

# Transcendence, Liberation, and Humanization in Novel Mantra Pejinak Ular (Literary Criticism Learning Material)

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the repertoire in the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* which is used as the background of creation so that the author's foreground can be revealed. This study's object is associated with the foundation of creation, which includes social norms, historical norms, and the entire culture displayed in the text. This research is a qualitative descriptive study with the research data source, namely the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular*, published in 2000 by the Kompas publisher in Jakarta. The data obtained is in the form of descriptive data so that data analysis is carried out by 1) reading, 2) identification, 3) classification, 4) interpretation, and 5) inference. This study will base the data analysis method on Wolfgang Iser Aesthetic Response. Iser's theory of repertoire used in this study focuses on the interaction process between the text and the reader to produce a response. So it is necessary to read the text in the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo to reveal its repertoire. The appropriate method of reading the text is the text criticism method. The results of reading, tracking and analyzing data show that there are three important things in the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular*: transcendence, liberation, and humanization. Related to education, the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo can be applied as an alternative to teaching or learning for students in schools (high schools) and students at universities, especially in the field of literature. Students can appreciate literary works in the form of the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo to gain insight and experience in learning literary criticism.

**Keywords:** *Aesthetic Response, Transcendence, Liberation, Humanization, Literature Learning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that the creation of literary works is an imitation of the realities that exist in life. Teeuw [1] stated that literature is inseparable from a cultural vacuum so that literature as fiction cannot be separated from the facts in it. The existing socio-cultural facts will become the background of an author in his creative process. Not much different from the opinion of Kleden [2], namely that literary works cannot be separated from the conditions of society and culture in which the work appears even though an author deliberately takes a distance/transcends existing socio-cultural conditions. Likewise with Kuntowijoyo's work. [3] Sumardjo states that the 66th generation is the horizon generation

literature. This naming is based on the name of the publishing agency that contains literary works of writers. From what Sumardjo said, it can be seen that Kuntowijoyo can be included in the 66th batch, considering that in that year, Kunto had started his work in Indonesian literature by producing several literary works and even published in *Horizon* magazine.

Kuntowijoyo thinks that literary works must be able to provide a balance between social and spiritual themes, between self-involvement in humanitarian issues and worship activities, between worldly and inherent things, historical activism, and religious experience. Most of Kuntowijoyo's works "breathe" prophetic. In his last work entitled "Maklumat Sastra Prophetic," Kunto emphasized his position as the

initiator of prophetic literature. Prophetic literature is literature that is involved in the history of humanity. Kunto deliberately did not use the term Islamic literature because he thought it was too narrow. His desire with literature is literature as worship and pure literature. Worship literature is an expression of his appreciation of religious values, and pure literature is an expression of his capture of reality [4]

Kuntowijoyo views literary work as a structuralization of experiences, personal experiences, other people's experiences, collective experiences, and research results. From these experiences, writers write their works. According to him, literature is also seen as a structuring of the imagination. For him, literature is also the structuring of values derived from religion, philosophy, science, proverbs, and everyday wisdom. These values are then internalized in the text [5].

As a writer, Kuntowijoyo wrote various literary genres: poetry, short stories, novels, and dramas. In his writing, Kunto has the privilege of producing works in the field of literature and scientific/academic works that are carried out in a balanced manner. It is certainly different from writers in general who only focus on one field. Prominent in academics but less prominent in writing literary works or vice versa. Kuntowijoyo is one of the few Indonesian writers and academics who are able to write literary works and scientific works equally strong. His position and position as a writer is comparable to his position as an academic. Kuntowijoyo pays intense attention to activities in the world of literature and science. It is what distinguishes Kuntowijoyo from other writers.

In a literary meeting at the 1986 TIM, Kunto clearly expressed the need to uphold prophetic ethics. According to him, in the Islamic framework, the human task is in two dimensions: the relationship between man and man (*hablun minannas*) and the relationship between man and God (*hablun minallah*). It is in this context that literature must show its existence and function [6].

