

Between Fiction and History: The Narratives of Majapahit in Gigrey's Novel *Mada*

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ABSTRACT

The Majapahit Empire has been a source of inspiration for writers of historical fiction, such as Gigrey with his novel *Mada*. Unfortunately, these historical fictions have the possibility to make readers experience misunderstanding in comprehending history. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal to what extent historical deviation can be considered as creativity and not deviation and whether it can be considered a deviation when the writer develops the history excessively. This study employed a descriptive-qualitative method and used Lindbald's theory of historical fiction for analyzing the data. The result shows that there is a historical narrative that can be categorized as creativity because it is so imaginative and does not trap readers in false history. Meanwhile, one form of creative change in the novel that traps can be seen when Nertaja is told as Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewi's adopted son. Because of these creative changes, many readers are trapped in a false history as evidenced by the comments on Goodreads. This is exacerbated by promotional narratives about the author's extensive research, making common reader even more trapped in the falsehood.

Key words: historical construction, historical fiction, *Mada*, Majapahit

INTRODUCTION

The majesty of the Majapahit Kingdom, as recorded in the *Nagarakretagama* manuscript, seems to have inspired the writing of many novels on the history of the Nusantara. Not only that, its majesty is also often found in later New Javanese manuscripts that explain the genealogy of the Mataram Dynasty. In *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Kertapradja 2014; Rummelink 2022) there is a sentence that clearly explains the following Majapahit lineage "Trunadilaga, How can you die just for fighting commoners? Are you not a descendant of Brawijaya Majapahit? Get up! Unleash your rage!". The name Brawijaya was used again when Sunan Pakubuwono II abdicated and decided to take the name Panembahan Brawijaya (Rummelink 2022). Sudibyo (2000) states that the Mataram Dynasty family is descended from the last Majapahit king, Brawijaya V. From the fall of Majapahit in 1527 (Muljana 2007) to the present day (in an interval of almost 500 years), the narrative of Majapahit's greatness is still widely retold in historical fiction.

The greatness of Majapahit's glory is not only supported by the *Nagarakretagama* manuscript and the *Palapa Oath* of Gajah Mada, but also by existing archaeological remains, such as Jawi Temple, Jabung Temple, and others. Munandar (2011) reveals that the most data on the development of Buddhism comes from the period of the Singhasari and Majapahit Kingdoms (13-15th centuries). Not only that, according to Nugroho (2011) as written on *Nagarakretagama*, Majapahit established itself as the ruler of seven commercial zones in Asia after its victory over the Mongols and its establishment of diplomatic relations with Yawana or Arabia. This shows that Majapahit was once a successful maritime state until its decline. Its influence in uniting Nusantara proves its lasting legacy, so almost every year there are novelists who make Majapahit the setting of their stories, such as Gigrey with his novel entitled *Mada*.

The novel *Mada*, written by Gigrey or Gigi, is a historical fiction novel originating from Wattpad published by PT Akad Media Cakrawala in Depok in 2024 (3rd printing). Wattpad is a social media platform that allows users to read and write stories. The novel mostly uses the setting of Majapahit during the reign of King Hayam Wuruk which focuses on the romance between Patih Gajah Mada and Gendhis, a woman from the 21st century who is thrown far into the past. The novel shows several historical events, such as the Bubad War and the decline of Gajah Mada. The existence of historical and fictional elements provides a different view of the historical past. In this case, historical reconstruction plays a role in rebuilding the past not only for the benefit of the past but the present and the future.

From the literature review, several studies related to historical fiction were found. First, research conducted by Tyas (2018) entitled *Penggunaan Novel Sejarah sebagai Sumber Belajar Sejarah* (The Use of Historical Novels as History Learning Resources). In the study, Tyas supports the use of historical novels as a medium of learning for use by history teachers, especially for literacy development, as a medium for explaining something imaginative, and affective support for students. In contrast, Litt (2008) in his article titled *Against Historical Fiction* firmly provides a view of historical fiction as something inherently bad. Litt highlights some readers (and writers) defend historical fiction as an innovation from rigid history. Litt considers this a form of logical fallacy, which is a false way of thinking claiming that historical fiction is considered factual. When in fact historical fiction is just a blurry shadow between fact and transcendence (fictional).

