

**THE TRANSFORMATION OF
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN
“TRUE STORY GITTA SESSA WANDA
CANTIKA”
A NOVEL BY AGNES DANOVAR AND
“SURAT KECIL UNTUK TUHAN”
A MOVIE BY HARRIS NIZAM**

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Abstract

This descriptive qualitative study finds out the transformation of narrative structure in two literary works that is a novel entitled *True Story Gitta Sessa Wanda Cantika* by Agnes Danovar and a movie by Harris Nizam entitled *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan*. The intertextuality theory in reception becomes the base of the study. The technique of obtaining the data is by reading the novel and watching the movie carefully. All data is categorized

based on the topic of discussion then described in details. The result shows that there are transformation in narrative structure of both works each on the characterization, settings, and plot. The transformation indicates that the novel is responded and given meaning in the following work i.e. movie by Harris Nizam. The characterization is seen from the aspects of naming, personality, and internal conflict. The setting is from the addition and reduction of setting, meanwhile the plot is seen from the startup of the story, the complexness of the conflict, and the presentation of ending.

Keywords: reception, intertextuality, transformation of narrative structure, Novel *True Story Gita Sessa Wanda Cantika*, movie *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan*

A. Introduction

Literary reception (Ratna, 2004: 166) has been dominant literary criticism since 1970s for several reasons i.e. (1) as an answer for structuralism which focus on the elements/structures, (2) an awareness to the re-birth of human values for the sake of universal humanity consideration, (3) a belief that literary works can be explored through readers competence, (4) a belief that the durability of literary works is on the hands of its readers, and (5) a belief that a meaning is created within the ambiguity relation of the works and its readers.

The role of readers is the main point in reception, there is no meaning of a work when there is no reader response toward the work itself. A literary work actively responded by its reader will automatically creating new work under the idea both precisely presented similar in elements or even the opposite at all. It means that the creation of a new

literary work cannot be separated from the influence of the other literary work which is in turn called as a history of literature.

According to Sitanggang (2003: 81), the birth of literary work is related to the prior works defined by the authors. They are not only the creator but also a receptor. A literary work is realized after the process of reception, a process of filling out the space between what is written and what is hoped to be written. Through previous literary works, an author process its notion and aesthetic of the works itself before transforming them into a new work (Sitanggang, 2003: 81).

A best seller novel written by Agnez Danovar entitled *True Story Gitta Sesa Wanda Cantika* (2008) tells about a real life of a girl aged 13 years old surviving from a serious deadly cancer. This novel is then responded by Harris Nizam through a movie. The transformation phenomena from a text to movie has been popular; there are many novels adapted into a movie. This is a proof of how literary works influence the film industry in the world.

Harris Nizam is not the only one doing a reception toward the works (2011), there is also a series with similar title *Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan* directed by Gita Asmara in 2012. It consists of long scene and episodes. This can be inferred that the story has attracts many readers or spectators making the novel itself becomes popular. This study, however, will focus only on the intertextuality of the novel and the movie finding out the kinds of transformation found in the structure of narration as well as the notion of both works.

B. Literature Review

Intertextuality as proposed by Jauss is the application theory in which one text as a combination of the previous texts. Kristeva in Ratna (2004: 173) states that a text is actually parts of other texts, as part of a bigger structure from cultural notion. Meanwhile Barthes digs out the text quality by considering the text without its writer, Kristeva thinks that in defining text optimally, it must be returned to the realm of culture first, even eventually it still an anonym part of culture. This causes the background of the others text matters in giving a text meaning, then one of the texts is called as hypogram. Riffarette (Ratna, 2004: 174) defines hypogram as the pre-text structure -as poetic text energy, which according to Strauss, it has an equal level with the *bricoleur* energy that constructing a thing using available materials on hands.

In the intertextuality theory, the reading process conducted by the receptor will make him/her not as common reader but an author or creator of a new literary work. The work he/she creates is constructed based on the text materials read. The reader response in form of text can indicate a broader and open-ended definition of literary work. The hole (open flack) provided by the previous author will eventually followed with creative notions of the reader itself.

According to Jauss in Fadlil (2013), a literary work is not an independent object and giving similar perspectives toward the readers at any time; it is not a monument representing an everlasting essence. Means that the literary works can always be redefined by its readers based on the spirit of its time (*Zeitgeist*). A literary work will inevitably opposed by its previous elements and new elements by confronting their intertextuality for the sake of its dialogical characters.

This dialogical perspective is then giving a wider possibility to reveal the complexities of narrative structure, notions, authorial domination, and so does the other monologist aspects. This picture means that the inter-textual relation cannot be simply defined but complexly based on readers' competence and knowledge. It means, the more knowledge the readers have, the more variety of relations will be created. The higher the horizon of hopes are toward the texts, the easier the readers will be able to reveal all the complexity of narrative structure, notions, authorial domination and other monologist aspect.