According to Kunto, prophetic literature aims to expand the human mind in terms of divine awareness and human awareness. Literary works must provide a balance between social and spiritual themes, between self-involvement in humanitarian issues and religious activities, between those that are *dunyawiyah*, *ukhrawiyah*, and between historical activism and religious experience. Not only prophetic literature initiated by Kunto, but also prophetic social science based on humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Therefore, as emphasized by Kuntowijoyo, prophetic literature is literature that is involved in the history of humanity. This literature becomes part of the reality of human life, which is an afterthought of reality. From this thought, prophetic literature can be literature that

refines morals, educates reason, and sharpens the conscience.

Kunto's works are known as prophetic literature. The concept of prophetic literature is a literary concept that cares. The rules refer to the understanding and interpretation of scripture against reality. Three ethics, namely 1) *amar maruf* (humanization); *Nahi munkar* (liberation; and 3) *Tu minuna billah* (believing in God/transcendence).

Humanism is an attempt to humanize humans. Humanization is needed because society is in a state of dehumanization. Transcendence makes faith/transcendental an essential part of the process of building civilization. Transcendence is an effort to direct the purpose of human life to become a more meaningful life. Transcendent values are religious values that direct humans to find the great values of humanity. It can also be said as human values towards divinity. Meanwhile, liberation is an effort to free people from the shackles of oppressive social, economic, and political systems.

Realized in the novel *MPU* by Kuntowijoyo is a form of knowledge warehouse owned by Kuntowijoyo. When juxtaposed with the concept of Iser, this storehouse of knowledge can then be called a repertoire. Repertoire can be recognized through references to previous works or to a set of norms on which the creation is based, namely social, historical, and whole cultural norms that appear in the text [7]. Wolfgang Iser is a German literary theorist and co-founder of the admissions aesthetic schools at the University of Constance and the University of California [8].

The hallmark of the reception/reception theory is the aesthetic response. The aesthetic response must be understood in terms of the interaction between the text and the reader [9]. It is called an aesthetic response because it stimulates the reader's imagination, which gives life to the desired effect [10].

Iser's aesthetic response study centers on fundamental questions concerning the process of interpreting the text generated through communication between the text and its readers [7], namely how and in what conditions so that a text becomes meaningful to the reader. This question concerns (1) the way or action of reading; (2) the interaction between the text and the reader. The mode or action of reading refers to how the text directs how it is read and how the reader's experience governs the reading. In relation to meaning, Iser emphasizes that readers should react to the text, not just accept what the author says in the text. There are two reasons why a text is not neutral or closed to readers. First, writers are readers who are engaged with a lot of text. Second, a text reader is a person who has a variety of texts in him. That is why reading activity becomes an activity to "produce" (write) a cluster

(meaning) of texts [11]. The form of humanization, liberation, and transcendence expressed in the novel *MPU* is a repository of knowledge or a repertoire that Kuntowijoyo owns as a writer.

Reference to previous research, namely research conducted by Dimas Nurrochmat in 2019. This research is entitled *Novel Mantra Pejnak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo as a Literary Teaching Material in Senior High School: Study of Inner Conflict and Moral Educational Value. The results of this study can be used as a study of moral values and inner conflicts that are depicted in the psychological characters in the novel.

This study's difference is that both kinds of research focus on conflict, namely inner conflict and social conflict, while this study focuses on repertoire related to humanization, liberation, and transcendence. The novelty in this research uses Wolfgang Iser's Repertoire theory to find the author's intention in his work, namely humanization, liberation, and transcendence which can then be used as literary learning material.