From these two studies, Carroll (2011) in his article entitled *The Trouble with History and Fiction* provides two perspectives, from the historian's and from the novelist's. According to Carroll, the persistent problem between history and fiction is that traditional historians are still loyal to principles that are considered rigid, as opposed to historical fiction that presents stories more freely and is considered more plausible than factual history. This article does not provide a middle ground between the two, but rather to examine between history and fiction objectively from two different perspectives. This was later refined by Lindbald (2018) in his research entitled *History and Fiction: An Uneasy Marriage?* provides an overview of the 'bargain' between history and fiction in historical fiction. In this case, the researcher provides a middle ground, which is that the presentation of historical fiction must emphasize accuracy in historical details so that deviations that occur can still be tolerated. Nonetheless, historical fiction remains 'highly demanding and problematic'. The literature review found different views on historical fiction. Therefore, based on Lindbald's ideas and with no disrespect to novelists, this research aims to answer the questions: (1) to what extent can historical deviation be considered creativity and not deviation? and (2) if a writer develops excessively, can it be considered a deviation?

The history of Majapahit is unfortunately still unknown. Therefore, this research uses canon histories contained in canon manuscripts for comparison, such as *Nagarakretagama*, *Pararaton*, and *Kidung Sunda* that describe the Majapahit Kingdom. However, it should be noted that Berg (in Ricklefs 2007) states that these sources should be viewed not as historical documents but as mythical documents. To some extent, this view is rejected by Ricklefs (2007) who argues that to a certain extent, these documents can be historical sources (of course by ignoring their fictional elements). From Ricklefs' statement, the author cannot decide on the historical truth contained in the canon works so that the interpretation of Majapahit history is still open to new research. Then to

strengthen the existing canon history, various historical studies that are more scientific are also used.

The method used in this research was descriptive-qualitative with the primary objects in the form of Gigrey's *Mada* novel and the secondary objects in the form of canon manuscripts and historical research results on the Majapahit Kingdom. The data in the primary object were collected by careful reading method, whereas the ones from the secondary objects were collected by literature review method. After having been collected, the data were then analyzed using Lindbald's theory to determine the extent to which historical deviation can be considered as creativity and not deviation.

**HISTORICAL
FICTION:
BETWEEN FICTION
AND HISTORY**

**The Narratives
of Majapahit in
Mada Historical
Fiction**

***The majesty of
Majapahit fom
time to time***

This section will focus on the narratives about Majapahit in Gigrey's historical fiction novel *Mada*, a discussion of these narratives, and the problems that can be caused by historical fiction.

The grandeur of the Majapahit Kingdom is described in detail in *Nagarakretagama* (Muljana 1953; Muljana 2006), namely thick and high red brick walls with the gate on the north being made of iron with sculptures. Then to the east there was a grand stage with a floor covered with shiny white stone. In contrast to this narrative, in *Mada's* novel, Gigrey describes the splendor of the Majapahit palace as follows.

Ke bagian timur istana terdapat sebuah joglo besar. Di sana, ada orang-orang yang berkerumun. Sebuah singgasana emas tampak begitu menawan (Gigrey 2024, 109)

(To the east of the palace was a large *joglo*. There, people were gathered around. A golden throne that looked so charming)

The depiction of the Majapahit palace in the novel is not very detailed and there are also differences with the description from *Nagarakretagama*, namely the grand stage in *Nagarakretagama* and the large *joglo* (a traditional Javanese building with a limasan-shaped roof) in the novel. Regarding the *joglo*, no research has been found that estimates the beginning of the existence of *joglo*. However, from the architectural form and structure of the building, it can be seen that the shape of the *joglo* house resembles the shape of a Hindu temple, which is getting smaller and smaller, so the *joglo* is thought to be a form of transformation from a Hindu temple (Djono, et.al. 2012). If this is related to the beginning of the *joglo's* appearance, it cannot be ascertained regarding the shape of the magnificent stage considering that the ruins of the Majapahit kingdom only left the foundation. Therefore, the choice of *joglo* as a building in the palace is intended to allow readers to imagine a luxurious traditional feel instead of using the majestic stage as part of the palace.