This relation (Ratna, 2004: 173) created is like a tied up chain, supporting each other to finally be a new literary work. The meaning production is done through an intertextuality covering the process of preposition, mutation, and transformation. Finding the meaningful relation between two texts or more is the characteristic of inter-textual study. The texts used as the inter-text is not restricted only as similar genre, but it gives huge possibility for the researcher to find the *hypogram*. Therefore, the intertextuality study might relate a novel to another novel, a novel with a poem, a novel with a myth, even a novel with a movie/film. In this case, the relation created is not only based on its similarity but also its difference both as parody or negation.

C. Method of Investigation

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research does not use calculations but description. The written or oral data is descriptively analyzed. The source of data is taken from the novel entitled *True Story Gitta Sessa Wanda Cantika* by Agnes Danovar and a movie *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan* directed by

Harris Nizam. Both are literary works created each in 2008 and 2011. The technique of obtaining the data is by reading the novel and watching the movie carefully. All data is categorized based on the topic of discussion then described in details.

D. Findings and Discussion

The major discussion in the research is the transformation of narration structure of both works. The narration structure covers the theme, characterization, setting, plot (orientation, climax, and reorientation).

Transformation indicates dialogical character between texts in literary works; they complete each other creating tight bounding. The transformation itself might happen to the narrative structure of the works, notions, and an authorial domination of the texts.

1) Theme

The theme presented in both works are similar that is the struggle of a teenage girl in fighting her cancer called as *Rhabdomyosarcoma*. There are three basic themes provided by the novel such as (1) the struggle and toughness owned by a teenage girl in fighting against her cancer disease, (2) the toughness and hopelessness of a father struggling for his daughter's recovery, and (3) love and friendship. Meanwhile the movie has one more theme to add besides that three similar basic themes that is problems of a household.

2) Characterization

There is slight different in the characterization particularly to the naming of characters. The main characters name is similar i.e. Keke but the name of Keke's brother and

number is different. Keke's brothers in the novel each called as Koko and Kiki, while in the movie are Chika and Kiki. There is also different name in some supporting characters such as the name of the doctors. There are three doctors in the novel called as dr. Ferdy, dr. Lukman, and Professor Hata; meanwhile in the movie there are only two doctors, the first is a woman without name and the second is Professor Muklis. The table of comparison in characterization can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Transformation of the characterization in both works.

Character	Novel		Movie	
	Name	Character	Name	Character
Main	Keke	Tough, smart, kind, loves singing and modelling	Keke	Tough, smart, kind, loves dancing.
Father	Joddy	Tough, never give up, kind, gives everything for his daughter's recovery.	Joddy	Tough, never give up, kind, gives everything for his daughter's recovery.
First Brother	Koko	Married, too busy with his married life.	Chika	Unmarried, having great conflict with his father, loves car racing, no attention to his sister.

Second Brother	Kiki	Diligent, smart, busy with his education.	Kiki	A good brother to Keke, caring, and always available for his sister.
Mother	Mother	Having good relationship with Mr. Joddy after getting divorce.	Mama	Still having conflict with Mr. Joddy after getting divorce.
Assistant	Mr. Erwin	Loyal but not clearly depicted in the novel.	Mr. Yus	Loyal, always be in Keke's side, taking care of Keke and love Keke very much.
Keke's Boyfriend	Andi	Loves Keke sincerely, never give up.	Andi	Loves Keke sincerely, having personal conflict, hesitate.
Friends	Shifa Fachda Dinda Andini Ida Maya	Loyal and good friends of Keke	Shifa Fachda Dinda Andini Ida Maya	Loyal and good friends of Keke
Doctor	Dokter I: dr. Ferdy	Caring, suggesting dr. Lukman for further disease analysis.	None	
	Dokter II: dr.	Professional and caring, suggesting cancer	An anonym female doctor	Professional, suggesting surgery

	Lukman	surgery to half of Keke's face.		
	Dokter III: Prof. Hata	Professional, giving all his ability and skill for Keke's case, close with Keke's family.	Prof. Mulkis	Professional, giving all his ability and skill for Keke's recovery.
Additional Character	A woman with white dress	Tender and lovely	Little kid	Afraid of taking medicine

In characterizing, the movie has simpler formula for the figures yet details in each character. Some supporting characters in the movie are having personal conflict making the characterization varied and complex. If it is compared to the characterization used in the novel, all characters are presented simple and less in personal conflict. This shows that the reception done by Harris in his movie is giving certain touch to the characterization without leaving aside the characterization in the previous text.

