



Women's Resistance in Serat Candrarini through a Jacques Derrida Deconstructive Reading

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Abstract

Serat Candrarini (SCR), a 19th-century Javanese didactic text by R. Ng. Ranggawarsita commissioned by Pakubuwana IX, is conventionally read as a manual of wifely obedience within the palace polygamous household. Previous deconstructive work on SCR (Iryani & Suryaman, 2025) remained confined to the aspect of binary opposition. This study extends that reading by applying five aspects of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction; binary opposition, *différance*, trace, supplement, and undecidability to the five *pupuh* of SCR (Sinom, Dhandhanggula, Asmarandana, Mijil, and Kinanthi), addressing two questions: (1) how the five deconstructive aspects manifest in the *macapat* verses of SCR; and (2) what forms of women's resistance such a reading reveals. Employing a qualitative-deconstructive approach to the digital manuscript of SCR held by the Perpustakaan Rekso Pustaka, Pura Mangkunegaran, data were gathered through document study and close reading, then analysed following the data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). The findings show the five aspects to be interlinked: the seemingly hierarchical and stable binary opposition depends on the subordinated element as its supplement; this dependence leaves a trace that displaces meaning through *différance*, culminating in undecidability. From these fissures of meaning emerge four forms of women's resistance: passive, symbolic, discursive, and cultural. Women's compliance in SCR is therefore not always identical with submission; it can be read as strategy a negotiation conducted from within the patriarchal structure. These findings enrich the study of wulang literature and the deconstruction of Nusantara literature while offering material for critical-deconstructive literacy in classical Javanese literature pedagogy.

Keywords: Serat Candrarini, Deconstruction, Women's Resistance, Jacques Derrida, Compliance as Strategy

Introduction

Classical Javanese literature, particularly *piwulang*, plays a dual role: on the one hand it represents the noble values of Javanese culture, on the other it perpetuates patriarchal values deeply rooted in Javanese society (Fitriana, 2019; Hastuti et al., 2024; Ismawati et al., 2022). Within this social system, men are positioned as heads of households and primary decision-makers, while women are directed toward the domestic sphere and required to be gentle, obedient, and unobtrusive (Hastuti et al., 2024; Ismawati et al., 2022) consistent with the general definition of patriarchy as a system that privileges men through domination, identification, and

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the concentration of authority (Johnson, 2005; Walby, 1989). Classical literary works of this kind are not only of aesthetic value but also function as ideological artefacts continually referenced in contemporary cultural and gender discourses; critical readings of them are therefore essential if the noble values they contain are to be preserved without perpetuating gender inequality.

Serat Candrarini (SCR), a *piwulang* text written by the palace poet R. Ng. Ranggawarsita at the behest of Pakubuwana IX in the Kasunanan Surakarta in 1863 to guide women within the palace polygamous household (Faidah, 2023; Florida, 1993; Ranggawarsita, 1863) has been examined from various perspectives. Pikatan (2012) concluded that SCR positions women as obedient, patient, and faithful figures for the sake of preserving family integrity, while Wahjono (2004) maintained that such values are increasingly questionable in their relevance to modern gender equality. A similar pattern is found in contemporaneous *piwulang* texts: Serat Wulang Putri has been studied as a political instrument consolidating the stability of power through women's domestic morality Nugroho et al (2024), while Fitriana (2019) demonstrated a comparable representation of ideal womanhood in that text. The doctrine of wifely devotion and obedience in wulang literature has been systematically documented by Anggraeni and Suyanto (2017) whereas Fadilah et al (2021) deconstructed the discourse of Javanese womanhood according to Serat Wulang Putri showing that deconstructive readings of wulang putri texts already possess relevant precedent. From the standpoint of agency, Mahmudin (2021) proved that even a patriarchal wulang text can be read as a space for women's self-actualisation within the family. Applications of Derridean deconstruction to other Nusantara literatures have likewise yielded promising results: Rohmatin (2019) uncovered women's mutedness in Hikayat Darma Tasiyah, Neisyah (2017) showed how deconstruction can reverse the position of priyayi Javanese women from subordinate to empowered in the novel Canting, and Winarti and Erlinawati (2025) demonstrated the productivity of deconstructive readings of contemporary Indonesian short stories.

More specifically regarding SCR, Iryani and Suryaman (2025) found that the gender ideology of this text operates through a rigid structure of binary opposition; rational/emotional, active/passive, high/low that systematically consolidates women's subordinate position. That study, however, addressed only one aspect of deconstruction, namely binary opposition, while the four remaining aspects *différance*, trace, supplement, and undecidability have yet to be applied to SCR in an integrated manner. More importantly, the possibility of a counter-reading within SCR that is, the forms of women's resistance hidden behind the teachings of obedience has not been systematically formulated as a research focus. Yet that article itself noted that the text preserves "small spaces" allowing critical readings of patriarchal values (Iryani & Suryaman, 2025). It is this gap that the present study addresses: following the deconstructive reading of binary opposition, the next step is to trace how Derrida's five aspects of deconstruction operate comprehensively and the central focus of this article on how the resulting fissures of meaning open space for women's resistance.

