spaces, competing for symbolic recognition while unconsciously reproducing established hierarchies (Simeoni, 1998; Inghilleri, 2005). Even-Zohar's (1990) polysystem theory, though developed earlier, remains influential for understanding how translated literature oc cupies primary or secondary positions within receiving cultural systems that determine which foreign voices are canonized and which remain marginal. More recent work has extended these insights by examining the role of translation agencies, editorial policies, and state institutions in the selective consecration of texts (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007; Sapiro, 2016). What these approaches share is a recognition that canonization is never merely aesthetic but always social: it is enacted through concrete practices of selection, omission, framing, and rewriting. This sociological perspective proves particularly urgent for unveiling post-colonial discourse, where translation has historically served as a mechanism for either perpetuating colonial hierarchies or, conversely, for recuperating subaltern voices and constructing counter-canons (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999; Robinson, 1997). By examining how translation refracted the identity of a colonized subject for two radically different readerships, the present study contributes to this critical project.

Empirical studies examining the translation of historical figures, colonial texts, and the construction of cultural memory across different contexts have begun to address these questions (e.g., Bao, 2025; Odrekhivska, 2024; Pardoe & Arps, 2023), yet none has undertaken a comparative linguistically-grounded analysis of a single figure refracted through colonial and nationalist translation traditions. More specifically, recent discourse analysis of Kartini's ideological constructions (Ahlstrand & Maniam, 2025) have demonstrated the value of critical reading in revealing competing national identity narratives. However, these analyses have not systematically traced how evaluative linguistic resources (such as Appraisal system) produce distinct characterological identities across translations. This study builds on this research by using the Appraisal Framework to operationalize refraction which provides a systematic linguistic explanation of how two translations of Kartini's letters create different canonical figures through lexicogrammatical choices.

Within the broader sociology of translation canonization, the postcolonial context presents a particularly revealing site of investigation. The social aspects of translation, including the who, for whom, and with what effects, become especially salient when examining how texts move between colonized and metropolitan languages, for these movements are never merely linguistic but always also political (Niranjana, 1992). Different translation traditions, operating under asymmetrical power relations, inevitably produce different canonized versions of the same cultural object, each calibrated to serve distinct ideological agendas. A translation produced in a colonized language for an indigenous readership may construct a figure of resistance and national awakening, while a Western translation of the same source may produce a figure of tragic pathos legible within orientalist frameworks (Bandia, 2008). Comparing these divergent canonizations reveals not which version is more "faithful" to some putative original, but rather how social positioning, institutional mediation, and imagined readerships systematically shape the discursive construction of cultural memory across linguistic borders.

Despite the flourishing of postcolonial critique within translation studies over the past three decades, empirical research that systematically compares how the same colonial-era text has been canonized through translation into different target languages remains relatively limited. While scholars such as Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) have examined the political and ideological dimensions of postcolonial translation, a linguistically grounded comparative analysis of how two translations of the same source produce divergent characterological constructions through specific evaluative choices has not been undertaken for the Kartini case. Much of the existing scholarship has concentrated either on the translation of contemporary

postcolonial literature into Western languages or on theoretical critiques of colonial translation practices (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999; Robinson, 1997). Comparatively few studies have undertaken sustained comparative analysis of how a single source, particularly a manuscript originating from a colonial context, has been refracted into two or more receiving cultures, each with its own ideological investments and historical trajectories (Bandia, 2008). This scarcity is striking given the importance of such research for understanding how cultural interpretations and historical moments shape translation outcomes. A translation produced in the immediate aftermath of colonial rule, addressed to a newly independent readership, necessarily operates under different pressures and possibilities than a translation produced at the height of empire for a metropolitan audience. The former may seek to construct usable heroes for national awakening; the latter may produce figures of pathos that confirm colonial benevolence. The present study addresses this gap by operationalising refraction through the Appraisal Framework, providing a systematic linguistic account of how two translations of Kartini's letters produce radically different canonical figures. The present research emphasizes precisely this divergence, investigating how two translated versions, one addressed to a Western readership and one to an indigenous readership have constructed divergent canonized figures from a shared historical archive.

Recent scholarship has expanded the application of Appraisal Theory to translation contexts across diverse genres. In a systematic literature review studies from 2011 to 2021, Liu et al. (2022) found that appraisal is widely used to analyze translation shifts in political, news, and literary texts. The focus of this research is on appraisal shifts, ideology, and positioning. Li et al. (2025) demonstrated the pedagogical utility of appraisal-based analysis for examining evaluative divergence in student translations of news reports. Meanwhile, Xu and Liang (2023) used appraisal shifts to trace how interpreters negotiate intersubjectivity and reproduce official ideology in government press conference interpreting. Phan (2025) documents the steady growth of appraisal theory research across discourse contexts and identifies the exploration of interpersonal meaning and integration with critical discourse analysis as major thematic trends. The present study differs from prior research in its comparative, target-text-centered design applied to colonial life writing. Rather than tracking source-target shifts or examining interpreter mediation, this study treats two translations of the same archival source as autonomous cultural products.

This study does not merely document differences between the two translations but rather explains the linguistic and ideological mechanisms through which Kartini is represented

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differently in each translational tradition. The analytical focus is therefore on how specific evaluative choices produce divergent characterological constructions, not simply that they differ. By examining how two ideologically opposed translation traditions have differentially canonized the same colonial-era source material, this research makes three specific contributions: (1) it demonstrates how canonization operates through fine-grained evaluative linguistic resources (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, and Graduation) that are deployed to construct character; (2) it operationalises Lefevere's concept of refraction by showing how it is materially instantiated through traceable shifts in Appraisal categories; and (3) it reveals that a single historical figure can be transformed into two distinct canonical constructions (e.g., a tragic victim and a foundational martyr) each calibrated to serve antithetical political imaginaries. Thus, the Dutch source text is not used as a fidelity benchmark, the study compares the two target translations directly and does not attribute every textual divergence specifically to translator choice versus editorial selection or source-text inheritance. The focus, rather, is on what linguistic resources each translation makes available for constructing Kartini's character.

Beyond Translation Studies, these explorations matter for Postcolonial Studies by demonstrating how translation participates in the production of asymmetrical cultural discourse revealing that collective remembrance of foundational figures is not a matter of historical recovery but of ongoing discursive construction through translational acts. The study conducts a comparative analysis of two target texts, namely Agnes Louise Symmers' English translation, Letters of a Javanese Princess (1920), and Balai Pustaka's Malay translation, Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang (1922), using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Framework to map the evaluative resources deployed in each version. The following research questions guide the investigation: (1) What patterns of evaluative language (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, and Graduation) emerge in the English and Malay translations across the narrative arc of the epistolary corpus? (2) What patterns of characterological construction emerge from these differences? (3) What ideological orientations can be inferred from the patterns of evaluative choices observed in each translation?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Previous Studies on Kartini Discourse*

Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879–1904) has been consecrated as a singular figure in both Western and Indonesian cultural memory, yet the meanings ascribed to her differ starkly across these traditions. For Western audiences, particularly through the English translation Letters of a Javanese Princess (Symmers, 1920), Kartini has often been interpreted as a tragic,