Then the next description of greatness is shown with the Sumpah Palapa (Palapa Vow), made by Patih Gajah Mada, as follows.

Mada tersenyum puas. Ia berdiri tegap di tengah aula, mengeluarkan sebilah keris yang disimpannya di balik punggung. Mada mengacungkan keris itu ke atas langit. Matanya berkilat tajam, menatap Hayam Wuruk yang duduk tenang di singgasananya.

"Lamun huwus kalah Nusantara isun amukti palapa, lamun kalah ring Gurun ring Seran, Tanjung Pura, ring Haru, ring Pahang, Dompo, ring Bali, Sunda, Palembang, Tumasik, samana isun amukti palapa"

(Gigrey 2024)

(Mada smiled with satisfaction. He stood tall in the center of the hall, pulling out a kris he kept behind his back. Mada held the kris up to the sky. His eyes flashed sharply, looking at Hayam Wuruk who sat quietly on his throne.

"If I have defeated the archipelago, I (will only) give up fasting. If I defeat Gurun, Seram, Tanjung Pura, Pahang, Dempo, Bali, Sunda, Palembang, Tumasik, then I (will) break my fast")

The event of Sumpah Palapa is listed in Kitab *Pararaton* by Mangkudimedja (transliterated by Hardjana HP 1979), but not in the form of active sentences spoken by Gajah Mada himself, but in the form of an explanation from the narrator. However, Muljana (2021) writes the oath as it is written in the novel. The Palapa oath, which retains its original Javanese language, proves that the glorification of Majapahit reaches the present generation.

The majesty and greatness of Majapahit that is being reproduced (especially in literary works) is an effort in the formation of the identity of Indonesian society. As stated in the introduction, Mataram which descended from the Majapahit kingdom as written in ancient manuscripts, is a form of legitimization as well as identity formation for the Mataram Dynasty itself. Until now, there are still many people who claim to be descendants of Majapahit, such as news about residents in Jombang who claim to be descendants of Aria Wijaya (Merdeka.com 2023).

**Historical
interpretation:
creativity or
deviation?**

In their efforts to retell historical stories, writers usually make many changes as part of their creativity. But to what extent can this be considered creativity? If a writer overdevelops, can it be considered a deviation? These questions are tried to be answered in this research. The form of story development carried out by the author is found in the narrative when Gendhis receives a painting of a woman in a red shawl from the Yogyakarta Palace who coincidentally resembles her. The woman in the painting was called Nyai Gendhis by her grandfather.

"Kakung mendapatkan tugas mencatat semua benda kekayaan keraton dan melihat lukisan ini di sebuah ruangan yang terkunci. Sampai sekarang, Kakung tidak tahu siapa pemilik ruangan itu. Gusti Kanjeng Ratu bilang, wanita di dalam lukisan itu adalah alasan utama mengapa Nusantara bisa bersatu. Wanita yang tak pernah namanya tertulis di sejarah, tapi selalu diingat jasanya oleh keturunan keraton. Terlihat anggun nan rapuh, tapi kekuatan wanita itu sungguh luar biasa. Rumor mengatakan, Nyai Gendhis lebih cakap dari seorang Maharaja dan Mahapatih pada saat itu" (Gigrey 2024, 45)

("Grandfather was tasked with recording all the palace's treasures and saw this painting in a locked room. Until now, he didn't know who owned the room. Her Royal Highness said the woman in the painting was the main reason why the Nusantara was united. A woman whose name was never recorded in history, but whose services are always remembered by the descendants of the palace. She looks graceful and fragile, but her strength is extraordinary. Rumor has it, Nyai Gendhis was more capable than the Maharaja and Mahapatih at the time")

In later chapters of the novel it is revealed that the woman is the wife of Patih Gajah Mada. The wife of Gajah Mada is mentioned in *Kidung Sunda* (Wirasutisna, 1980). It is said that after the Sundanese army lost the war, Sri Rajasanagara went to meet Dyah Pitaloka at the guesthouse. However, Dyah Pitaloka was found dead. This event made the King very sad and sickly until he finally died. The incident made Prabu Kahuripan angry and ordered his troops to capture and kill Gajah Mada. Knowing this, the Mahapatih then performed meditation until *moksa*

(free from reincarnation). This action was then followed by his wives who performed committing suicide by thrusting a kris into themselves.