Against this gap, the present study aims to re-read SCR deconstructively by applying Derrida's five aspects of deconstruction: binary opposition, *différance*, trace, supplement, and undecidability, comprehensively to the five principal *pupuh* of the text, namely Sinom, Dhandhanggula, Asmarandana, Mijil, and Kinanthi. Specifically, the study answers two research questions: (1) how do Jacques Derrida's aspects of deconstruction manifest in the *macapat* verses of SCR? and (2) what forms of women's resistance are revealed through such a deconstructive reading?

This study offers several contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the study of wulang literature and the deconstruction of Nusantara literature by showing that classical ethical-didactic texts harbour a structural complexity that permits resistance readings without discarding still-relevant cultural values. Practically, the findings can serve educators and curriculum developers as a reference for transforming the teaching of classical Javanese literature from a merely technical reading of *macapat* metre toward critical-deconstructive literacy, while also serving other researchers seeking to examine *piwulang* texts or other classical Nusantara literatures through a deconstructive approach.

Theoretical Framework

This study rests on two complementary frameworks: Jacques Derrida's deconstruction as the instrument for reading the text (Martínez Aguilar et al., 2025), and resistance theory as the lens for formulating the findings of that reading (Hidayat et al., 2025).

Derrida introduced deconstruction as a method of reading that rejects the assumption that a text possesses a single (Saikhudin & Dewi, 2026; Sherma, 2026), stable meaning, targeting in particular the hierarchical binary oppositions such as speech/writing and presence/absence of Western metaphysics of presence (Culler, 1997; Derrida, 1974). In this study, that critique is positioned parallel to the man/woman opposition in Javanese *piwulang* texts. Five analytical constructs are derived from this framework as the foci of the reading, as elaborated below.

The five constructs are: (1) binary opposition, a pair of concepts arranged hierarchically with one pole privileged over the other; such oppositions are never stable, for the privileged pole defines itself precisely through what it rejects (Aprilia & Arianto, 2021; Mousavilar & Pourmahmoud, 2021); (2) *différance*, the movement of meaning-formation that always involves both differing and deferring, so that meaning is never fully final (Evink, 2020); (3) trace, the implicit presence within a sign of another meaning one absent or suppressed—which allows the dominant meaning to be questioned (Goldgaber, 2020; Rubenstein, 2014); (4) supplement, that which is rhetorically positioned as an addition to a centre presumed whole, yet reveals that the centre was never self-sufficient and requires the supplement to cover its own lack (Butt & Ghauri, 2022; Derrida, 1974); and (5) undecidability, the condition in which a sign accommodates mutually contradictory meanings without their being resolvable into a single final meaning (Deer, 2020).

The choice of Derridean deconstruction is grounded in its fit with the characteristics of SCR as a *piwulang* text explicitly built upon the hierarchical man/woman opposition, while abounding in symbolic and metaphorical diction with the potential to harbour layered meanings (Iryani & Suryaman, 2025). Conventional literary sociology or gender-studies approaches tend to read such texts unidirectionally merely as representations of dominant ideology thereby risking the neglect of internal fissures and contradictions that are precisely the entry points for resistance readings (Holmes, 2021). Deconstruction is chosen because it is methodologically designed to trace such contradictions and ambiguities: not to abolish binary opposition, but to show that the opposition was never truly stable and that the subordinated element here, women always retains the potential to displace the hierarchy pressing upon it, as has been demonstrated in its applications to other Nusantara literatures (Neisya, 2017; Rohmatin, 2019; Winarti & Erlinawati, 2025). Precedent for applying Derridean deconstruction to Indonesian literature is increasingly established: Kurniasih (2024) applied Derrida's binary opposition to the novel *Carita Calin*, Nugraha et al (2020) operationalised binary opposition, logocentrism, and *différance* in Eka Kurniawan's novel *O*, Hasanah and Adawiyah (2021) deconstructed the concept of womanhood across eras, and Waqiah et al (2026) explicitly employed *différance* and trace in a Derridean poststructuralist analysis.

In patriarchal societies, women's resistance does not always appear as open rejection or frontal movements against the dominant system (Patel et al., 2023). In *Weapons of the Weak*, James C. Scott showed that subordinate groups frequently resort instead to hidden, quiet, everyday forms of struggle: silence, feigned compliance, delaying the execution of orders, or bending the meaning of dominant teachings which he termed everyday resistance and hidden transcripts (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Scott, 1985). Scott's framework has been formulated methodologically for the study of literary representation (Zulfikar et al., 2024). Such strategies arise not because women lack agency, but because repressive social situations do not always permit explicit resistance.