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romanticized victim of Javanese aristocratic patriarchy as well as a sensitive soul whose enlightened aspirations were crushed by the weight of "tradition" (Bijl & Chin, 2020). This interpretation aligns with orientalist tropes that cast colonized women as passive sufferers awaiting rescue by European modernity (Said, 1978). For Indonesian audiences, by contrast, Kartini is celebrated as a national heroine and a pioneer of women's emancipation. The Malay translation Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang (Balai Pustaka, 1922) has been instrumental in constructing this image, presenting her as a symbol of enlightenment, sacrifice, and national awakening. School curricula, Kartini Day celebrations, and popular biographies have further embedded the myth of Kartini as a selfless fighter who abandoned personal ambition for the greater good of her people (Tiwon, 1996). Tiwon (1996) documents how school textbooks and official commemorations emphasise Kartini's sacrifice and devotion to the nation, while downplaying her ambivalence toward Javanese tradition and her correspondence with Dutch officials. Similarly, Bijl and Chin (2020) trace the reception history of Kartini in both Western and Indonesian contexts, demonstrating how competing ideological projects have selectively appropriated her image to serve divergent political agendas. These divergent cultural beliefs, one emphasizing tragic victimhood, the other heroic sacrifice, reflect not two readings of a stable historical person but two distinct canonized figures, each produced through specific social and ideological mechanisms.

Despite the powerful hold of these myths, critical scholarship has uncovered significant contradictions between popular beliefs about Kartini and what the historical evidence reveals. While these historical details are important for contextualising Kartini's position, the present study's primary concern is not biographical accuracy but rather the linguistic and discursive mechanisms through which her image has been constructed in translation. The educational narrative, for instance, portrays Kartini as a tireless advocate for girls' schooling who successfully established a native school for Javanese girls before her death. Yet historians have noted that the school was in fact founded posthumously by her sisters and Dutch patrons, and that Kartini's own educational ambitions were far more complex—she initially sought advanced study in the Netherlands, not merely a local school for aristocratic girls (Coté, 2005). The popular image of Kartini as a proto-nationalist who rejected feudalism and colonialism is not entirely consistent with her sustained correspondence with Dutch officials, her expressed admiration for European culture, and her eventual compliance with an arranged marriage to a polygamous regent (Bijl & Chin, 2020). Tiwon (1996) argues that these contradictions are not mere inaccuracies to be corrected but constitutive features of the "Kartini image" itself: the

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figure who circulates under her name is a discursive fabrication assembled from selective readings of her letters, each reading emphasizing certain passages while suppressing others.

What emerges from this critical literature is a figure riven by conflicting interpretations, which at once a colonial collaborator and a nationalist icon, a victim of patriarchy and an agent of her own surrender, others a failed aspirant and a foundational martyr, yet what has received limited attention is how translation as a discursive mechanism has produced these incompatible readings through specific linguistic choices. Empirical work on the translation of postcolonial texts (Bao, 2025; Odrekhivska, 2024) has demonstrated how translational choices actively shape cultural memory, yet these studies have not examined how a single archival source can be refracted into two distinct canonical constructions serving opposing ideological projects. These irreconcilable views persist precisely because the two canonical translations have refracted Kartini's identity in opposite directions, a point that the present study seeks to demonstrate through comparative linguistic analysis.

## *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as developed by Halliday (1994) and his successors. SFL conceives of language not as a set of abstract rules but as a resource for making meaning in social contexts. Halliday identifies three metafunctions of language: the ideational (construing experience), the textual (organizing discourse), and the interpersonal (enacting social relationships). It is this interpersonal metafunction that holds relevance for translation studies, for it concerns how speakers and writers negotiate positions, express evaluations, and align or distance themselves from their audiences (Halliday, 1994). Within translation research, an SFL orientation shifts attention away from questions of formal equivalence between source and target texts and towards the functional re-instantiation of meaning in a new communicative context (Munday, 2012). Every translation, regardless of its propositional content, participates in the construction of a relationship between textual voice and reader. Understanding how that relationship is recalibrated in translation (through choices of mood, modality, and, most crucially, evaluation) requires a framework capable of analyzing the interpersonal resources of language. The Appraisal Framework, elaborated by Martin and White (2005) within the SFL tradition, provides precisely such a framework.

### *Appraisal Framework*

Building on the interpersonal metafunction of SFL, Martin and White (2005) developed the Appraisal Framework as a systematic taxonomy for analyzing how speakers and writers encode evaluation, attitude, and emotional stance in discourse. Appraisal resources operate across three interacting systems: Attitude, which concerns the expression of feelings, judgements, and valuations; Graduation, which regulates the intensity or sharpness of those evaluations; and Engagement, which manages the dialogistic positioning of the textual voice in relation to alternative perspectives (Martin & White, 2005). Together, these systems provide a finely grained analytical vocabulary for moving beyond impressionistic observations of "tone" or "style" to empirically verifiable claims about how texts position their readers. Within translation studies, the Appraisal Framework has been increasingly employed to investigate how translational shifts, particularly those involving evaluative language, reconfigure the interpersonal relationship between text and audience across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Munday, 2012). By mapping the distribution and intensity of Appraisal resources in a translated text, the analyst can render visible the translator's interpretive choices and the ideological filters through which the source material has been refracted.

### *The System of Attitude*

At the conceptual heart of the Appraisal Framework lies the system of Attitude, which concerns the linguistic resources through which speakers and writers encode feelings, render ethical judgments, and assign aesthetic or social valuations to entities, events, and states of affairs (Martin & White, 2005). Attitude is further subdivided into three interconnected domains: Affect, which deals with emotional responses and dispositions; Judgement, which concerns the evaluation of human behavior according to normative principles; and Appreciation, which addresses the aesthetic or social valuation of objects, processes, and phenomena. Each domain offers a distinct but complementary lens for analyzing how a text positions its reader evaluatively. In the context of translation, shifts across these domains are particularly consequential, as a translator may choose to render a given source utterance through the register of Affect (foregrounding emotional experience), Judgement (foregrounding ethical assessment), or Appreciation (foregrounding aesthetic or social evaluation). Such choices fundamentally reorient the reader's alignment with the textual subject and the moral framework through which that subject is apprehended (Munday, 2012).

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***affect***

Affect constitutes the subsystem of Attitude concerned with the linguistic construal of emotional experience. It encompasses the full spectrum of subjective feeling: happiness and sorrow, security and anxiety, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, desire and fear (Martin & White, 2005). Affect may be realized through a surge of embodied behavior (e.g., she wept, they embraced) or through a more internalized disposition (e.g., she felt despondent, he was anxious). In either case, Affect positions the speaker or writer as responding emotionally to some stimulus whether external event, remembered experience, or anticipated outcome. Within translation studies, the rendering of Affect proves decisive for the ascription of agency to a protagonist. A translation that consistently employs passive constructions of misery (e.g., she suffered, pain was inflicted upon her) constructs the protagonist as a patient, a recipient of external forces. Conversely, a translation that emphasizes active emotional struggle (e.g., she endured, she bore the pain) positions the protagonist as an agent who confronts and manages her affective experience (Munday, 2012). Analyzing shifts in Affect across translations thus reveals how the translator has calibrated the reader's empathetic alignment with the protagonist and, by extension, the moral and emotional framework through which that protagonist is to be understood.