From the summary of the story about Gajah Mada's *moksa*, it can be seen that no historical literature has been found which states the names of Gajah Mada's wives. Although *Kidung Sunda* clearly mentions that Gajah Mada had more than one wife, the veracity of *Kidung Sunda* is also questionable because of its position as a literary work and the information conveyed in it is different from *Nagarakretagama* (relating to the death of Gajah Mada). Therefore, the appearance of the name Gendhis as the wife of Gajah Mada is a creation of the author of the historical story. Even when Gajah Mada is described in Mada as very faithful because he only had one wife, it is considered a form of adjustment in this modern era because polygamy is a taboo in Indonesia. It is true that in royal life, especially in the past, polygamy was considered a natural thing, which of course was related to the continuation of the bloodline. However, the author adjusts to the views and laws in Indonesia that are clearly regulated in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage in *Pasal 3 Ayat 1* which explains that Indonesia refers to the principle of monogamy. The development can be interpreted as creativity, although the statement about Gendhis being more capable than Hayam Wuruk and Gajah Mada is a bold statement and a form of 'insult'. This is because the story about Gendhis coming from the future is a very imaginative story that tends not to trap the reader into believing that Gendhis is Gajah Mada's wife and a real historical figure.

The next narrative is about Hayam Wuruk, who is known for his reign that brought Majapahit to its golden peak.

Yang Mulia? Apakah itu artinya ia adalah Hayam Wuruk? Akan tetapi, kenapa seorang Sri Rajasanegara terlihat sangat kacau sekali? Di bayangannya, seorang Hayam Wuruk adalah pria yang bijaksana, pandai, dan tenang, sesuai dengan namanya yang berarti ayam yang terpelajar. Kenapa Maharaja justru terlihat sangat barbar? (Gigrey 2024, 117).

(His Majesty? Does that mean he is Hayam Wuruk? But why did Sri Rajasanegara look so chaotic? In her mind, Hayam Wuruk was a wise, clever, and calm man, as his name implies, a learned chicken. Why did the Maharaja look so barbaric?)

The narrative about the barbaric Hayam Wuruk probably comes from *Nagarakretagama* pupuh 91 stanzas 7-8 which states that Hayam Wuruk at the big party at Bubat Field was willing to appear wearing a mask and start with jokes that made everyone laugh.

The explanation of the barbaric and witty Hayam Wuruk is found in the next chapter which tells that Hayam Wuruk was a high school youth who travelled back in time, as follows.

"Bagaimana kalau aku bilang... aku datang dari tahun 2018" (Gigrey 2024, 125).

("What if I told you... I came from 2018")

Hayam Wuruk melihat sekeliling, memastikan keadaan benar-benar aman. Ia lantas mencondongkan tubuh guna berbisik, "Akan kuberi tahu sebuah informasi yang gila. Sebenarnya, enggak pernah ada yang namanya Hayam Wuruk. Aku diselamatkan oleh penunggu Merapi, Mbah Merapi, dan dititipkan pada Dyah Gitarja juga Bhre Tumapel. Mau tahu rahasia yang enggak pernah ada di buku sejarah?".... "Dyah Gitarja terkena kutukan besar kesengsaraan dunia. Mereka tidak akan pernah memiliki keturunan hingga salah satu di antara mereka meninggal. Keduanya enggak akan pernah

punya anak selain aku, anak angkat mereka. Setelah Dyah Gitarja naik takhta menjadi Ratu Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewi, aku dididik untuk mempertahankan posisiku sebelum para Dharmaputra menggulingkan kekuasaan kembali seperti masa Jayanegara” (Gigrey 2024, 127-128).