## 2. METHODS

Humanization, Liberation, and Transcendence in this study are related to the repertoire. For this study, the researcher used Wolfgang Iser's literary reception theory related to the repertoire. Wolfgang Iser's repertoire theory views that what is realized in literary works is the author's "store of knowledge." It is inseparable from the author's social, cultural and historical norms as the background to create the intended foreground. The data source of this research is the novel *Mantra Pejnak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo, published by PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama Jakarta 2000 [12]. The data obtained were in the form of verbal descriptions so that data analysis was carried out by 1) reading, 2) identification, 3) classification, 4) interpretation, and 5) inference. This study will base the data analysis method on Wolfgang Iser Aesthetic Response. Iser's theory of repertoire used in this study focuses on the interaction process between the text and the reader to produce a response. Considering that a text will only give meaning when read [7], it is necessary to read the text in Kuntowijoyo's novel *MPU* to reveal its repertoire. Therefore, the method used is the reading method. The appropriate method of reading the text is the text criticism method. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. Qualitative research is defined as research that does not make calculations [13]. Before the data is collected and analyzed to prove the truth or untruth of the hypotheses made, the nature of the object of research must be determined. Thus material objects and formal objects must be defined. Material objects become the research field, while formal objects are seen from a certain point of view [14].

## 3. HUMANIZATION, LIBERATION, AND TRANSCENDENCE IN NOVEL MANTRA PEJINAK ULAR

Humanization ethics can be interpreted as a complete human being. Humanization is carried out to eliminate the state of dehumanization that afflicts modern society as a negative impact of technological and industrial progress. Dehumanization is human objectivation (theological, cultural, mass, state), aggressiveness (collective, individual, criminality, loneliness (privatization, individualization), and spiritual alienation (spiritual alienation, meaning that people have become foreign to themselves). In dehumanizing human behavior, the subconscious is more controlled by the subconscious than its awareness. Unwittingly, dehumanization has undermined Indonesian society, namely the formation of human machines, humans and mass society, and mass culture. Humanization in prophetic ethics is an effort to fight against dehumanization:

Then grandfather asked for the baby. She brought a red baby wrapped in batik cloth to Ronggowarsito's grave to experience blessings, asking for blessings. While handing back the baby, he said to his parents, "Be careful to take care of this child, tomorrow he will be a poet" (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 2).

In the quotation from the data above, it can be seen that a "blessing" culture can get closer to the act of shirk. This dressing has much reflection in the Indonesian people's social and cultural life, which later became Kuntowijoyo's storehouse of knowledge and was expressed in the *MPU* novel's text. The "experience of blessings" that often occurs in Indonesian society apart from sacred graves asks for help from people who have died by reciting a spell or oral speech at the place where the person is buried. It contrasts with humanization, which is a form of traditional dehumanization, namely believing in myths and making the graves of specific people or figures sacred. It can also be seen from the character of the grandfather who saved the grave of Ronggowarsito, a poet in Java who believed that visiting the grave could get blessings or good luck. The form of dehumanization in Kuntowijoyo's novel *MPU* can be seen in the following quote.

"You must not die before teaching this knowledge to the right person."

"What is that?"

"Snake-disposal spell."

Then the man looked for Abu's right ear and whispered a sentence.

"Understand?"

Then the man whispered again in Abu's right ear.

"Yes, this is all from the Quran." (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 21).

In the quote above, it is illustrated that two characters are having a conversation. One character spoke to Abu Kasan not to leave the spell. According to him, the mantra is in accordance with the Al Qur'an. Even though we can know in the Al-Qur', it never discusses the issue of mantras. Thus, this is also an act of shirk in the name of Islam. Islam and the Al-Qur' an are used as protection to justify mistakes in religion, namely doing actions strictly prohibited by religion, namely syirik and asking for help from supernatural beings other than God. Apart from traditional forms of dehumanization, there is also modern dehumanization. Modern dehumanization can be seen in the following quote.

"Reportedly, he was arrested for being a puppeteer" "Mastermind detained?" "Not the mastermind, but against the randu. (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 169)

In the above quotation, it can be seen that the art of puppetry becomes obstructed and is considered insignificant if it is no longer related to politics. Art that stands alone and is not related to political matters is considered helpless and meaningless because politics considers art to be a political victory tool. The art seen in the quote from the *MPU* novel is wayang art. In the novel, it is described that a puppeteer can be problematic if he remains idealist in defending art without confusing art as a tool for political gain. In the above quote, the Randu party is a symbol of the Golkar Party. This party is the largest and strongest party during the reign of President Suharto in Indonesia. Arts and politics are things that should stand alone without being tied together. Another dehumanization is dehumanization related to ma-lima, which can be seen in the following quote.