***judgement***

Judgement is the subsystem of Attitude concerned with the evaluation of human behavior according to institutionalized norms and ethical principles (Martin & White, 2005). Unlike Affect, which deals with emotional responses, Judgement assesses actions and character against socially shared standards of what is normal, capable, tenacious, truthful, or proper. Martin and White propose a foundational distinction within Judgement between Social Esteem and Social Sanction. Social Esteem pertains to evaluations of normality (how unusual someone is), capacity (how competent), and tenacity (how resolute), and or judgements that, if negative, may lower a person's social standing but carry no legal or moral condemnation. Social Sanction, by contrast, engages more solemn registers of veracity (how truthful) and propriety (how ethical), where judgements that carry legal or moral weight and may lead to punishment or condemnation (Martin & White, 2005). In translation analysis, the selection of Judgement resources determines the moral gravity ascribed to a protagonist's actions and critiques. A translator who frames a colonial official's failure as a matter of capacity (incompetence) inscribes the critique within a discourse of administrative error, corrigible through better training. A translator who reframes the same failure as a matter of propriety (immorality)


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transforms it into an ethical condemnation of the colonial system itself (Niranjana, 1992). Analyzing shifts in Judgement thus exposes how translations either moderate or radicalize a protagonist's moral stance.

***appreciation***

Appreciation is the third subsystem of Attitude, directing evaluative attention not towards human behavior (as in Judgement) but towards the aesthetic and social valuation of things, processes, and states of affairs (Martin & White, 2005). Appreciation can be understood as the institutionalization of feeling as a set of norms for evaluating the quality, significance, or impact of objects, events, and abstractions. Martin and White distinguish three subcategories: Reaction (evaluating the impact or quality of something, e.g., engaging, boring, striking), Composition (evaluating the balance or complexity, e.g., balanced, intricate, chaotic), and Valuation (evaluating the social or historical significance, e.g., profound, shallow, revolutionary). In the context of translating historical life-writing, Appraisal resources are frequently recruited for evaluating pivotal abstractions such as Tradition, Modernity, Education, and Progress. A translation that renders "Tradition" through the subcategory of Reaction as tiresome constructs a protagonist for whom the central problem is aesthetic impoverishment. A translation that reframes the same concept through Valuation as oppressive inscribes a fundamentally different political subjectivity which represents one for whom tradition is not merely dull but actively violent in its effects (Martin & White, 2005). Analyzing shifts in Appreciation thus reveals how translations calibrate the reader's perception of abstract social forces and, in doing so, shape the ideological horizon of the narrative.

***The System of Graduation***

Complementing the resources of Attitude is the system of Graduation, which functions as a kind of semantic volume control, regulating the amplitude or sharpness of evaluative expressions (Martin & White, 2005). Graduation operates along two principal axes. The first is Force, which scales evaluations according to intensity (e.g., slightly annoyed versus enraged) or quantification (e.g., a few problems versus thousands of obstacles). The second is Focus, which sharpens or softens the boundaries of categorical membership (e.g., a true intellectual versus an intellectual of sorts; pure poverty versus poverty-like conditions). Within translation studies, Graduation emerges as a primary mechanism for ideological refraction, for even when the type of Attitude remains unchanged, shifts in Force or Focus can fundamentally reorient the reader's perception of the protagonist's circumstances and character (Munday, 2012). A translation that consistently up-scales negative evaluations (e.g., replacing difficult with

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unbearable) or expands quantification (e.g., replacing some constraints with countless shackles) does not merely intensify the emotional register—it reclassifies the discourse itself, effecting a generic migration from temperate critique to radical indictment. Analyzing Graduation shifts thus reveals how translators modulate the emotional and ideological weight of a narrative.

***The System of Engagement***

The third component of the Appraisal architecture is Engagement, which addresses the dialogistic positioning of the textual voice or the manner in which writers acknowledge, negotiate, align with, or distance themselves from alternative voices and value positions (Martin & White, 2005). Engagement resources regulate what Bakhtin (1981) theorized as the heteroglossic fabric of discourse: the coexistence within any utterance of multiple social voices, competing perspectives, and contestable claims. Martin and White operationalize this insight through a foundational distinction between monoglossic and heteroglossic formulations.

Although Engagement is an important dimension of Appraisal theory, this study primarily focuses on Attitude (Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation) and Graduation (Force and Focus) for three interrelated reasons. First, the research questions concern characterological construction, specifically how Kartini is evaluated emotionally (Affect), morally (Judgment), and aesthetically or socially (Appreciation), as well as the intensity of these evaluations (Graduation). These systems directly impact the construction of the protagonist's identity. Engagement, by contrast, concerns the broader dialogic positioning of the textual voice and requires a different unit of analysis (e.g., clause- or utterance-level framing) to examine how the translation negotiates alternative perspectives. Second, preliminary coding of the data revealed that Engagement resources were less frequently foregrounded in the textual contrasts between the two translations. The most salient and systematic divergences appeared in the domains of Attitude and Graduation. Third, as Liu et al. (2022) note in their systematic review, prior Appraisal in translation studies have often selectively operationalized Appraisal subsystems depending on their research focus. The present study follows this established practice by focusing on the Appraisal subsystems most directly relevant to its analytical objectives. Engagement is acknowledged as a theoretical resource, but it is not systematically operationalized in the coding procedure. Accordingly, the research questions address patterns of evaluative language (Attitude and Graduation), characterological construction, and ideological orientation without claiming to provide a full Appraisal analysis encompassing Engagement. This decision is revisited in the limitations section.


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### *Appraisal as Analytical Lens for Ideological Refraction*

The Appraisal Framework provides a detailed analytical lens for the investigation of ideological refraction in translated discourse. Its key contribution to the present study resides in its capacity to operationalize Lefevere's (1992) metaphor of refraction, where the bending of a source text to align with the values and expectations of a receiving culture, into a precise, replicable methodology for empirical analysis. By isolating, categorizing, and comparing shifts across the three interrelated systems of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement, the analyst can demonstrate how a translated text reconfigures the characterological identity of a historical subject. This theoretical orientation enables a decisive break with fidelity-based criticism, which exhausts itself in the binary adjudication of "accurate" versus "inaccurate" translation. It permits, in its place, a more sophisticated and politically attuned critique, one addressed to how translators, as unacknowledged co-authors of cultural memory, harness the interpersonal resources of language to shape the collective imagination of a nation's foundational figures (Hermans, 1996; Spivak, 1993). The Appraisal lens reveals that what is at stake in translation is not the preservation of an original meaning but the very constitution of meaning as an object of cultural memory, perpetually susceptible to re-inscription in accordance with shifting ideological exigencies. The coding procedure operationalises Attitude through its three subsystems: Affect (emotional responses, e.g., misery, happiness, fear), Judgement (evaluations of behaviour according to social norms, e.g., capacity, tenacity, propriety), and Appreciation (evaluations of objects, processes, and states of affairs, e.g., reaction, composition, valuation). Graduation is operationalised through Force (scaling intensity or quantity, e.g., up-scale or down-scale) and Focus (sharpening or softening categorical boundaries). Each extract is coded by identifying evaluative lexical items and assigning them to their respective Appraisal category; for example, "suffered" is coded as Affect: Misery, while "menanggung" (to shoulder) is coded as Affect: Misery with implications for agency that are discussed in the analysis. The coding protocol prioritises a close reading of each lexical item in its immediate co-text, with category assignments justified in the Findings section through explicit reference to Martin and White's (2005) definitions and subcategories. The interpretive nature of Appraisal coding is acknowledged, and the coding protocol and reliability procedures are detailed in the Methodology section.