(Hayam Wuruk looked around, making sure it was completely safe. He then leaned in to whisper, "I'll tell you a crazy piece of information. Actually, there is no such thing as Hayam Wuruk. I was saved by the guardian of Merapi, Mbah Merapi, and left in the care of to Dyah Gitarja as well as Bhre Tumapel. Want to know a secret that's never been in the history books?".... "Dyah Gitarja was hexed with the great curse of the world's misery. They will never have children until one of them dies. Both of them will never have children other than me, their adopted son. After Dyah Gitarja ascended the throne to become Queen Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewi, I was educated to maintain my position before the Dharmaputras to topple again the ruling power as in the Jayanegara's era")

Gendhis masih belum bisa mengolah semua informasi barusan. Seakan-akan yang diketahuinya selama ini kebohongan. Bagaimana bisa seorang raja Majapahit yang membawa kesuksesan luar biasa tidak lebih dari seorang anak SMA? Dunia sudah gila! (Gigrey 2024, 128).

(Gendhis still could not process all the information just now. It was as if what she knew all along was a lie. How could a Majapahit king who brought tremendous success be nothing more than a high school student? The world has gone mad!)

The three quotes seem to confirm the author's statement quoted earlier that Hayam Wuruk was a barbaric king. Of course, because in the three quotes above, it is explained that Hayam Wuruk fell from the modern era, namely 2018, when he was still in high school. The author's statements in these excerpts are very bold, especially in the part where Hayam Wuruk never existed and Dyah Gitarja who received a curse so that she did not have children. This is a form of adding fiction in history. It is clear in *Nagarakretagama* (pupuh 2-3) and *Pararaton* (Mangkudimedja 1979) that Hayam Wuruk was the son of Tribhuwana Tunggadewi.

“Nertaja. Angkatlah Nertaja sebagai adikmu. Dan, nikahkanlah dia dengan pria yang dicintainya. Pastikan dia tetap hidup bahagia” (Gigrey 2024, 352).

(“Nertaja. Take Nertaja as your sister. And, marry her off to the man she loves. Make sure she lives a happy life”)

“Ah, Nertaja, anak yang manis. Kini, gadis barbar itu akan tercatat dalam sejarah sebagai adikku...” (Gigrey 2024, 370).

(“Ah, Nertaja, what a sweet child. Now, that unschooled girl will go down in history as my sister...”)

In the novel, Nertaja is described as an escaped slave who was adopted by Gajah Mada and then handed over to Hayam Wuruk to be adopted as his sister. Of course, this narrative contradicts the existing history, as in *Nagarakretagama* (pupuh 5) and *Pararaton* (Mangkudimedja 1979, 139) it is explained that the youngest daughter of Kertawardhana who reigned in Pajang was the younger sister of Hayam Wuruk. Such deviations can certainly lead to the emergence of new discourses that have the potential to cause misunderstandings in history. Although again it is emphasised that the deviation in question is a deviation from canon history. In fact, this deviation was raised to highlight Gajah Mada who was hit by a curse.

Later in the novel, Hayam Wuruk's reign is described as follows.

"Ingat James? Dia meminta untuk dibebaskan karena negaranya membutuhkannya. Bahasa inggrisku enggak sampe KKM, jadi aku cuma paham kalau dia mau bicara sama Mbak Gendhis. Aku mau kita bertiga mendiskusikan ini baik-baik" (Gigrey 2024, 192).

("Remember James? He asked to be released because his country needed him. My English isn't up to scratch, so I only partly understand that he wanted to talk to Ms. Gendhis. I want the three of us to discuss this carefully")

Bertahun-tahun ia berdiri di balik bayangan Gajah Mada. Tanpa rakyatnya sadari, Hayam Wuruk hanyalah seorang raja boneka yang dikendalikan oleh orang lain (Gigrey 2024, 253-254).

(For years he stood in the shadow of Gajah Mada. Without his people realizing it, Hayam Wuruk was just a puppet king controlled by others)

The quote contains a representation of King Hayam Wuruk as weak and easily controlled. This is also related to the inclusion of the Palapa Vow by Gajah Mada in this novel. According to Kitab Pararaton (Mangkudimedja 1979, 141, 310), the Palapa Vow should have taken place during the reign of Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi, but was instead performed during Hayam Wuruk's reign possibly because Gajah Mada is said to have achieved various achievements during Hayam Wuruk's reign. The next question is why is the time setting not when Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi was enthroned? This may be due to Hayam Wuruk's status as King during Majapahit's peak era. However, when looking at the quote above, it can be assumed that the choice of Hayam Wuruk's time is the author's way of presenting Gajah Mada as the "savior of Majapahit" and as the Patih who brought Majapahit to glory.

