

The Adaptation of Novel “*Bumi Manusia*” Into Theater Performance

Retno Dwimarwati*

Theater Department
 Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia (ISBI) Bandung
 Bandung, Indonesia
 *rdwimarwati@gmail.com

Abstract—Novel *Bumi Manusia* (Earth of Mankind) written by Pramoedya Ananta Toer has received Magsaysay award and has been translated into several languages. This humanist novel is also adapted by Faiza Marzuki into theatre play script entitled “Nyai Ontosoroh”. Feminism issues are presented in the acts by showing the character of Nyai as a strong figure in the context of gender equalities. Her efforts in managing house, and the administration are not appreciated at all by the Dutch law. She does not even have the right to fight for her children. The adaptation process from the novel into a play script and a theatre performance can take place either intrinsically (*physical form*) or extrinsically (*mental form*) through creative process realized in theatre expression. The adaptation process’ Pavis can be conducted by: 1. Reposition the work from one genre to another; 2. Change the literature text into performance (dramaturgy); 3. Translate the text adjusted and loyal to the source text. The article is written based on the experience and practice in the creative process; the analysis of the novel into adaptation process in the play script (re-thinking) becomes a form of performance (dramaturgy). This article can be a model of creativity.

Keywords: *adaptation, re-thinking, creative process*

I. INTRODUCTION

Bumi Manusia (Earth of Mankind) created by Pramoedya Ananta Toer (PAT) is a novel that’s very well known for the struggle of low-class humans against the Government of the Dutch East Indies. The story sets in the late 19th century (1890s) shows the power of Pram’s historical analysis in an interesting fiction. The story revolves from the meeting of Minke (main character), an HBS student who worships modernization and European way of thinking. He considered his ancient ancestral culture and tried to leave it by covering his identity as a Javanese aristocrat. He became a HBS student because of his position as a noble child who was allowed to study with white people. He met with Nyai Ontosoroh when invited by his friend (Robert Suuhroff) to visit the big house of *Boerderij Buitenzorg* to meet a beautiful girl [1].

She is a “Nyai” whose position was very humiliated at that time because she was a mistress / mistress of Mr. Herman Mellema. But the condition of Sanikem (real name Nyai Ontosoroh) that her father sold to the Big Lord Ruler of the Sugar Factory in Tulangan. He made her not worse in the condition “Nyai-nyai “or” mistress” as experienced by many

girls in this country at that time. Due to the kindness of his master and his strong desire to learn, he was able to make himself literate and even able to master the trades, herds, plantations pioneered by Mr. Mellema and himself. Finally Minke greatly admired the woman and considered her teacher, both in life and in broad knowledge of her reading results outstanding. He mastered Malay, reading and writing in Dutch as well. Minke’s life journey and story were later known to Minke when she had become good friends with her mother and daughter who later also became lovers and his wife (Annelies Mellema). The condition then went bad when a legitimate son emerged from Mr. Mellema (Maurits Mellema) who sued his father to insure his actions leaving Madam Amelia Mellema Hammer without divorce. Conflicts escalated when Mr. Herman Mellema died and all the White court rules did not consider any indigenous position, especially a mistress. Sanikem was forced to accept the nickname “Nyai” [2]. She as a brave and strong woman, she becomes aware of the need for freedom. Nyai fight for her independence and to possess sovereignty for her people, society, family, children and herself [3]. Her status as mistress make both mother and children social out casts [4].

II. METHODS

A novel adaptations in a drama manuscripts with focused to Nyai Ontosoroh [5]. Julie Sanders states that adaptation is a sign relation referring to the source of the original text or text [6]. Variation of text can be done by producing new works through fundamental changes that are real and can still be recognized.

Pavis agreed with the term, he mentioned in the Theater Dictionary (Dictionary of Theater, 1998) by dividing three definitions:

- Repositioning a work from one genre to another
- Literary works (text) are changed into a form based on dramaturgy
- Do the translation of text adjusted / at least position yourself faithfully to the original text.