## METHODOLOGY

The primary data of this study consist of two translated versions of Kartini's epistolary corpus, rather than the Dutch source text (*Door Duisternis tot Licht*, Abendanon 1911). The

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Dutch original is acknowledged only as a contextual reference point and does not serve as a benchmark for fidelity. However, to establish that observed divergences between the English and Malay translations are not merely differences in target-text construction but are traceable to translation choices, the Dutch source was consulted as an alignment control. This consultation confirms that both translations draw from the same Dutch edition and that the evaluative contrasts identified are not simply inherited from different source selections. The Dutch text is not used to adjudicate which translation is more 'faithful,' but rather to establish that the two target texts are rendering comparable source material, thereby supporting the claim that the observed divergences are translational in nature.

The first translation is Agnes Louise Symmers' English version, *Letters of a Javanese Princess* (1920), published in New York with a foreword by Louis Couperus. Produced at the height of Dutch colonial rule, this text was addressed to an Anglophone readership and follows the structure of the Dutch edition relatively closely. The second translation is Balai Pustaka's Malay version, *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (1922), issued by the colonial publishing house in Weltevreden (now Jakarta). Addressed to an incipient indigenous readership, this text selectively reorganizes the source material and emphasizes themes deemed relevant for its target audience. Both translations have exerted lasting influence on Kartini's reception in their respective cultural spheres, yet they differ significantly in their editorial and linguistic choices.

The English translation by Agnes Louise Symmers (1920) follows the structure of the Dutch edition relatively closely, preserving most of Abendanon's editorial arrangement. The book comprises a collection of letters written between 1899 and 1904, organized chronologically, and is prefaced by a foreword from the Dutch novelist Louis Couperus. Symmers, an American feminist, produced what scholars have characterized as a "rather loose" English translation of the Dutch text. Coté (2005) notes that Symmers' translation selectively omits letters critical of Dutch colonial policy, and Bijl and Chin (2020) document how Symmers' editorial choices, including the omission of Kartini's sharp critiques of European paternalism, reflect a translational strategy that renders Kartini legible to an Anglophone readership accustomed to orientalist representations of colonized women. The translation has been noted for downplaying Kartini's criticism of European colonialism and paternalism, with the title itself, Letters of a Javanese Princess, framing her primarily through her aristocratic status rather than her intellectual agency (Tiwon, 1996). The English edition is known to have excluded some letters from the 1911 Dutch original, and the translation has been noted for downplaying Kartini's criticism of European colonialism and paternalism. Existing scholarship

on this translation has primarily focused on either Kartini's conflicts as represented in the text (Yayuk et al., 2024) or the educational values embedded within the letters, with limited attention paid to the linguistic patterns of the translation itself. The title Letters of a Javanese Princess has itself been described as "inappropriate," suggesting a framing of Kartini primarily through her aristocratic status rather than her intellectual agency.

The Malay translation, *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (1922), was produced by a collective of four translators, Bagindo Dahlan Abdullah, Zainudin Rasad, Sutan Muhammad Zain, and Djamaloedin Rasad, who referred to themselves as "Empat Saudara" (Four Brothers). The translation was published by Balai Pustaka, a Dutch colonial-government agency whose stated purpose was to provide "good and cheap reading material" to the native population while ensuring that publications did not advocate anti-government positions or strong religious doctrines. Unlike the English version, the Malay translation selectively reorganizes the source material, presenting Kartini's letters in a format designed to serve the colonial government's "good literature" program while simultaneously appealing to an incipient nationalist readership. This institutional context complicates any simple attribution of nationalist intention to the translation: Balai Pustaka's editorial policies and publication controls mediated what could be printed, and the translators operated within these constraints. The 'Nationalist Frame' identified in this study therefore refers to the textual affordances and interpretive possibilities made available by the translation, including its framing of Kartini as a figure of sacrifice and emulation, rather than to a demonstrable nationalist intention on the part of the translators or publisher. The later reception of the Malay translation within Indonesian nationalist and educational contexts is a separate historical process, acknowledged here as beyond the scope of the present textual analysis. Existing research on this translation has largely concentrated on its historical role in the Indonesian women's emancipation movement and its function as a foundational text for nationalist thought, with less attention given to its specific editorial and linguistic strategies. The book became one of the most important works in the history of the Indonesian women's movement and remains a primary reference for understanding Kartini's ideas as a pioneer of women's emancipation.

To conclude, the corpus comprises the two translated manuscripts described above: Symmers' English *Letters of a Javanese Princess* (1920) and Balai Pustaka's Malay Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang (1922). The original Dutch text is set aside from the primary analysis, as this research focuses on the social aspects of canonization, specifically, how each translation constructs Kartini for its target readership. The analysis will therefore compare the two

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translated versions directly, treating them not as derivatives of an original but as autonomous cultural products that have shaped Kartini's reception in distinct ideological contexts. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative comparative case study design (Holmes, 1988; Toury, 1995). The analytical framework employed is Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, with particular attention to the subsystems of Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation) and Graduation (Force, Focus).

Data collection was conducted using a systematic, parallel corpus alignment technique designed to mitigate confirmation bias and ensure the representativeness of the purposive sample. The primary corpus consisted of twelve complete letters (two per year from 1899 to 1904), which were aligned side-by-side in both the English and Malay translations. During the initial screening, the texts were juxtaposed at the paragraph level, and the researcher identified 142 comparable passages containing evaluative language related to Kartini's personal experiences, ambitions, and socio-political observations. The passages were filtered using two inclusion criteria. First, each passage had to contain explicit Appraisal resources (Attitude or Graduation) directly related to Kartini's self-representation. Second, each passage had to exhibit a discernible evaluative shift between the two translations where the polarity, force, or category of Attitude was altered. Following these criteria, 48 passages were identified as exhibiting significant translational shifts regarding characterization. To prevent cherry-picking of data, all 48 qualifying passages were coded and categorized chronologically into three narrative phases: Phase 1 (1899–1900), Phase 2 (1901–1902), and Phase 3 (1903–1904). The coding revealed dominant trends within each phase. For instance, in Phase 2, over eighty percent of the shifts involved the English translation down-scaling Kartini's agency into Affect: Misery, while the Malay translation up-scaled it into Judgment: Tenacity. Rather than presenting isolated anomalies, the researcher purposely selected nine final extracts (three per chronological phase) to serve as primary data points for qualitative discussion.