If we look at Muljana's discussion (2021) that the Palapa Pledge was a form of instigation of Majapahit's political program at that time. From this program, it can be seen that Gajah Mada controlled almost all of the government politics. This of course indirectly places the Queen as a "puppet" of Gajah Mada. This is then raised by the author that Hayam Wuruk took refuge behind his powerful patih, Gajah Mada.

In the novel, it is not only shown about the narrative of the Patih's greatness, but also his curse, as follows.

"Ada satu orang lagi yang memiliki kutukan yang sama dengan Dyah Gitarja"... Mahapatih Gajah Mada tidak bisa memiliki keturunan? (Gigrey, 2024, 128-129).

("There is another person who has the same curse as Dyah Gitarja"... Mahapatih Gajah Mada cannot have offspring?)

"Aria (Bebed) adalah budak yang melarikan diri. Dan, itu adalah daftar para budak yang akan berlayar ke barat tujuh hari lagi" (Gigrey 2024, 141).

("Aria (Bebed) was a runaway slave. And, it is a list of slaves who will sail west in seven days")

Gajah Mada is said to be unable to have children with Dyah Gitarja due to a curse. Just like Nertaja, Aria Bebed was an escaped slave (he escaped carrying a baby who was later named Nertaja) and was adopted by Gajah Mada. There are many rumors that Aria Bebed is the son of Gajah Mada and his wife, Ni Luh Ayu Sekarini (Midaada 2023). However, there is no such information in either Nagarakretagama or Kidung Sunda (perhaps the information comes from oral literature developed in the community). This, of course, cannot be factual evidence as oral literature changes over time.

Another historical development is found in the following excerpt which emphasizes the concept of reincarnation.

"Gender mereka berbeda, kamu pernah lihat bagaimana Nala menari bahagia saat berhasil menenggelamkan kapal musuh kerajaan?".... "Tenggelamkan" (Gigrey 2024, 390).

("Their genders are different, have you seen how Nala dances happily when she sinks an enemy ship of the kingdom?".... "Sink them")

To see the concept of reincarnation, it is necessary to know about the beliefs adopted during the Majapahit period. According to Ulum (in Segara 2017, 213) during the Majapahit period, the beliefs adopted were the Shiva-Buddhist religion which can be seen in several ancient literary works, such as *Kakawin Sutasoma* and *Kakawin Arjunawijaya*. This is then reinforced by a statement from Segara (2017: xxiii) that most Hindus in Indonesia are Saiwa Siddhanta (another name for Shiva-Buddhism) and Waisnawa. This teaching explains that Karma Phala or the fruit of actions is closely related to Punarbawa or the cycle of reincarnation (Suji 2021). Karma Phala or the fruit of the action can be received when doing or afterwards which is related to rebirth (Karma Wasana). This is a form of reincarnation (Punarbhawa or Samsara) in the form of a path to improve oneself. The opportunity is used to produce the fruit of actions that will determine life after death with *moksa* as the ultimate goal to release oneself from attachment to birth (Segara, 2017: xv).

Thus, the presence of the reincarnation of Admiral Nala in the form of a Minister of the Republic of Indonesia who is famous for the slogan "Sink them!" can be interpreted as Nala who still has business in the world so he is born again. In the concept of Shiva-Buddha, this might happen because in the past, Admiral Nala conducted many wars of conquest so that his hands were always bloody. As mentioned in Munandar (2008) and *Nagarakretagama pupuh* 72 which states that in 1357 AD Admiral Nala was appointed as a hero after subduing Dampo. However, these arguments are of course based on fictional accounts. In fact, it is most likely a form of Majapahit glorification in the present day that there is an important figure from Majapahit who is reincarnated and still faithfully serving the Republic of Indonesia.