When the village head chose, the caretaker cum headman liked five, namely madon, drinking, drinking, playing (women, drinking alcohol, smoking opium, gambling), so he was not chosen as the head of the village. The caretaker's family was never thieved, but the four were enough to make him disabled in front of the village community (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 4).

Ma-lima stands for 5M, including *Maling*, *Mabok*, *Madat*, *Madon*, and *Main* (stealing, drunk, drugs, playing women, gambling). Ma-lima is a reflection of character. They will be considered as doing evil deeds so that their character is also wrong. A leader is strongly discouraged from doing this because the leader must set a good example. If a leader does this, his career will be damaged.

The liberation formulated by Kuntowijoyo comes from nahi munkar. Nahi munkar itself has the meaning

of preventing things that are evil/preventing things from evil. The term liberation comes from the Latin word *liberare*, which means to liberate/liberate, all with connotations of social significance. The form of liberation in the novel *Mantra Pejina Ular* by Kuntowijoyo is shown in the quote below.

Falling in love is natural. What is forbidden by religion is adultery. So, falling in love is legal, just as it is legal for people to drink water, eat rice, watch puppets, and sing. That is all because it is natural. God spoils nature. (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 33).

From the quotation of data 1, it can be seen that the form of liberation, which is the storehouse of Kuntowijoyo's knowledge expressed in the novel *MPU*, is a statement that as a human being, it is natural to fall in love. It is not wrong to fall in love with adultery because it is forbidden by religion. The feeling of falling in love is a blessing from God, but adultery is a prohibition from God. In quote 2, the form of liberation depicted in the text excerpt in the *MPU* novel is an invitation not to damage the environment because humans always depend on the environment to meet their daily needs. The non-damaging act depicted in Kuntowijoyo's novel *MPU* is not cutting down forests. What is expressed in the novel *MPU* is a form of Kuntowijoyo's store of knowledge in seeing the reality around him, the reality of environmental damage caused by human activity that can endanger the survival of humans and other living creatures.

Transcendence ethics, namely reminding the existence and behavior of humans on earth (between humans and between creatures) with the existence of God. The union of human consciousness with divine consciousness makes human existence complete. Ritual worship for God is balanced with social worship to fellow humans (including protecting nature and other God's creatures). Roger Garaudy said there are three transcendence elements, namely, recognition of human dependence on God, the absolute difference between God and humans, and recognition of absolute norms from God that do not come from human reason. [4]. In Islam, transcendence is in the form of Sufism. Quotations of data in the *MPU* novel that show the value of transcendence can be seen in the quotation below.

Just throw away the mantra, what you need is science, technology, and prayer, not mantras (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 257)

An old man then opened the Qur'an, showing the verse. "Jin can live anywhere. After deliberating, the genies agreed to go (Kuntowijoyo, 2000: 202).

In some data quotations in the form of text in Kuntowijoyo's novel *Mantra Pejina Ular*, it can be interpreted that the *MPU* novel contains a transcendent form as a repository of Kuntowijoyo's knowledge. The

form of transcendence is Kuntowijoyo's effort to carry out his writing mission to make things better. Kunto's mission in writing is to write literature for the beauty and worship of God. There is a text quote that states Kuntowijoyo's thought that humans must remember, believe, and depend on God in this life. Asking only from God through prayer with effort is not dependent on mantras and asking other than God. Asking other than God will lead people to actions that are forbidden by God.