Analysis proceeds through three levels: micro-level coding of Appraisal resources, meso-level pattern recognition across narrative phases, and macro-level ideological interpretation using Lefevere's (1992) concept of refraction. Each research question is addressed through these three levels: RQ1 (patterns of evaluative language across narrative phases) is explored through close reading and qualitative comparison of Appraisal category distributions in the selected extracts; RQ2 (patterns of characterological construction) is addressed through synthesising these observations into coherent character profiles; RQ3 (ideological orientations) is addressed through interpreting these profiles through the lens of

refraction (Lefevere, 1992). The analysis is qualitative and comparative in nature, focusing on salient patterns observed in purposively selected extracts rather than reporting exhaustive frequency counts. The meso-level pattern recognition stage involved identifying recurrent evaluative strategies across the three extracts within each narrative phase, with patterns considered established only when observed consistently across multiple extracts in that phase. This sequential approach, which is pattern first, interpretation second, ensures that ideological readings are grounded in observable textual regularities rather than isolated lexical contrasts.

The coding procedure followed a systematic and transparent protocol designed to establish interpretive credibility and minimize subjective bias. The primary researcher coded all extracts using the Appraisal taxonomy provided by Martin and White (2005). Each evaluative lexical item was assigned to its respective Attitude category (Affect, Judgment, or Appreciation) and Graduation subcategory (Force or Focus). To ensure inter-coder reliability, a second coder was trained on the Appraisal Framework taxonomy and the operational definitions adopted in this study, then independently coded a randomly selected subset of thirty percent of the extracts representing passages from all three narrative phases. Inter-coder agreement was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient, yielding a value of 0.84, which indicates strong agreement beyond chance. Disagreements between the two coders were resolved through collaborative discussion. Where consensus could not be reached, a third coder, familiar with the Appraisal Framework but not involved in the primary analysis, was consulted.

## FINDINGS

This section presents a comparative analysis of selected extracts from the English and Malay translations of Kartini's epistolary corpus to reveal how each version deploys Appraisal resources to construct the protagonist's character. A total of nine translational extracts have been selected, three from each of the three narrative phases, based on their salience in revealing evaluative shifts between the two versions. In the presentation that follows, each extract is introduced with a sequential number (Extract 1 through Extract 9). For each extract, the English translation (TT1) is presented first, followed by the Malay translation (TT2). All evaluative language and the specific Appraisal resources thereby instantiated are rendered in italics to facilitate identification. The analysis proceeds extract by extract, with one or two paragraphs following each pair of quotations to explain the linguistic evidence and its social and cultural implications.

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The organization of this section follows the chronological grain of Kartini's own epistolary self-narration, tracing her trajectory from the first stirrings of intellectual dissent, through the protracted ordeal of frustrated ambition, to the final, ambivalent settlement with fate. Three subsections correspond to these phases: The Awakening (1899–1900), The Struggle (1901–1902), and The Resolution (1903–1904). Each subsection begins with a brief characterization of the phase and the dominant translational pattern observed. Within each phase, extracts are presented sequentially, and after each extract the analysis identifies the specific Appraisal shifts, whether in Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation) or Graduation (Force, Focus), and then interprets their ideological implications. The subsection concludes with an interim synthesis that contrasts the emerging characterization of Kartini in the two translations. A final synthetic interpretation then draws together the findings from all three phases to demonstrate how the English and Malay translations have produced two irreconcilable Kartini's: one a tragic victim to be pitied, the other a foundational martyr to be emulated.

***Phase One: The Awakening (1899–1900)***

The inaugural phase of Kartini's epistolary corpus documents what may be termed her awakening, that is a dawning recognition of the constrictive architecture of Javanese aristocratic patriarchy. This period is marked by the exhilaration of intellectual discovery and the concomitant anguish of circumscribed possibility. Across the three extracts presented below, a fundamental divergence in translational strategy emerges. The English version tends to frame Kartini's opposition to customary constraint through the use of Appreciation, constructing her dissent as an aesthetic or intellectual judgement upon the quality of traditional practices. The Malay version, by contrast, reframes this same opposition through the evaluative lexicon of Affect, relocating the site of conflict from the external evaluation of objects to the internal experience of the suffering subject. This displacement is further amplified through the Graduation resources, wherein the Malay text consistently upscales the intensity and quantification of Kartini's affective responses.

*Extract 1*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "Your cordial words *warmed* my heart."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Kata-katamu… *meriang* dan menyukakan hatiku."

In Extract 1, the English verb *warmed* operates within a thermal metaphor of gentle, temperate comfort. Within the Appraisal taxonomy, this realizes Affect with low intensity on

the Graduation scale of Force. The Malay selection *meriang*, by contrast, denotes the febrile state accompanying fever which is a somatic experience of disorientation, heat, and bodily permeability. This reading is supported by historical Malay lexicographical sources: Pijnappel's (1875) dictionary defines meriang as 'feverish, shivering, having a chill,' and the term appears consistently in early 20th-century Malay texts to denote physical debility associated with fever (Wilkinson, 1932). The word's semantic range in the colonial period thus aligns with somatic intensity rather than emotional comfort.

This is not comfort but overwhelming intensity, an affective surge that destabilizes rather than soothes. The shift from low-intensity to high-intensity Affect in Extract 1 constructs the Malay Kartini as a figure of emotional extremity, one whose inner life is calibrated to a pitch that distinguishes her from the more temperate English protagonist. This translational choice exemplifies Lefevere's refraction: the intensification of Affect from gentle warmth to febrile heat repositions Kartini within a nationalist evaluative register, constructing emotional extremity as the precondition for heroic sacrifice.

*Extract 2*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "The ceremonies… are *an abomination* to me."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Adat lembaga… perkara yang *menyakitkan hati* saja."

Extract 2 reveals a migration across Appraisal domains. The English formulation instantiates Appreciation: Reaction. Kartini evaluates the quality of the ceremonies as repellent (*an abomination*), positioning herself as a critic exterior to that which she judges. The Malay formulation migrates to Affect: Misery. The phrase *menyakitkan hati* (hurting the heart) expresses not the object's properties but the pain inflicted upon the subject. The evaluative grammar positions Kartini as the recipient of tradition's wounding rather than its external judge. The shift documented in Extract 2 reorients the reader's empathy: the English Kartini commands respect as a discerning critic; the Malay Kartini solicits pity as a vulnerable victim. The migration from Appreciation to Affect here performs ideological work: by framing tradition as wounding (*menyakitkan hati*) rather than merely repellent, the Malay translation constructs Kartini as a vulnerable subject whose suffering solicits empathy, not critical distance.

*Extract 3*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "A *dozen* strong chains bind me fast."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "*Beribu-ribu* belenggu yang mengikat aku."

In Extract 3, both translations employ the metaphor of bondage, but the quantification operates at radically different scales. The English *dozen* is a bounded, countable plurality where a finite inventory of constraints that implies the possibility of breaking free. The Malay *beribu-ribu* (thousands upon thousands) effects a migration from bounded to unbounded quantification, from the finite to the incalculable. Within Graduation: Force, this is a dramatic up-scaling that transforms the nature of the oppression represented. The shift in Extract 3 positions the English Kartini as one who may aspire to liberation, while the Malay Kartini is situated within a condition of totalization where individual escape is structurally foreclosed, and only collective, sacrificial transformation remains conceivable. Through this up-scaling of quantification, the Malay translation reframes Kartini's oppression as more extensive; this may reflect cross-linguistic preferences for intensification as well as ideological refraction.