This study formulates the findings of the deconstructive reading into four forms of resistance. First, passive resistance: struggle conducted quietly and indirectly, for instance through silence, particular emotional expressions, or the use of symbolic language as a strategy for survival and for negotiating spaces of agency within constraint. Second, symbolic resistance: struggle through cultural expression, gesture, and language that appear trivial yet unsettle dominant norms; within Judith Butler (2006) framework of gender performativity, the repetition of seemingly compliant acts that deviate from the norm can constitute effective subversion. Third,

discursive resistance: struggle emerging subtly and implicitly within discourse through semantic ambiguity, the deferral of meaning, or the quiet inversion of assigned roles for since power operates through discursive practices, resistance too must be read within the same frame (Foucault, 2013; Nartey, 2024). Fourth, cultural resistance: the use of norms, symbols, and cultural practices such as the image of the “*wadon becik*” or mastery over moral narrative as strategies for renegotiating dominant norms and creating alternative moral legitimacy.

The meeting point of the two frameworks is formulated in the concept of “compliance as strategy”. Barragan et al (2018) termed it strategic (dis)obedience: compliance arranged as a tactic for changing the system from within. Ybema & Horvers (2017) demonstrated the strategic and subversive potential of resistance through compliance, while Cekaite (2020) described subversive compliance as outward obedience that corrodes the oppressive order precisely because it is performed with an awareness of the fissures it leaves behind. In the Javanese context, the concept of *nrima* does not always signify resignation, but rather a strategy for maintaining equilibrium within hierarchical relations (Ismawati et al., 2022; Kuswaya & Ma'mun, 2020), and contemporary Javanese women interpret traditional values not as subjugation but as inspiration for independence (Pramitasari & Widagdo, 2024). As Mahmood (2005) argued, agency does not always appear as resistance against norms; it can also be realised through the strategic inhabiting of norms, and it is this that the present article traces across each *pupuh* of SCR.

For consistency, several key concepts are defined operationally. *Piwulang* refers to Javanese ethical-didactic literature functioning to provide guidance on conduct, including women's conduct; SCR is understood as part of this tradition, containing teachings on women's lives within marital relations. Deconstruction is Derrida's (1976) method of reading for dismantling structures of meaning that appear fixed and stable, by exposing tensions and contradictions within the text. Resistance in this study refers to subtle strategies, passive, symbolic, discursive, and cultural, through which women negotiate their position inside, rather than outside, the text's patriarchal structure.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative design with the deconstructive analytical method developed by Jacques Derrida. The design was chosen because the study's aim is not to test causal relations or measure variables statistically, but to dismantle alternative meanings hidden behind the structure of a literary text, particularly those concerning patriarchal hierarchy, women's position, and the possibility of their resistance (Derrida, 1976). In practice, the design is realised through close reading of the five principal *pupuh* of SCR to identify textual elements bearing deconstructive aspects and forms of resistance, attending to patterns of language use in each *gatra* of the *macapat* verses.

Data Sources

The primary data of this study is the Serat Candrarini manuscript, selected because it contains representations of female ideality while leaving interpretive fissures not yet fully explored by previous research (Faidah, 2023; Pikatan, 2012; Wahjono, 2004). The manuscript consulted is drawn from the digital collection of the Perpustakaan Reksa Pustaka, Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta a Javanese cultural archive transliterated and translated by the palace philology team for research and classical-literature preservation purposes, thereby guaranteeing the authenticity of the analysed text. SCR comprises five *pupuh*: Sinom (8 *pada*), Dhandhanggula (5 *pada*), Asmarandana (5 *pada*), Mijil (5 *pada*), and Kinanthi (12 *pada*). Secondary data in the form of previous studies on SCR from gender and patriarchal perspectives, as well as literature on deconstruction, resistance, and Javanese literary studies, were used to strengthen the theoretical basis of the analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through document study employing close reading of the transliterated SCR. The research instrument was a data-collection sheet designed to identify and parse the text's

structure according to the five deconstructive aspects (binary opposition, *différance*, trace, supplement, undecidability) and the four forms of resistance (passive, symbolic, discursive, cultural), covering linguistic and dictional structure, symbols and metaphors, and narrative structure in each *gatra*. Data analysis followed the three-stage model of Miles et al. (2019) Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014): data condensation (selecting, filtering, simplifying, and transforming data into a content-analytic summary table (Krippendorff, 2022), containing the source text, translation, literal meaning, deconstructive aspect, and form of resistance for each unit of analysis), data display in matrix format organized by Derrida's categories of deconstruction, and conclusion drawing and verification by reviewing each interpretation against the master data table. Data validity was maintained through theoretical triangulation and the strategy of comparing literal meaning with the alternative meanings yielded by deconstructive reading for each textual citation. As a textual study of a classical literary manuscript involving no human subjects, this research required no ethics committee approval.