Pavis states that adapting is rewriting based on the initial text (row material), while Sander uses several points about infidelity which are mostly done in adaptation texts. What must

be done specifically when adapting historical documents to the stage [7].

"Nyai Ontosoroh" by Faiza Marzoeki conducted a re-thinking of the Bumi Manusia's novel by strengthening the role of women. Faiza made Nyai the main role, while in the novel the main role was Minke [5]. This manuscript is a complete adaptation to the PAT novel with very many roles (19 character figures plus 45 supporting characters). The scene begins in the afternoon when there is a payment of sugar workers and when it arises Sastrotomo (Sanikem's father) wishes to become a Tulangan Sugar Factory Payer. That intention gave birth to the idea to sell his 14-year-old daughter to the Great Lord of Power (Herman Mellema). In addition to the greed for the position of the paymaster, he was also uneasy about the views of the people about his child who developed the village was considered an old maid. Sastrotomo forced Mr. Mellema to play at his house. Since then the transaction occurred that his daughter was sold to Mr. Mellema for a wage and he became a sugar factory paymaster who had aspired to a more decent life.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I started with the background of Sanikem who are being sold to Dutch until entering Sanikem's journey as Nyai, Mr. Mellema's mistress. He accepted these conditions, joined with other Nyai lives with European culture, then took the step of not employing maids in his home, except Darsam, who was his loyal servant. Nyai did not want the life of her concubine to be known to many people so that all the work she took over by learning and learning [8]. Mr. Mellema liked it very much and he was taught various things about language, animal husbandry, plantation, administration, even his abilities exceeded the average Dutch woman, let alone Peranakan. As time went on and Nyai did not want to meet her parents, their family relationship had broken up. Their life went very well, and was immediately destroyed by the arrival of Ir. Mauritz Mellema, the legitimate son of Mr. Mellema. The incident made Mr. Mellema not care about himself and his family.

Action II tells the story of Minke when invited by Robert Suuhoff to meet the beautiful Annelies, Nyai Ontosoroh whom she admires, visits to her best friend (Jean Marais), discussions with her teacher (Magda Petters), follow-up meetings in the Nyai family until she lives there and marries a marriage with Annelies. The Minke summons by police officers to his parents' house in Bojonegoro and his struggle with Javanese civilization in behavior and behavior. He called it a historical leap and he should live in the next century.

A. *The Process of Empathy and Loyalty to the Text*

Broadly said that there were two forms of empathy, firstly Emphaty Affective which is a form of deep emphaty regarding emotional feelings that respond to situations or others [9] and Emphaty Cognitive which is to feel based on knowledge or views on the contents of texts including imagined places portrayed in people others [10]. Emphaty cognitive and affective are not used separately but can be used interrelated, complement each other in a complex process of imagination [11]. Faiza Marzoeki's work moves everything in the novel into a performance script such as a possible film scene with dozens

of settings and scenes. Including changes when Sanikem became Nyai Ontosoroh. The flow scrolls without taking into account the possibility of the scene on stage. In the theory of adaptation this means loyalty to the text, but dramatically the possibility of staging is difficult to realize. Therefore, a creative process is needed to anticipate this. Theater performances are a unity of time, space and events [12].

Faiza Marzoeki's work is very long and full of changing the settings. Transferring the settings in the novel directly on the theater stage requires technical precision in every change. This condition is for a staging theater that has a unity of space, time and events will be difficult. The possibility of a one-sided Indonesian theater stage that does not yet have a hydraulic stage makes it very difficult to change settings so that if every place has to be presented it requires adequate time and technology [12]. Suggestive stakes will also be difficult if too many setting changes are made to desc Mudford say: play has only one location, where the action moves freely, as inconsciousness between past, present and future. But this very restriction is also what makes a boundless stage action. Therefore, efforts (creative process) must be made and for that an ethical approach to the previous adapters is carried out. To make appropriate scenes and do not reduce the power of the story, both affective and cognitive permission requests are made to Faiza and in the introduction to any writing he is aware of the possibility of any genre and does not bind to a particular style [12]. The most important thing is "How to uphold the story of the resistance of a Sanikem alias Nyai Ontosoroh in a room called the stage. Anywhere! Does not stop in the reading room or in the solitude of the reader's image (Marzoeki, introduction to 2006) describe the whole scene.