3) Setting

The main setting used in both works are mostly the same such as school, home, and hospital. Yet there are some different setting for it follows different plot and complication. The settings of novel are home, school, hospital, hospital's waiting room, hospital's canteen,

school toilet, alternative disease treatment places, and Heaven which is represented with Paris – Kiki’s most favorite town. Further, the settings used in the movie are home, school, hospital, hospital’s waiting room, hospital’s park, alternative disease treatment places, kafe for dance floor show, and heaven which is visualized as a lake with white sand.

The difference settings used in the movie indicates that it tries to visualize what is not presented in the novel. A palace in heaven with a women on white dress is not there in the movie; it is substituted with the figure of Keke with her lovely light blue dress on the side of a lake called as “Heaven.”

This visualization differs since there is different narrator’s point of view. The novel is narrated from the eye of a little girl, while the movie is from adult. It makes the visualization for Heaven is different, yet gives similar definition that is happiness.

4) Plot

The plot is the most interesting structure in an inter-textual analysis. There must be differences even oppositions or addition and reduction of a plot line in reception. In the novel entitled *True Story Gitta Sessa Wanda Cantika* by Agnes Danovar and the movie *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan* directed by Harris Nizam, addition and reduction of plot is the most dominant transformation. There is also rearrangement of story line. It can be seen from element of plot i.e. orientation, climax, and reorientation.

In the orientation of the novel, Keke introduces herself and family meanwhile in the movie there is a monologue spoken by Keke of

her admiration toward inspiring figures in her life such as Pluto, Aristoteles, Einstein even the Prophet Mohammad.

Further in the climax or complication, the whole story line is similar however there is still addition and reduction to some parts such as a scene of a little boy afraid of taking medicine in the movie, which is in the end known as someone having cancer as Keke does. Yet, this kid is not coming a wealthy family as Keke has, so the doctors postpone the surgery for financial reason. This kind of scene is not seen in the novel. This brings us message that the movie depicts a social reality; there are many poor suffers from similar disease. This fact seems unnoticed since people with the disease too focus on her/his sorrow.

The main conflict in the novel is the cancer suffered by Keke, meanwhile in the movie, the conflict of Keke's parents is also dominating. The parents' problem makes the things going wrong. This is without any reason. The novel is written from the eye of a teenage girl, spoken by Keke as the first person. This creates open flack which is then completed by Harris in his movie. He brings the conflict of Keke's parent divorce as a matter beside the cancer itself. It also happens to the other characters who are involved in a personal plot, as what can be seen from Andi, Keke's brothers and friends' internal conflict. The emotion and conflict is blended together with the main issue about the cancer. The movie is succeeding in presenting perspectives from characters involved in the story. This of course making the story line in the movie more interesting and able to complete the lack of the first text that is the novel.

Regarding to the scenes of the novel, there are several scene not presented in the movie such as when Keke having serious nosebleed in her second day of examination. She runs to the toilet leaving the blood on the floor. In the movie, Keke is not only having a serious nosebleed but also get a foot paralyze making her falls off in the examination day. In the novel, after the incident, she is then brought to the hospital and having a comma state. This trigger a question of how can a comma girl gets the first rank in her class meanwhile she only takes two days of test. A different story line is seen in the movie. Before being brought to the hospital, she has struggled hard for three days of examination and gets the third rank in her class, - a more logical plot.

The reorientation of both works shows that Keke died after struggling hard for her cancer. To indicate that she has gone, the novel describes Keke meet a beautiful women in white dress in Paris – Keke’s most favorite town, the people she meets smiling at her. A France style house attracts her and there she meets a women in white dress hanging a basket of jasmine on her hand. This depiction is really touching and shuddering, showing the readers that there is a life after death waiting for us. A picture of eternal life driving a question whether we will be happy as Keke or not. However, this kind of scene is not presented in the movie, Harris does not visualize more on the moment of Keke’s end of life. He just show how happy Keke lying on the bank of a lake. After all, both scene ends up the story and indicates the death of the main character.

E. Conclusion

The movie entitled *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan* written by Harris is trying to fill out the hole in the previous text. The novel written by Agnes Danovar provides an open flack to be filled by the following works whether it is in the form of novel, poem, short story or even movie. Reader response toward a literary works is a starting point of the birth of new literary works. There is no texts without relation to the other texts. The new texts can be an answer to the reader's hope horizon, perspectives toward similar issue, visualization to the previous issue, etc. This study shows that the movie as the answer to the reader's hope horizon, perspective toward the issue, and visualization to the novel. Those can be seen in the transformation of its previous narrative structure such as characterization, settings, and plot. The transformation in characterization shows that there are several different character's name, detail personality, conflict, and involvement. The transformation in the setting is change for several places yet still bringing up similar scene and topic. Meanwhile the plot's transformation occurs in orientation, complication/climax and reorientation. Each has improvement and reduction, however, the topic delivered is the same.

Further study might learn more on the other types of transformation of the text such as notions, authorial domination and other monologist aspect.

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