Accuracy and Trustworthiness

The accuracy of textual evidence was addressed by checking selected quotations and their interpretations against the consulted transliterated text and accompanying translation. The validity and trustworthiness of interpretations were supported through theoretical triangulation and systematic comparison between literal meanings and alternative meanings generated through deconstructive reading. Relevant interpretations were examined in relation to Derrida's analytical concepts and scholarship on Javanese literature, gender, and women's resistance. Interpretations were also reviewed against their textual context and the master data table to maintain consistency between the evidence and the analytical conclusions.

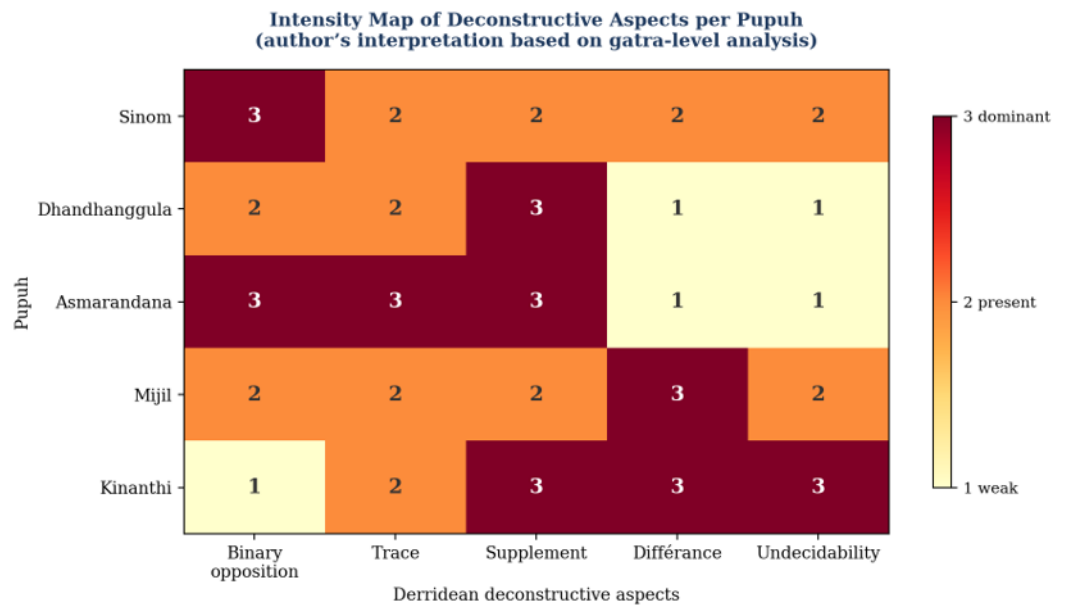
Ethical Considerations

As this study examines an existing classical literary manuscript and does not involve human participants or the collection of personal data, it did not require ethics committee approval, subject to the applicable institutional and journal requirements.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the deconstructive reading of the five *pupuh* of SCR. Before detailing the findings per *pupuh*, one methodological principle must be stated: deconstruction is not treated here as a labelling machine, attaching the terms *différance* or supplement to loosely fitting citations but as the tracing of mechanisms: how an opposition is constructed, where it depends on what it subordinates, and at which point it leaks. Each claim is anchored to specific *gatra* through a content-analytic summary table (Krippendorff, 2022) and tested via theoretical triangulation. This methodological safeguard matters because the classic risk of deconstructive reading is over-reading: discovering “resistance” everywhere until the concept loses its explanatory power (Culler, 1997).

The analysis shows that Derrida's aspects of deconstruction; binary opposition, *différance*, trace, supplement, and undecidability, operate in layered and interrelated ways within each *pupuh*, exposing fissures and ambiguities of meaning behind the text's seemingly stable structure. From these fissures, four forms of women's resistance are identified. A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Figure 1: Intensity map of Derrida's deconstructive aspects across the five *pupuh* of Serat CandrariniTable 1: Deconstructive reading and forms of women's resistance in the five *pupuh* of Serat Candrarini

Pupuh	Deconstructive mechanism	Forms of women's resistance
Sinom	- Hierarchical binary oppositions of king–public and man–woman (“<i>Kang agnya gita srinata ... miyarsakna trusing kang sabda narendra</i>”); - Trace of colonial-royal power; - Woman as the supplement that renders the decree meaningful; - Différance of female identity (“<i>sêmu budaya</i>”); undecidability of the meaning of divorce.	Passive and discursive: silence and “listening” as a survival strategy; a hidden transcript beneath outward compliance.
Dhandhanggula	- Supplement: <i>manut</i>, gentleness, and patience (“<i>susila anoraga</i>”, “<i>sêpi ing piangkuh</i>”), rhetorically positioned as mere additions yet functioning as the foundation of male authority's legitimacy; - Trace of the hidden function behind the value of obedience.	Symbolic and cultural: symbolic compliance as moral-spiritual autonomy; negotiating social position from within the norm.
Asmarandana	- Genealogical trace (“<i>atmajanirèng pandhita</i>”); - phallogocentric yet unstable active/passive and beautiful/virtuous binary oppositions; - the body as supplement (“<i>Dhêmês luwês mêrak ati, kadya pratima rinêng ga</i>”) as a condition of the moral order's existence.	Discursive and symbolic: the body, the smile, and courtesy as a symbolic language for managing social image and influence without violating norms.
Mijil	- Différance: “<i>cêngkir maya-maya lir piningit</i>” the body	Cultural and spiritual: fidelity and emotional control as