B. *The Creative Process is Carried Out by the Adaptation Method*

His manuscript Ontosoroh by Faiza requires refinancing so that the flow can remain conveyed without changing too many settings. That way can be done, both on the proscenium stage and arena stage. The story adaptation was carried out from the meeting between Minke and Robert Suuhoff with the Nyai Ontosoroh's family and the events that took place at Nyai's house. A setting with a different background is performed only with the addition of a dialog. The Sanikem incident when it was sold was not done through flashback but by telling by the character Nyai. Less significant scenes are removed to reduce the number of scenes and characters. Adaptations are made to anticipate performances by:

1) *The setting of the show:* The setting of the show is done symbolically to suggest a general depiction of events at Nyai's house and the road to the house.

- In the first performance at the Dewi Asri building the stage was performed on the Arena stage (August 5, 2016), the use of space was only with three sides of the spectacle because the back of the building was used for the player in and out of the main house. Level in the middle of the stage as a marker of a large upper-class house equipped with carved *amben* and a set of teak furniture, Nyai's workspace was strengthened by a desk and bookshelf to strengthen learning about European literature and civilization. Storage property is calculated

so as not to interfere with the viewer's view from one side only. A small fence was installed to the right of the stage to show the front of the room and the road to Nyai's house. Lighting that is used more generally is only fade in and fade out, and blackouts for scene transitions and time shifts.

- Performances at the Sunan Ambu Building (Poscenium) on July 6, 2019 were carried out by dividing the space to the right of the stage to *amben* with carved long chairs and balconies at the top, the middle part being a pavilion with teak *mebeleur*; and the left side of the front stage for the terrace of the house, the rear left was given the height of one trap as Nyai Ontosoroh's workspace. The division of space by blocking is performed on certain scenes with the help of light spots in order to narrow the space and focus on going scenes.



Sources: Fajar Syahbani and Herfan Rusando.

Fig. 1. Arena stage settings (2016) and proscenium (2019).

2) *The presenting pattern:* The presenting pattern is carried out with a different approach for the two performances because of the nature of the stage used.

- The Arena Stage uses a mobile pattern because each character must provide the same portion in order to meet the viewer's views on each side. Blocking is done in a circle and division of space in various directions so that it can be enjoyed by the audience as a whole.

- Proscenium performances are more possible with formal acting because the audience only sees from one side of the view. Locking figures are mostly done, although it does not rule out the possibility of turning and backing the audience if needed and in accordance with the needs of the cast.

3) *Reduction of players:* Reduction of players is done in the Novel "Earth of Mankind" and Manuscript "Nyai Ontosoroh" Faiza from 19 major roles with 45 supporting roles to 9 people with 2 people doing double casting for the roles of Judges and Prosecutors. This tweaking is done to strengthen the role portion of each character. Thus the sketch was reduced so that the duration of the show could last for an hour and a half.

The loyalty of the adaptation made in Faiza's manuscript is to continue to strengthen Nyai's role as a resistance figure to her fate, despite losing [13]. She continued to fight with her respect. The possibility of staging is carried out in an adaptive creative process according to the prevailing dramaturgy. The figures presented are the main role holders who have an impact on the next scene so that there is no miss scene that will confuse the audience. Changes in time for weeks, months and years are done by changing the lighting (black out). Music illustration is carried out to suggest the atmosphere of 1890, both with Javanese and gramophone gamelan and keroncong that lived in his day.