From the description and comparison of the quotations in the novel with the ancient manuscripts and studies, the temporary answer to the question at the beginning of this section is that the development of the story in some parts can be interpreted as a form of authorial creativity as long as it is not too imaginative. However, it can also be interpreted as a distortion of history. This of course relates to the form of narrative conveyed by the author. This will be explained in more detail in the following section.

The Problems of Historical Fiction

The historical fiction genre has strengths and weaknesses, especially in the eyes of history readers. To increase the sales of literary works, narratives that attract readers' attention are usually used. In Gigrey's *Mada* novel, the publisher @id.akad tried to promote the novel in several posts on his Instagram social media along with the author @gisellarahman as follows.

A romance from the land of Majapahit between History & Fiction about a green flag guy named Mada (id.akad and gisellarahman 2023).

(Note: a green flag guy is a person who has a positive attitude and is suitable as a life partner)

Learning history from fiction, really? Yes, you can! (id.akad and gisellarahman 2023).

The research for Mahajana is actually not as much as for *Mada*. In *Mada*, I had to visit several museums, libraries, looking for all literary things about

Majapahit and things that are rarely uncovered (id.akad and gisellarahman 2023).

The post seems to try to validate that *Mada's* historical fiction can be used as an alternative medium for learning history. Although initially it was stated that the novel was between history and fiction, the second and third quotes actually undermine the "fictional narrative" explained by the publisher and author. In addition, the word 'research' in the third quote makes the second quote valid and reinforces the historicity of the novel. This pattern of promotion is also found in posts about the novel *Mahajana*, also written by Gigrey.

"People said that it is boring!" What's boring? Maybe you haven't dived deep enough to find the 'juicy' stories. Try typing 'Mahajana' in your search bar, have you seen it or not? It's not just the fantasy that we can take away from *Mahajana*. But, the historical side, the quality of the narrative, the work life story, the new knowledge of Hayam Wuruk's heart can also be taken... This is also proof that wattpad stories have quality, the writers are also did research, so not all stories can be called 'boring' (id.akad and gisellarahman 2023).

The phrases 'juicy', 'historical side', and 'research' become an attempt to validate that the novel is not just fiction but can be used for enjoyable historical learning (along with things that are claimed to be still not revealed in history). This of course a fictional perspective of events for lay readers who may have no knowledge of the history in earlier authoritative texts, not to mention teenage readers. The impact of these historical narratives can be seen in the various reviews of *Mada's* novel on the goodreads website with a rating of 4.6/5 which shows that the novel received a good rating.

Eh, but seriously, because of this book, I had to search on google and youtube about the Majapahit kingdom and its famous stories (Annelice, 4 stars).

I understand that this is 100% fiction, but this book managed to make me more interested in learning about ancient kingdoms (Hasita Visakha, 5 stars). Because it made me curious, I learned more or less about history (thanks for that). And Wow, the author's research needs to be appreciated (Stargirl, 5 stars).

Positive reviews that foster the younger generation's interest in history can certainly arise because readers are stimulated to learn about history. On the other hand, one reader can also distinguish between literary works and history books, that they do not necessarily agree with the things written in the novel. However, the negative impact of the novel also appears in the following reviews.

The author can connect historical facts with the fictional plot well in my opinion (Sarah, 5 stars).

The plus point of this book is that to reach the ending, the plot is made in accordance with existing history without changing a bit of the past that has occurred such as Gajah Mada still taking the Palapa Oath, Gajah Mada uniting the Nusantara, the Bubad War incident, the rift between Hayam Wuruk and Gajah Mada and the curse experienced by Gajah Mada himself (Joyevgeniya, 5 stars).

The delivery of the Majapahit kingdom setting is really detailed & not inconsequential, as if I was there with Gendhis. The story feels very logical, in accordance with existing historical facts. not only leisure but one can learn history at the same time (Paramitha, 5 stars).