*Mantra Pejinak Ular* is the mind and thoughts of Kuntowijoyo as the author. The novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* contains a repository of knowledge or Kuntowijoyo's repertoire relating to his knowledge of nature, humanity, religion, myth, and culture. Kuntowijoyo sees outside himself as extra-intellectual knowledge to serve as the background for his creation in his novel. When it is related to Iser's theory regarding the repertoire that is inseparable from the social, cultural, and historical norms that appear in the text, then the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo fulfills this. Social norms are related to humanity which is expressed in the text of the novel. In cultural norms, Kuntowijoyo presents the reality of Javanese abangan people who still believe in myths and occultism. It is related to Javanese spirituality. Kebatinan can be identified with mystical. The dimensions of kebatinan include belief in sacred objects, belief in magical symbols, and belief in ancestral spirits. Mulder [15] considers Javanese society's kebatinan as a combination of religion and Javanese way of life.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the repertoire analysis results with Wolfgang Iser's Aesthetic Response theory to the object of study of the novel *MPU* by Kuntowijoyo related to humanization, liberation, and transcendence, it can be concluded that 1) Novel *MPU* contains humanization values (Amar 'maruf). The research results show that the form of humanization in the novel *MPU* by Kuntowijoyo is a concretization in resisting or rejecting dehumanization, which causes society's condition to be disharmonious at the level of social life. The resistance to dehumanization as a form of humanization, namely abandoning belief in myths. The value of liberation (nahi munkar) is inseparable from Kuntowijoyo's repertoire or store of knowledge as the background for the creation of works; 2) The novel *MPU* contains the value of liberation, which includes liberation from the politicization of art with the aim that art has purity without being documented by corrupt politics, preserving the natural environment, and the concept of love; 3) the novel *MPU* by Kuntowijoyo contains transcendent values (tu'minubillah), namely the Qur' an as a guide for life, trusting in God with gratitude for its blessings and asking only from God; and the act of praying and abandoning mantras; 4) In relation to

education, the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo can be applied as an alternative to teaching or learning for students in schools (Senior High Schools) and students in universities, especially in the fields of Language and Literature. Students and students can appreciate literary works in the form of the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo to gain insight and experience of learning literary criticism.

The novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo can be applied as an alternative to teaching or learning for students in schools (Senior High Schools) and students in universities, especially in Language and Literature. Students can appreciate literary works in the form of the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo so that students gain insight and experience about the application of Wolfgang Iser's Aesthetic Response Theory, the concept of repertoire in this theory, analysis of literary works based on the theory built by Wolfgang Iser, understand the meaning of liberation, humanization, and transcendence contained in the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular*, discover and understand the author's intention through his work. The most important thing for students and students is finding a form of literary criticism of a literary work genre in the form of a novel.

#### Literary Criticism as Literary Learning Material

Analysis of literary works in the form of the novel *Mantra Pejinak Ular* by Kuntowijoyo with Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic response theory, which focuses on repertoire, is a form of literary criticism. Literary criticism is significant in literature education and learning, namely to increase students' appreciation of literary works. Literary criticism can be in the form of descriptions, analyzes, interpretations of specific literary works [16]

It cannot be separated from learning literary criticism in literature learning for students in high schools and students at universities. The scope of literary criticism learning is comprehensive, namely writing book reviews, articles, essays, poetry, prose reviews, and analyzing literary works using specific theories. The existence of literary criticism will provide an overview and make it easier for students to appreciate literary works. It can be started by reading several literary works, reading responses or reviews about these literary works, practicing writing, and responding to the literary works they read.

The existence of literary criticism material as a form of literacy learning for students in schools and students at universities will reduce the effects of boredom and monotony in literature learning. It cannot be denied that teachers and lecturers have not expected literature learning in some schools because literature learning is still limited to theoretical nature and lack of action in practice. If this happens, students will experience failure

in developing knowledge, language skills, and a lack of interest in and appreciation of literary works.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1 is looking for appropriate research data sources and read them carefully. Author 1 consulted which theory and method would be appropriate to be used in the research. Author 2 and author 3 verify the theory and methods used in the research and direct the application of theory in data analysis. Author 2 and author 3 encourage author 1 to investigate and supervise research findings. Author 1 conducted data analysis, namely reading the text on the data source, data identification, data classification, interpretation, and inference. Author 2 and author 3 examine the results of the analysis and provide supportive suggestions. They were checking the text's reading on the data source, data identification, data classification, interpretation, and inference. Also, author 1 and author 2 address the shortcomings of author 1's work.

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