	simultaneously present and concealed, its meaning endlessly deferred; - Trace (“ <i>garwanira Sang Parta</i> ”); ambivalence of silence and symbolic power.	mastery of social ethics; a strategy for maintaining position within a hierarchical value system.
Kinanthi	Supplement, différance, and undecidability: fidelity, obedience, and beauty as effects of differential meaning-work; ambivalent identity gentle yet firm, submissive yet empowered.	Passive and cultural: women as guardians of moral values and narrative; claiming epistemic authority through the preservation of tradition.

In Sinom, deconstruction operates most nakedly at the level of authority. The four opening *gatra* “*Kang agnya gita srinata ... miyarsakna trusing kang sabda narendra*” erect the king–subject and man–woman oppositions hierarchically. Yet the command to “listen” is itself a performative contradiction: an authority that were truly natural would not need to command obedience. The repetition of the command throughout the *pupuh* becomes a trace of anxiety a sign that the order claimed as stable must be continuously produced lest it collapse.

Further, différance operates at the very heart of female ideality: Wara Sumbadra, the most praised figure and the first named among Arjuna’s five wives, is still judged “*sêmu budaya*” (slightly lacking in virtue). The standard of the “ideal woman” recedes every time it is approached; the text cannot produce a single subject fully compliant with its own standard. It is this structural failure not the text’s good intentions that constitutes the condition of possibility for resistance. The meaning of divorce is likewise undecidable: enduring marriage is glorified and divorce stigmatised as disgraceful, yet the entire burden of failure is loaded onto women. From this structure, passive and discursive resistance can be read: silence and “listening” as survival strategies harbouring hidden critique.

In Dhandhanggula, the sharpest finding lies in the logic of the supplement. The values of *manut*, gentleness, and patience, “*susila anoraga*”, “*sêpi ing piangkuh*”, are rhetorically positioned as moral additions, yet analysis shows them to be the foundation upholding the legitimacy of male authority: without the performance of compliance, that authority loses its legitimating ground. The critical implication is stark: patriarchy in SCR is parasitic upon the femininity it subordinates. It is not a hierarchy generously granting women a place, but a structure living off the “supplement” it disdains precisely Derrida’s (1976) logic of the supplement, whereby the centre was never self-sufficient. This finding reverses the conventional reading: what appears as a demand for obedience is in fact the text’s veiled confession of its dependence. From this, symbolic and cultural resistance can be read: women appearing in an ideal moral-spiritual image are in fact negotiating their social position, reconstructing patriarchal morality into a source of self-legitimation and moral autonomy.

Asmarandana displays the most aesthetic and most cunning deconstructive play. The genealogical trace (“*atmajanirèng pandhita*”) tethers women’s worth to the male line, while the active/passive and beautiful/virtuous oppositions operate phallogocentrically, yet unstably, since every repetition of an old value harbours the potential for deviation of meaning. The supplement of the body (“*Dhêmês luwês mêrak ati, kadya pratima rinêng ga*”) exposes a double paradox: the text needs women’s bodies twice as objects to be regulated and as the aesthetic ground of its moral system. Without this “adorned” body, patriarchy forfeits its symbolic legitimacy. The critical point: the body is at once the site of control and the instrument of influence. Women disciplined over their bodies in fact hold the very medium without which the moral order cannot appear. From this, discursive and symbolic resistance can be read: gentleness, the smile, and courtesy as a symbolic language for managing social image and influence a performative compliance that in fact governs how the world sees and treats women.

In Mijil, différance appears in its most poetic and most subversive form: “*cêngkir maya-maya lir piningit*” the body present and concealed at once, its meaning endlessly deferred, never arriving in full. The critical reading: by refusing to fix the body’s meaning finally, the text inadvertently bestows upon women an unreadable interiority (opacity). What cannot be fully read

cannot be fully controlled. The silence and gentleness attached to women, as in the figure of Retna Gandawati (“*garwanira Sang Parta*”, carrying a genealogical trace of resignation within it) can be re-read as a strategy of self-control rather than mere obedience. Silence here is not emptiness but impenetrability. The resistance that emerges is cultural and spiritual: fidelity not as mere sacrifice but as control over complex social relations within a culture that ranks patience as the highest virtue.