IV. CONCLUSION

PAT's Bumi Manusia novel is full of humanism. How is the life of a Nyai who is vengeful to his family but produces a struggle for a better life so that he is able to show himself far more valuable than humans of higher degrees. His struggle and ideals failed because of his position as a mistress. The white court did not appreciate all the work that had been done to build Buitenzorg with or without Mr. Mellema's help. Natives especially "Nyai" make themselves worthless in European law. Faiza strengthened Nyai's struggle with Sanikem's resistance with the zeal of an imaginative, novel oriented orchestra to be staged in a theatre performance. The construction of an oppressed human character into a strong figure even mastering his master is a formidable warrior to defend himself and his rights, over his family and children. He takes the fight as a principle. Fighting an injustice is an honour if done honourably. The adaptation method is used with re-thinking and creative processes to strengthen PAT humanism and support the Faiza women's movement. Nyai figure became the main character of the struggle for rights with resistance respectfully. Minke became a supporter of Nyai's strength, they were two indigenous people who knew European culture and worshiped him and then felt the injustice of the civilization that was the teacher. They criticized and then fought in the name of rights and humanity [14]. Changes and self-actualization have been done, but time and age have not been in favour of them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to recognize the supplementary support by student in Theatre Department (Jaelani, Tiara Anjani, Regita, Tita, Chandra, and Aster). The writing cannot

be complete without contribution from related parties. Hence the writer would like to thank for Dr. Arthur S. Nalan, Afriwita, MA, Dr. Arining Wibowo. Pro-minent figure in Nyai Ontosoroh Per-formance, Fajar Syahbani and Herfan Rusando. I'd like to gratefulness to my friends in Theatre Department: Agus Setiawan, Yani maemunah, Rusman Nurdin, Kurnain and Yoyo C. Durachman. Especially for my family: My Mother, my husband, and my children (Dyah, Bhimo, and Kartika). There are names that cannot be written all here. The writer thanks for all help and support.

REFERENCES

- [1] P.A. Toer, *Bumi Manusia*. Jakarta: Lentera Dipantara, 2005.
- [2] Inan, "Nyai Ontosoroh, female character in post-colonial Indonesian Literatur," posted on Februari 10, 2018. [Online]. Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/@inananan/nyai-ontosoroh-female-character-in-postco-lonial-indonesian-literature-93531a13-d960> [Accessed on: Desember 16, 2019: 09.00 pm].
- [3] D. Syofyan, "Pramoedya's Faith for Women," *The Jakarta Post*, Monday, April 16, 2018. [Online]. Retrieved from: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2018/04/16/essay-pramoedyas-fight-for-women.html> [Accessed on: Desember 16, 2019: 10.00 pm].
- [4] <https://www.enotes.com/topics/this-earth-mankind/themes>
- [5] F. Marzoeki, "Nyai Ontoso-roh," *Naskah Pertunjukan*, 2006.
- [6] J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- [7] P. Pavis, *Dictionary of The Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- [8] R. Dwimarwati, "Emansipasi dan Aktualisasi Ala Nyai Ontosoroh (Berdasar Novel Bumi Manusia karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer)," *Prosiding Seminar Internasional Sastra, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya UNPAD*. Bandung: UNPAD Press, 2016.
- [9] S. Baron-Cohen, *Zero Degrees of Emphaty: A New Theory of Human Cruelty*. London: Penguin Books, 2011.
- [10] D. Zillman, "Mechanism of Emotional involvement with Drama," *Poetics*, vol. 23, no. (1-2), pp. 33-51, 1995.
- [11] A. Coplan and P. Godie, Eds. *Emphathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- [12] P. Mudford, *Making Thea-tre, From Text to Performance*. London & New Brunswick, NJ: The Athlone Press, 2000.
- [13] D. Budiyantri "Nyai Ontosoroh," Posted on Mei 9, 2007. "...Hidup bisa memberikan segala pada barang siapa tahu dan pandai menerima," (P.A. Toer, *Bumi Manusia*. 2002, p. 105). [Online]. Retrieved from: <https://pramoedyainstitute.wordpress.com/2007/05/09/nyai-ontosoroh>
- [14] K.T. Yunanto, "Voices Of Human Rights Note on Nyai Ontosoroh," (Ind) 31/12/2007. "Nyai Ontosoroh Perjuangan Menuju Keberanian Melawan" 16 Agustus 2007 – 17:48 WIB VOICES OF HUMAN RIGHTS.