From the review, it can be seen that some readers agreed with the writing and considered it as historical fact. This is a problem because the Wattpad version of Mada's novel has been read approximately 3.3 million times, which of course more or less influences readers' thinking. The reason is, among these readers there are some groups who are historically illiterate and tend to swallow the things as presented in the novel. As has been explained earlier about various deviating story developments, one of which is about a genealogy that says that Nertaja is not Hayam Wuruk's blood related sibling. In addition, Professor I Ketut Riana who placed Indudewi as Hayam Wuruk's consort was heavily criticized by Siwi Sang (2016). Not to mention the narratives that seem to demean Hayam Wuruk by likening him to a high school student trapped in the past.

Historical fiction can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can motivate readers to learn history, and on the other hand, it can be a form of historical distortion. Even after saying that the author did quite a lot of research, the beginning of the novel states that the novel is "a development of an existing story, so that if there are similarities or differences, they are purely a form of fictional development from the author". This statement gives the impression that the author wants to "escape from blame" and "avoiding responsibility". In the end, this will become a homework for scholars of literature and history to straighten out eventually.

To answer the question posed in the second section, the researcher argues that literary development that deviates from history is a form of creativity as long as it is still within reasonable developments, for example not changing the canon plot and not changing the position of historical figures (which could result in changing the existing genealogy). Excessive developments such as fantasy elements (such as time travel) included in literary works can still be easily distinguished as something fictional (because it does not make sense) so that it does not change historical facts but seen as elements of fantasy. Ironically, Gigrey was actually writing about his unwillingness to change history. However, his small act of presenting historical fiction accompanied by the claim that the novel is the result of extensive research and can be used as teaching material for history could mislead some people into false facts.

Memberi tahu bahwa Hayam Wuruk bukanlah keturunan dari seorang raja tapi menduduki singgasana adalah sebuah kebohongan yang bisa saja menumpahkan banyak darah orang-orang tidak bersalah.... Ia tidak ingin mengubah sebuah sejarah (Gigrey 2024, 132).

(Telling that Hayam Wuruk was not a descendant of a king but occupied the throne was a lie that could have spilled a lot of innocent blood.... He did not want to change history)

Of course, criticism is not only directed at the author, but also at the readers who must have at least basic knowledge if they want to read critically historical fiction.

If we take a step back to the literature review section, we can see that *Mada's* novel does not present many details related to its history. In fact, in his promotion, the author openly said that he had done "a lot of research" which seemed to imply that "this novel can be trusted as historical fact". Another thing is that the storytelling focuses too much on imagination and romantic love stories that many teenagers crave, making it easy for the author to slip in irregularities, such as the narrative that Nertaja is an adopted child. This has a domino effect on ordinary readers (who lack historical literacy) who can easily get lost and fall into believing something fictional.

CONCLUSION Developing history into fiction is fine as long as it does not deviate too much from historical facts. Of course, this must be read critically by readers who are willing to study history with open arms and can filter the information received wisely. When referring to canon history, *Mada's* novel features things that have the possibility of misleading ordinary readers, namely the relationship between Hayam Wuruk and Nertaja, who should be siblings (according to canon history), written as adopted siblings in the novel.

The narration of Majapahit's majesty and greatness in *Mada's* novel may be a form of longing for Majapahit's greatness. In addition, the influence of readers' imaginations about kings and kingdoms caused *Mada's* novel to become a magnet for 3.3 million readers on the Wattpad application. This large number certainly causes some readers who are not critical of history to slip into fictional narratives. In addition, the author's statement about in-depth research also plays a role in solidifying the hearts of lay readers to believe in the fictional story. This belief is evidenced by the quotes in the ratings on the goodreads site which show that there are some readers who consider the novel a source of facts.

This would have been different if Gigrey and his publishers had not claimed that the novel had been thoroughly researched and could be used as a reference for learning history. His statement in the opening of the novel asserts that the novel is a development of an existing story, so that if there are similarities or differences, it is purely a form of fictional development from the author, giving the impression that the author wants to avoid responsibility. Ultimately, it will be a homework assignment for scholars of literature and history to rectify historical misconceptions that deviate from canon history.

Due to the limitations of the material object and the duration of the research, the researcher hopes that in the future research on historical fiction can be sharpened by using various historical sources as a comparison. In addition, this research is hoped to be a basis for further research.

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