Kinanthi is the *pupuh* most open to deconstruction. Supplement, *différance*, and undecidability operate simultaneously: fidelity, obedience, and beauty are not fixed truths but effects of differential meaning-work the text displays them at once as moral virtues and as instruments of power. Women here are gentle yet firm, submissive yet empowered; their identity is continuously negotiated and irreducible to either pole. The critical finding lies in women’s role as transmitters of “*piwulang*” and preservers of tradition: this seemingly most conservative position is in fact a claim to epistemic authority. Whoever controls the transmission of values controls the interpretation of society itself. Women guarding tradition wield power disguised as compliance, the power structure erected to subordinate them instead installs them as gatekeepers of its meaning. The resistance legible here is passive and cultural, with the highest stakes: not merely surviving within the system, but mastering the interpretation of the system itself.

Taken together, the five aspects of deconstruction do not operate as separate checklist items but as a chain of mechanisms: binary opposition builds hierarchy, supplement exposes the centre’s dependence on the subordinated element, trace opens alternative trails of meaning, *différance* defers and displaces meaning, and undecidability affirms that no meaning is final. The intensity of each aspect across the *pupuh* is visualised in Figure 1: Sinom is dominant in binary opposition, Dhandhanggula and Asmarandana in supplement and trace, Mijil in *différance*, and Kinanthi in *différance* and undecidability. The cross-*pupuh* pattern reveals a striking escalation: the further the reading moves from Sinom toward Kinanthi, the more sophisticated the text’s mechanisms of control, and the deeper the subversive fissures they produce. Resistance, too, is graded: from the quietest (passive, in Sinom) to the most structural (cultural-epistemic, in Kinanthi). Women’s compliance in SCR is therefore not always identical with submission; it constitutes a space of negotiation and resistance from within the patriarchal structure the mechanisms of which are systematically unpacked in the discussion that follows.

Discussion

The findings of the deconstructive reading above point to a single central thesis that is the focus of this article’s discussion: women’s compliance in Serat Candrarini operates as strategy. The compliance demanded by the text: *rila*, *sabar*, *narima*, *manut* is not mere passive submission but a strategy of negotiation conducted from within the patriarchal structure itself. This interpretation resonates with Barragan et al (2018) as strategic (dis)obedience, and affirmed by Ybema and Horvers (2017) through the concept of resistance through compliance, outward compliance can harbour strategic and subversive potential: it becomes a cover enabling subordinated subjects to erode the dominant order without bearing the risks of open resistance. Cekaite (2020) termed this mechanism subversive compliance; that is subversive precisely because it is performed with an awareness of the fissures it leaves behind.

In this context, the quietest form of resistance is legible in *Pupuh* Sinom and Kinanthi. Women depicted as merely “listening to the king’s decree” present a paradox: silence as a strategy for survival. Yet the critical reading moves beyond “survival”: silence here is epistemic refusal a reluctance to become legible to power. Following Spivak (2010) and Verma and Verma (2025), silence is not the absence of meaning but a space for reading the power structure that silences; by refusing to speak in the master’s discursive language, women withhold part of themselves from the reach of control. This strategy aligns with the notion of the hidden transcript (Scott, 1985, 1990), in which outward compliance conceals critique of hegemony, and with the framework of everyday resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016): the accumulation of small, hidden, routine acts gradually loosens norms. Here lies the relevance of strategic (dis)obedience (Barragan et al., 2018) obedience arranged as tactic. There is, of course, the risk of romanticising silence until every muteness is read as resistance; its safeguard is textual anchoring: silence is read as strategy only where specific *gatra* the performatively contradictory command to listen, the documented

deferral of meaning demonstrate its tactical work, not as women's essence but as a situational choice under pressure.

Beyond silence as a form of resistance, *Pupuh* Dhandhanggula and Asmarandana, resistance operates through the very symbols provided by the system itself and here the most radical reversal occurs. The logic of the supplement reveals that gentleness, patience, and the body, positioned as "additions", are in fact the infrastructure bearing the entire edifice of patriarchal legitimacy. The implication is far-reaching: Javanese femininity coded as weakness gentle, patient, unobtrusive appears in this reading as a load-bearing structure. What is deemed weak turns out to sustain; what sustains goes unacknowledged. Within the framework of gender performativity (Butler, 2006) the repetition of seemingly compliant acts that deviate from the norm constitutes effective subversion: every repetition of compliance is also a repetition that can miss its mark, and it is in that missing that agency slips through. As Chaudhary and Dutt, (2022) showed, women often forge new gender ideologies through "gentle actions" that appear non-confrontational yet are in fact subversive and transformative a finding consistent with Handajani's (2022) study of Indonesian women's beauty and appearance practices as arenas for negotiating gender ideology and resistance. In Asmarandana, this mechanism reaches its most corporeal form: the body disciplined by the text becomes the very medium without which the moral order cannot appear a dependence granting women symbolic bargaining power over the system that subordinates them.