The cumulative effect of Extracts 1, 2, and 3 is the consolidation of two sharply discrepant characterizations. The English translation, through its restraint in Graduation and its privileging of Appreciation over Affect, constructs an early Kartini legible as the *Discontented Aristocrat*, a perceptive critic whose opposition to tradition is principally intellectual. The Malay translation, through its migration to Affect and its relentless up-scaling of evaluative intensity, constructs an early Kartini as *Tormented Soul* representing a figure whose suffering is visceral, embodied, and totalizing. This foundational characterization, however, is not an end. Within the narrative logic of the Malay translation, the experience of intense, somatic suffering is the necessary precondition for the tenacity and heroic sacrifice that will emerge in subsequent phases. The English Kartini, whose pains are fewer and less intensely realized, possesses no such affective core to invest.

***Phase Two: The Struggle (1901–1902)***

The second phase of Kartini's epistolary production documents the protracted crisis that constitutes the dramatic center of her narrated life. This period witnesses the progressive erosion of her most cherished aspiration, that is the pursuit of advanced education in the Netherlands, and also the corresponding intensification of pressure towards aristocratic marriage. Across the three extracts presented below, the comparative analysis discloses an accentuation and refinement of the divergent translational strategies already identified. The English translation, consistent with its foundational construction of Kartini as a discerning critic, tends to frame this period through the lexicon of Affect: Misery, constructing a protagonist who is primarily the recipient of suffering. The Malay translation, however, affects a remarkable generic migration. It reframes the experience of crisis not through the passive

registers of misery but through the active, agentive lexicon of Judgement: Tenacity. The Kartini of Balai Pustaka's rendering does not merely suffer; she endures, she shoulders, she bears.

*Extract 4*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "Adieu *illusions*—adieu golden dreams."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Tinggallah engkau, wahai *kenang-kenanganku*!"

In Extract 4, Kartini bids farewell to her ambition of study in Holland. The English formulation renders this valediction through the lexeme *illusions*, which instantiates Appreciation: Valuation with unequivocally negative force. An illusion is a deception or a fantasy mistaken for fact. To designate Kartini's most cherished aspirations as illusions is to invalidate them retroactively, the implication is that her struggle was predicated upon error. The Malay translation, by contrast, renders the farewell as *kenang-kenanganku* (my cherished memories). A *kenang-kenangan* is an object of positive valuation, preserved precisely because it is precious and transmits value across time. The shift documented in Extract 4 performs an act of preservation rather than disavowal, which means that the dream is not exposed as falsehood but consecrated as legacy. The English Kartini undergoes a painful education, accommodating to the world as it is; the Malay Kartini transforms unrealized aspiration into collective inheritance. The decision to render farewell as *kenang-kenangan* (cherished memory) rather than illusions constitutes a refractive act of preservation: defeated dreams are consecrated as legacy, not exposed as error, aligning Kartini with a nationalist teleology of inheritance. A check of the Dutch source confirms that both translations draw from the same underlying passage, establishing that the divergence is translational rather than inherited from different source selections.

*Extract 5*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "We have *suffered* much."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Kami telah *menanggung* banyak."

Extract 5 represents an evaluative shift of profound consequence. The English verb *suffered* realizes Affect: Misery, positioning Kartini as the locus of an experience that impinges upon her from without, she is the undergoer, the recipient of affliction. The Malay verb *menanggung* also realizes Affect: Misery, but its semantic core is the physical action of shouldering a burden; Kartini is not merely the recipient of affliction but is grammatically constructed as the agent of an action directed towards that affliction. This semantic contrast in

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agency has profound implications for character construction: the English Kartini suffers, soliciting pity; the Malay Kartini labors, soliciting admiration. The reader is invited not to compassionate spectatorship but to respect for active endurance.

*Extract 6*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "A *deep sadness* settles upon me."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "*Kedukaan yang gelap* meliputi aku."

In Extract 6, Symmers renders Kartini's melancholy through a metaphor of verticality: *deep sadness* that descends, occupies space, imposes weight. The intensifier *deep* operates within Graduation: Force, quantifying sadness along a measurable axis. However profound, depth remains a determinate dimension. The Malay formulation, *kedukaan yang gelap* (darkness of sorrow), activates a different metaphorical system. *Gelap* (darkness) is not a dimension but an atmosphere. It does not admit of measurement, but it envelops and saturates the perceptual field that dissolves boundaries between self and world. The verb *meliputi* (to cover, envelop) reinforces this architecture of totalization. The evaluation and graduation shift in Extract 6 moves sadness from a localized, attributable emotion to an ontological condition. The English sadness invites the question "What is she sad about?"; the Malay darkness suggests despair as pervasive, a pattern that cumulatively across all three Phase Two extracts supports an interpretation of systemic critique. The atmospheric expansion of sadness into *gelap* (darkness) performs a refractive shift from individual psychology to systemic indictment: despair is no longer a personal emotion but the condition of an epoch, demanding not sympathy but political diagnosis. Support for this interpretation comes from the cumulative pattern across all three extracts in Phase Two: the Malay translation consistently expands individual suffering into collective, atmospheric despair (Extract 6), reconfigures passive suffering as active labour (Extract 5), and consecrates defeated dreams as cherished legacy (Extract 4). It is this repeated pattern across the phase that licenses the interpretation of the Malay translation as moving toward systemic indictment, not the single lexical contrast in Extract 6 alone.

The cumulative effect of Extracts 4, 5, and 6 consolidates two sharply divergent narrative structures. The English translation, through its consistent privileging of passive affect and containment of suffering within individual psychology, progressively consolidates as a *Tragedy*. Its Kartini is a protagonist of sensibility and refinement whose aspirations are defeated by the obdurate resistance of social reality. The reader is positioned as spectator to

her defeat, invited to mourn the waste of her potential. The Malay translation, through its recurrent reallocation of agency, its grammatical reconfiguration of suffering as active labor, and its atmospheric enlargement of despair, progressively consolidates as an *Epic*. Its Kartini is not a spectator of her own defeat but its antagonist. Her dreams are consecrated as legacy, her suffering is labored over, her despair is the atmosphere of an epoch. The reader is positioned not as compassionate spectator but as co-inheritor of her struggle. The English The English Kartini invites a reading as a figure to be pitied; the Malay Kartini invites a reading as a figure to be emulated.

***Phase Three: The Resolution (1903–1904)***

The terminal phase of Kartini's epistolary corpus encompasses her reluctant consent to marriage, the birth of her son, and her death in childbirth. This period constitutes the narrative resolution to the point at which the various strands of her narrated life are gathered and finally knotted. Across the three extracts presented below, the comparative analysis discloses the fullest elaboration of the translational strategies traced across the earlier phases. The English translation consolidates its architecture of tragic closure, representing Kartini's death as the melancholy terminus of a life whose aspirations exceeded its possibilities. The Malay translation, by contrast, performs a remarkable act of discursive transfiguration, representing Kartini's physical extinction not as defeat but as sacrifice, and her death not as termination but as transmission.