Beyond corporeal resistance, *Pupuh* Sinom and Asmarandana open resistance at the level of discourse, and the critical argument is foundational: *différance* is not merely an "interesting feature" of the text but the condition of possibility for every feminist reading of SCR. As Evink (2020) explained, *différance* is the never-completed deferral of meaning; because the meaning of the "ideal woman" is never finally fixed even the most praised Sumbadra remains "*sêmu budaya*" the text is structurally incapable of closing itself against counter-interpretation. The text's failure to finalise meaning is also its failure to finalise subjugation. Within discourse analysis, resistance indeed often emerges subtly and implicitly through semantic ambiguity, the deferral of meaning, or the quiet inversion of assigned roles (Foucault, 2013). Nartey (2024) showed that women build voice, agency, and resistance precisely through discourse that is not explicitly political yet disturbs gender hegemony. So too in SCR: the instability of the active/passive and beautiful/virtuous oppositions in Asmarandana supplies a vocabulary for readings that reverse hierarchy without a single line openly defying the order. Discursive strategy, then, is the art of exploiting power's inability to have the final word.

At the epistemic level, the most long-term form of resistance is legible in *Pupuh* Dhandhanggula, Mijil, and Kinanthi, and its stakes are epistemic. In a Javanese culture that ranks patience as the highest virtue, the woman who "*nrima*" is in fact mastering the social ethics underpinning honour (Kuswaya & Ma'mun, 2020); fidelity in Mijil is not mere sacrifice but control over complex social relations. This strategy is rooted in the understanding that *nrima* does not always mean resignation but a way of maintaining equilibrium within hierarchical relations (Ismawati et al., 2022) and that contemporary Javanese women likewise interpret traditional values as inspiration for independence rather than subjugation (Pramitasari & Widagdo, 2024). In Kinanthi, cultural resistance reaches its peak: when women become transmitters of "*piwulang*" and preservers of tradition, they seize epistemic space mastering the historical narratives and moral values that define society. As Nugroho et al (2024) showed, female figures in classical Javanese texts can hold veiled spiritual and political power; cultural resistance is therefore not a rejection of the past but a struggle over the right to interpret it. Here Mahmood's (2005) thesis is sharpest: agency does not always appear as resistance against norms it is also realised through the strategic inhabiting of norms. The women of SCR inhabit the norm of compliance so totally that the norm turns into a source of their authority: the domestic sphere the territory of subordination is converted into a moral and spiritual arena that in turn shapes the social order.

However, the claims above invite the classic objection against deconstructive reading: can this method not discover "resistance" everywhere, until every ambiguity is conjured into subversion? The objection is serious and must be answered methodologically, not rhetorically (Culler, 1997). This study erects three safeguards. First, textual anchoring: each form of resistance is traced to specific *gatra* documented in the content-analytic summary table, not to general

impressions of the text (Krippendorff, 2022). Second, theoretical triangulation: readings are cross-tested between literal meaning and alternative meaning for each citation. Third, and most importantly, a criterion distinguishing resistance from mere coping: an ambiguity is read as resistance only if it redistributes agency or legitimacy that is, when the fissure of meaning grants women bargaining power, room for manoeuvre, or interpretive authority previously monopolised by power. Ambiguity that changes nothing is recorded as ambiguity, not as resistance. With these safeguards, “compliance as strategy” is not a licence to romanticise oppression but a working hypothesis traceable, testable, and refutable at the level of the text.

Employing Derrida’s framework, a critique of Western logocentrism to read a 19th-century Javanese text harbours an irony that must be openly acknowledged: is this not a form of Western theoretical imposition upon a non-Western archive? This study’s answer is strategic, in Spivak’s (2010) sense: deconstruction is used as a reading strategy, not as a metaphysical claim about Javanese thought. What is imported is not doctrine but questions where an opposition is built, on what it depends, at which point it leaks and the answers are validated against the text’s own internal logic, not against theory. Here lies the reflective value: that the mechanism of the centre’s dependence on the margin operates in a text born far from Western metaphysics suggests that what deconstruction exposes is structural rather than cultural it is the logic of power producing hierarchy through language, wherever that language is spoken. At the same time, this study does not claim Derrida as the only key; he is one instrument among a repertoire of readings, whose results remain open to testing through philological, historical, and reader-reception approaches (as suggested by Pramitasari & Widagdo, 2024).

Building on these methodological safeguards, the study advances three contributions. First, for applied deconstruction studies: most studies apply Derrida’s aspects in isolation binary opposition in one study (Kurniasih, 2024), *différance* in another (Nugraha et al., 2020; Waqiah et al., 2026) whereas this study shows all five operating as an integrated chain of mechanisms within a single corpus of non-Western didactic text, with an intensity map varying per *pupuh* (Figure 1). Second, for resistance studies: the study textualises Scott’s (1985, 1990) hidden transcript born of peasant ethnography within a 19th-century prescriptive literary archive, extending the archive of everyday resistance beyond the ethnographic realm into the textual (consistent with the methodological formulation of Zulfikar et al., 2025). Third, for the gender study of Javanese literature: the formulation of “compliance as strategy” offers an analytical framework moving beyond the compliant/defiant dichotomy continuing and deepening the groundwork of Rohmatin (2019) on women’s mutedness and Neisya (2017) on the reversal of *priyayi* patriarchy by showing that even the most normative *wulang* text harbours a grammar of resistance amenable to systematic study.

The four forms of resistance do not operate separately but reinforce one another across the five *pupuh*: the seemingly stable binary opposition has its fragility exposed through the supplement, the supplement leaves a trace leading to *différance*, and the entire process culminates in the undecidability of meaning that furnishes room for strategy. This pattern of interconnection distinguishes the present study significantly from Iryani and Suryaman (2025), which applied the binary-opposition aspect in isolation; by tracing all five aspects comprehensively and formulating them as forms of resistance, this study shows SCR to harbour a far richer structural complexity than binary-opposition analysis alone suggests. The finding also accords with Winarti and Erlinawati (2025) that undecidability of meaning is precisely the mark of a text rich in layers of meaning.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, for *wulang* literary studies: SCR can no longer be read merely as an obsolete document of patriarchy; it is a battleground of meaning where compliance and resistance operate simultaneously and the “compliance as strategy” framework can be tested on other contemporaneous *piwulang* texts (Serat *Wulang Putri*, Serat *Wulang Reh Putri*) to map whether a similar grammar of resistance operates there. Deconstructive reading allows the cultural values contained within fidelity, self-control, relational harmony to be preserved without neglecting the principle of gender equality. Second, for education: the findings can serve as a reference for transforming the teaching of classical Javanese literature from a merely technical reading of *macapat* metre toward critical-deconstructive literacy, where learners are trained to read fissures, ambiguities, and alternative

possibilities of meaning within heritage texts a critical-thinking skill extending beyond a single text toward reading power in everyday language.

Conclusion

This study aimed to re-read Serat Candrarini (SCR) deconstructively in order to uncover the manifestation of Jacques Derrida's five aspects of deconstruction binary opposition, *différance*, trace, supplement, and undecidability in the five principal *pupuh* of SCR, and to formulate the forms of women's resistance revealed through such a reading. The findings show the five aspects to be interlinked: the seemingly hierarchical and stable binary opposition depends on the subordinated element as its supplement; this dependence leaves a trace that displaces meaning through *différance*, culminating in an undecidability that renders meaning never final.

From these fissures of meaning emerge four forms of women's resistance: (1) passive resistance silence and "listening" as survival strategies harbouring hidden critique (Sinom, Kinanthi); (2) symbolic resistance gentleness, patience, the body, and courtesy as a language of power negotiating social position from within the norm (*Dhandhanggula*, *Asmarandana*); (3) discursive resistance semantic ambiguity and the deferral of meaning as spaces of counter-interpretation (Sinom, Asmarandana); and (4) cultural resistance mastery of social ethics through *nrima* and claims to epistemic authority through the preservation of moral narrative (*Dhandhanggula*, Mijil, Kinanthi). Together they formulate one central thesis: women's compliance in SCR operates as strategy a negotiation conducted from within the patriarchal structure, not mere submission.

The study's contribution lies in two things. First, the integrated application of all five aspects of deconstruction extends Iryani and Suryaman (2025), which was confined to binary opposition, while enriching the corpus of Nusantara literary deconstruction (Neisya, 2017; Rohmatin, 2019; Winarti & Erlinawati, 2025). Second, the formulation of "compliance as strategy" offers an alternative framework for reading wulang literature: a seemingly patriarchal text can harbour subversive potential accessible only through careful deconstructive reading.

This study is limited to a single manuscript and a reflective deconstructive interpretation; its findings are therefore not intended for generalisation across all Javanese wulang literature. Future research may employ comparative inter-*piwulang* studies and interdisciplinary approaches, while in education the findings can support critical-deconstructive-literacy-based teaching of classical Javanese literature.

Ethics approval

Not required. This study is textual/documentary research on a classical literary manuscript and did not involve human subjects, so no formal ethical approval was necessary.

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Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Evi Iryani: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Project administration. Maman Suryaman: Methodology, Validation, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition. Ahmad Taufiq: Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

This study used artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically Claude (Anthropic) and Grammarly, during manuscript preparation for language refinement, including improvements to grammar, sentence structure, and readability. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed and edited by the authors to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and reliability of the manuscript. The final decisions, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article were made solely by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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