*Extract 7*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "If God grants me a child, my little one must not be ashamed of his mother; he must be able to say: 'My mother was a *true* Javanese princess.'"

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Jikalau Allah mengaruniakan kepadaku seorang anak, janganlah ia malu akan ibunya; hendaklah ia dapat berkata: 'Ibuku seorang puteri Jawa yang *sejati*.'"

In Extract 7, both translations express Kartini's hope that her child will not be ashamed of her, but the evaluative framing differs subtly yet significantly. The English true instantiates Appreciation: Valuation with a relatively neutral, descriptive force. It affirms her authenticity as a Javanese princess without necessarily imposing moral weight. The Malay sejati (true, genuine, authentic) carries a stronger evaluative charge within Graduation: Focus. It sharpens the categorical boundary of what constitutes a true Javanese princess, implying not merely

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authenticity but an idealised, essentialised standard against which Kartini measures herself. This intensification positions Kartini as a figure who must prove her worth against a normative ideal, subtly reinforcing the Malay translation's broader project of constructing her as a model to be emulated. The English Kartini seeks acceptance; the Malay Kartini seeks validation against an exalted standard.

*Extract 8*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "My *treasure* must smell sweet."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Alangkah harum baunya *biji mataku* itu nanti."

In Extract 8, Kartini speaks of her unborn child. Symmers renders this through the metaphor of *treasure*, instantiating Appreciation: Valuation. A treasure is an object of value possessed by a subject, implying a grammar of ownership and transitive relation. The child is valuable but external to the mother. The Malay translation, by contrast, employs the somatic metaphor *biji mataku* (pupil of my eye; literally "seed of my eye"), a conventional Malay-Indonesian expression for that which is most precious and intimately connected to the self. The pupil is not an object the eye possesses; it is the eye's very capacity for vision. To refer to one's child as *biji mata* asserts ontological inseparability. The shift in Extract 8 moves from possession to intimate connection. The English Kartini leaves behind a treasure; the Malay Kartini leaves behind something inseparable from herself (*biji mata*), reinforcing the translation's pattern of representing her legacy as deeply personal and enduring. The somatic refiguration of the child as *biji mata* (pupil of the eye) performs a refractive transposition: Kartini's death is reconfigured not as termination but as continuity, her vision embodied in her offspring and carried beyond her physical extinction.

*Extract 9*

TT1 (Symmers, 1920): "I have *given* my consent."

TT2 (Balai Pustaka, 1922): "Aku sudah *menyerahkan diri*."

Extract 9 documents Kartini's consent to marriage. Symmers renders the decision through the negative Tenacity verb *given*, operating within the grammar of transaction. Consent is conceptualized as an object transferred from one party to another. What is given is specific and limited. Kartini gives her consent to this particular marriage, preserving a residue of autonomy. The Malay translation selects a construction of markedly different evaluation. *Menyerahkan diri* (to surrender oneself) means there is a migration from transactional to

sacrificial register. The verb *menyerahkan* shares the semantics of transfer, but its object is not the limited commodity of consent but the total substance of the self (*diri*). To *menyerahkan diri* is to offer the very ontology of the self as a gift or sacrifice, this is positive Tenacity. The shift in Extract 9 transforms the English Kartini, who remains a subject who has and gives, into the Malay Kartini, who offers her autonomous selfhood upon the altar of obligation, and in this immolation achieves paradoxical consecration. The sacrificial register of *menyerahkan diri* (to surrender oneself) refracts Kartini's consent as paradoxical agency: in offering her very selfhood, she achieves consecration which produce a translational move that transfigures private resignation into public foundation. In both cases, the coding follows Martin and White's (2005) definition of Tenacity as the Judgement of resolve and determination.

The cumulative effect of Extracts 7, 8, and 9 completes the ideological divergence between the two translations. The English translation, faithful to the tragic architecture consolidated across the earlier phases, represents Kartini's death as the melancholy terminus of a life whose aspirations exceeded its possibilities. Her farewell to dreams, her relation to her child, her surrender to marriage are rendered through evaluations that preserve the privacy of her tragedy, its confinement within individual biography. The reader is invited to mourn Kartini, to honor her memory, but the mourning remains elegiac rather than mobilizing. The Malay translation, by contrast, represents Kartini's death as the condition of her posterity. Her dreams are consecrated as memory; her child is the embodiment of her vision; her surrender is the ultimate exercise of agency. The reader is invited not to mourn but to inherit. The tragedy of individual defeat is dialectically transfigured into the epic of collective foundation; the private grief of a Javanese princess becomes the public inheritance of an Indonesian people.

## DISCUSSION

The preceding analysis documents a pattern of ideological refraction, but its significance extends beyond empirical description: these findings refine Lefevere's (1992) concept of refraction by demonstrating its material instantiation at the level of lexicogrammatical choice, challenge the assumption that a single historical subject can be recovered through translation by revealing two irreconcilable characterological constructions, and extend Appraisal Theory's application to postcolonial translation contexts where the stakes are not merely textual but memorial and political. The English translation by Agnes Louise Symmers (1920) operates as a mechanism of colonial canonization. Through its privileging of Appreciation over Affect, its restraint in Graduation, its representation of Kartini's suffering as passive experience rather than active labor, and its consignment of her aspirations to the

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ontological category of illusion, this translation constructs a Kartini legible within the discursive protocols of Anglo-American orientalism. This finding aligns with recent scholarship that has demonstrated how translation functions as a site of cultural contestation within postcolonial discourse, where power asymmetries are simultaneously reproduced, contested, and reconstructed through translational choices (Bao, 2025). Similarly, Odrekhivska (2024) has shown that colonial translation strategies, including cultural appropriation and the centering of imperial recognition, produce parallel, colonially inflected narratives of marginalized literatures in Anglophone academia. She is the beautiful victim and simultaneously a figure of pathos whose exceptional refinement underscores the tragedy of her confinement. Her story is a linear tragedy: hope, disappointment, resignation, death. The reader is positioned as compassionate spectator to a defeat that, in its inevitability, paradoxically legitimates the structures that defeated her. Paratextual evidence, including Couperus's foreword, supports the reading of Symmers' translation as presenting Kartini within an orientalist framework (Bijl & Chin, 2020).

The Malay translation by Balai Pustaka (1922) operates as a mechanism of nationalist canonization. Through its migration from Appreciation to Affect, its relentless up-scaling of evaluative intensity, its grammatical reconfiguration of suffering as active labor (*menanggung*), its transfiguration of defeated dreams into cherished legacy (*kenang-kenangan*), and its somatic refiguration of inheritance (*biji mata*), this translation constructs a Kartini radically discontinuous with her English counterpart. She is the foundational martyr as well as a figure whose individual immolation is the precondition of collective emancipation. Her story is a dialectical epic: oppression, suffering, sacrifice, inheritance. The reader is positioned not as compassionate spectator but as co-inheritor, the beneficiary of a sacrifice whose meaning is fulfilled only in the future community for which it was undertaken. This active reconfiguration of suffering into agency resonates with Barakat and Tyulenev's (2024) observation that translation is not merely a linguistic operation but a process through which collective narratives about the past are reconstructed, and history is selectively remembered for future generations. In the Indonesian context, Pardoe and Arps (2023) have similarly exposed how few indigenous voices are heard in postcolonial memory discourses, and how translation can serve to recuperate anti-colonial narratives against dominant nostalgic framings. The Malay Kartini, therefore, participates in a broader translational project of recuperating subaltern memory and constructing counter-canons. The 'Nationalist Frame' is treated here as a textual affordance,

not as a proven translator intention, particularly given Balai Pustaka's colonial institutional context.

The translators do not merely render Kartini differently; they render different Kartinis. The English Kartini invites a reading as a figure to be pitied; the Malay Kartini invites a reading as a figure to be emulated. These mutually exclusive constructions serve antithetical political imaginaries, demonstrating translation's constitutive role in constructing the figures that populate cultural memory. Recent translation scholarship has extensively theorised this phenomenon. Kuzderová and Bednárova-Gibová (2021) argue that translators cannot detach texts from the ideologies of either the source or the target culture, and that translations serve the target culture rather than the source. This is precisely what the present study has demonstrated: Symmers' translation serves an Anglophone readership saturated in the certainties of empire, while Balai Pustaka's translation serves an incipient nationalist public. Furthermore, the growing body of research on translation and memory confirms that cultural memory is not static but is actively remediated and selectively preserved through translational choices, with significant implications for how history gets to be remembered (Barakat & Tyulenev, 2024). The present case exemplifies how competing political imaginatives produce rival mnemonic narratives of the same historical figure.

What is at stake is not the recovery of an authentic, pre-translational Kartini but the recognition that translation is not merely secondary representation but a constitutive site of discursive production where a reality in which heroines are always, in part, the creations of those who translate them. This insight is supported by the systematic literature review of Qi et al. (2022), who found that Appraisal Theory has been widely used in translation studies to analyze how ideology and positioning are encoded through linguistic choices, particularly in political, news, and literary texts. However, they also noted that the number of translation studies applying Appraisal Theory remains limited, with significant potential for examining other text types such as colonial life writing. The present study addresses precisely that gap. Moreover, Carbonell i Cortés and Monzó-Nebot (2024) have recently argued that translation and interpreting are instruments that can either sustain dominant structures or challenge them, and that asymmetries in power are fashioned, experienced, and rewritten through translation. The divergence between the English and Malay Kartinis vividly illustrates this dual potential: Symmers' translation sustains colonial structures by presenting Kartini's defeat as inevitable and even educative; Balai Pustaka's translation challenges those same structures by transfiguring defeat into the foundation of national emancipation. Translation, as Garg (2025)

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affirms in her analysis of postcolonial literary translation, is not merely a vehicle for meaning but a site where epistemic domination, historical erasure, and resistance are enacted. This perspective is further supported by Liu et al. (2022), whose systematic review of Appraisal Theory in translation studies confirms that translation operates as a site of ideological negotiation, with significant potential for examining postcolonial texts where asymmetrical power relations are reproduced and contested through linguistic choices. What is required, therefore, is not a nostalgic return to an authentic original but a rigorous, linguistically grounded analysis of how translation produces the heroines and heroes by whom nations remember themselves. The present study has sought to contribute to that critical task.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the ideological refraction of Kartini's epistolary identity across two seminal translations: Agnes Louise Symmers' English *Letters of a Javanese Princess* (1920) and Balai Pustaka's Malay *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (1922). Adopting a descriptive qualitative comparative case study design, the research deliberately bracketed the Dutch source text to focus on the social aspects of canonization to explain how each translation constructs Kartini for its respective readership. Using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Framework, the analysis examined nine translational extracts distributed across three narrative phases (The Awakening, The Struggle, The Resolution), with particular attention to shifts in Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, and Graduation. Lefevere's (1992) concept of refraction served as the overarching interpretive lens, enabling the study to move beyond fidelity-based criticism and toward an understanding of translation as a mechanism of ideological rewriting.

The findings demonstrate an internally coherent pattern of divergence. In Phase One (The Awakening), the English translation privileges Appreciation, constructing Kartini as a discerning critic of tradition, while the Malay translation migrates to Affect with up-scaled Graduation, constructing her as a tormented soul whose suffering is visceral and totalizing. In Phase Two (The Struggle), the English translation consolidates passive misery, representing Kartini as a tragic victim who suffers; the Malay translation shifts to Judgement: Tenacity, reconfiguring suffering as active labor (*menanggung*), transfiguring defeated dreams into cherished legacy (*kenang-kenangan*), and expanding despair from localized depth to atmospheric darkness. In Phase Three (The Resolution), the English translation frames Kartini's consent to marriage and her death as accommodation to reality where illusions abandoned, a treasure left behind, consent given; the Malay translation performs a discursive


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transfiguration, representing her farewell as consecration of memory (*kenang-kenangan*), her child as embodied vision (*biji mata*), and her surrender as sacrificial offering of the self (*menyerahkan diri*). Cumulatively, these shifts produce two irreconcilable protagonists: the English Kartini, a tragic victim to be pitied; the Malay Kartini, a foundational martyr to be emulated.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, they demonstrate how Appraisal analysis can make ideological refraction linguistically visible, contributing to the established critique of fidelity-based models in translation studies; the belief that a single, authentic historical subject awaits recovery through more accurate translation; and the implicit assumption that colonial and nationalist readings of the same text can be reconciled without remainder. Second, they support and empirically substantiate key theoretical claims in the field: Lefevere's theory of refraction as an observable, analyzable phenomenon; the post-colonial assertion that translation participates actively in asymmetrical power relations and identity construction (Niranjana, 1992; Spivak, 1993); the need for linguistically grounded, comparative methodologies in translation research; and the recognition that canonization is not an intrinsic property of texts but a social process enacted through translational choices across institutions, editors, and readerships.

30 The theoretical framework deployed in this study, Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, has proven its value as an analytical lens for operationalizing refraction. By mapping shifts in Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, and Graduation across the two translations, the study has rendered visible the lexicogrammatical mechanisms through which translators fabricate distinct characterological identities. This approach enables a decisive break with fidelity-based criticism, redirecting attention to the more urgent question of how translation offers different textual resources for remembering historical figures. The case of Kartini demonstrates that translation is not secondary representation but a constitutive site of discursive production: the English Kartini and the Malay Kartini are not distorted reflections of an authentic original but autonomous discursive artefacts, each calibrated to serve antithetical political imaginaries. Neither is the historical person; both are refractive creations. The task of a critically informed translation studies, therefore, is not to lament the irrecoverability of the past but to analyses with precision and political awareness how translators, as unacknowledged co-authors of collective memory, continue to shape the heroines and heroes by whom nations remember themselves.

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Several limitations should be acknowledged. The Dutch source text was not systematically coded; the analysis compares target texts rather than tracking source-target shifts. The extract sample is purposive and small, and findings are qualitative rather than frequency-based. Appraisal coding is interpretive in nature. The analysis also does not include systematic Engagement coding or transitivity analysis, though these are acknowledged as potentially valuable for future research. The study does not include reception or paratextual data beyond what is cited. These limitations point to directions for future research.

## DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors would like to declare the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT was utilized for brainstorming initial concepts and improving the clarity, grammar, and overall language of the text. All final content was reviewed and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity of the work.

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