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**Aesthetical Form and Educative Messages of Illustration Image  
of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata (Not Merely Tears) Short Story by  
Abdullah Ibnu Thalhah**

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**Abstrack**

Some people still underestimate art. Art is a keyword in all fields. For example, the design of advertisements on industrial products that seek to touch the needs of emotion and imagination of its consumers. A short story illustration is a part of a work of art that illustrates a short story narrative text. There is an expression stated that the short story text acts as a Master, while the short story illustration acts as a servant who is obedient to his Master. It means that the illustrations for short stories are only seen as decoration. This study aims to describe and analyze the aesthetic form and educational message of the illustrated *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata (Not Merely Tears)* short story by Ibnu Thalhah. The research method used qualitative research with a case study design. The data collection used observation, interviews, and documentation. According to Miles and Huberman, this study used data analysis techniques: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This study's results indicate three stages in analyzing the visuals in the illustrated short stories, including description, formal analysis, and interpretation. The embodiment of the aesthetic form of the illustration for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story by Ibnu Thalhah is surreal, with black and white colour domination. Each object drawn has a hidden meaning in it. In the illustration, the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story contains educational messages, including religious, moral, social, and cultural values. The significance of this research is educating the readers that short story illustrations cannot be seen as decoration only because it visualizes the narrative texts that contain meaning and educational messages, which can be used as a medium for public awareness regarding phenomena in society.

**Keywords:** Short Story Illustration, Aesthetic Forms, Educative Messages

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## INTRODUCTION

Art can be interpreted as something created by humans with elements of beauty that can evoke feelings for themselves and others (Astuti et al., 2021). It is sometimes taken for granted, and some people even think it is useless, a waste of time, effort and money, so it becomes unimportant. This kind of phenomenon regarding art is very ironic. Art has become a keyword in all fields, educational, social, economic, and others (Sunarto & Suherman, 2017). Furthermore, Sahman (in Tarsa, 2016: 51) stated that when we talk about art, especially fine art, it cannot be separated from a work of art. An artwork is a product of art created by humans to convey their feelings towards a value.

An illustration from a short story is a form of two-dimensional applied art, which belongs to the type of literary illustration. Generally, short story illustrations can be found in print media such as newspapers or magazines in the short story column. According to Kusrianto (2009: 140), illustrations are art images used to explain a goal visually. Furthermore, Mahayana (2006:14) explained that stories are sketches, fragments, speeches, or essays that cover everyday human life, light and funny stories or serial stories taken from an event that was once actual news. The magazine "Sahabat Kita" stated that light stories with short narratives are called short stories.

In line with this, Prasetyo (2006:26) emphasized that the illustrations of a short story usually clarify the narrative text of a short story. In his article titled *Pameran: Melepas Beban Ilustrasi*, he added that the short story illustrations illustrate the short story's narrative text. The relationship between word and sight adheres to traditional standards involving explicit subordination between two mediums, verbal and visual, with clearly defined roles for each. The short story text acts as the master, while the short story illustration acts as an obedient servant to his

master. In its conventional meaning, short story illustrations are seen as mere decorations. Its status is artificial instead of essential.

The development of art, particularly the illustration of short stories, is not only about beauty without meaning but also about the nature of the works of art created. Through the illustrated short stories, the illustrator communicates both implicitly and explicitly visual messages, which can provide enlightenment and influence contemplation for the audience to achieve their aesthetic awareness. Art can be a medium for social awareness regarding phenomena and value policies in social life. Its expression does not only give meaning to social reality but rather as a medium for critical awareness and action for change (Zaenuri & Lestari, 2009).

The awareness regarding the importance of art in education has been present for a long time. Art is seen as a medium to balance life as a dignified human being. As Plato stated in his thesis, "that art should be the basis of education". This statement is not only responded to as arts education but, more broadly, as aesthetic education. Art is an educational tool and a medium to balance life between intellectual-rational reasoning and aesthetic-emotional sensitivity (Rohidi, 2011).

Literary works are the product of the author's imagination which is influenced by social realities beyond imagination because every social phenomenon in literary works reflects social phenomena that occur in society. One form of literary work that can be used is short stories (Suyanto et al., 2018).

Ismayani (2013) explained that a short story, one of the literary texts, is a unity between meaning, language, and a specific purpose. The purpose of literary texts is certainly inseparable from the didactic function of literary works, which are expected to be able to educate readers about the good things contained in literary works. As a statement by Kadembo (in Zatwaricka-

Madura & Nowacki, 2018) stated that "storytelling or the narrative approach is increasingly becoming a core element in influencing processes such as education".

Primarily, the educational process is a communication process, namely conveying the communicator's message to the communicant. Moreover, education is also an effort to transmit values from individuals to others. Communication that occurs in the context of transmitting these values is educative. The substantial aspect of scholarly communication is the transmission of values that contain messages with educational values; thus, it changes the perception and behaviour of each individual (Chandra & Rahim, 2020). Wicaksono (2017) added that in the scope of literary works, there are four educational values: religious, moral, social, and cultural.

In this study, the author chose the illustrated object for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* (Not Merely Tears) short story by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah in 2011, which indicates educational messages either implicitly or explicitly.

As a material for comparison and study, this research is inseparable from previous research. The research results used as reference material, namely research on the role of illustrated short stories, were carried out by Ratih Candrastuti with the title "Peran Gambar Ilustrasi dalam Cerita Pendek (Studi Kasus: Cerpen Harian Kompas Minggu)". The results of this study suggested that the art of illustration clarifies the contents of a book or essay, and essays can be in the form of literary works such as short stories. The essence of the story is the events and characters as the main characters, and another is the basic theme of the author, which contains messages, advice, criticisms and values of humanity. The author and illustrator deliver this thematic aspect by giving the readers a chance to interpret the contents of the theme that they want to convey in the form of an image. The text then is framed in Kompas media. The role of the illustrator and the author is a complete collaboration in one unit. In contrast,

illustrators can express their ideas through visual language according to their respective styles and expertise (Candrastuti, 2015).

In her research, Candrastuti used the study object to illustrate the 2008 Kompas Sunday short story with various colour elements, which was the work of illustrators Hadi Susanto and Ipong PS, using a theory from Erwin Panofsky, namely pre-iconographic, iconographic and iconological aspects. At the same time, the novelty in the present research includes using the object of study of the illustration of the 2011 *Suara Merdeka* short story by Ibnu Talhah, which has black and white elements. This research examined the embodiment of the aesthetic form of short story illustrations using the aesthetic theory by Feldman and examined the educational messages using a theory by Wicaksono.

The formulation of the problems in this study include: (1) How is the aesthetic form of the illustration for the short story *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah? (2) What educational messages are conveyed in the illustrations for the short story *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah?

## METHODS

Theoretically, this research used an interdisciplinary approach. Rohidi (2011) argued that the interdisciplinary approach involves taking concepts or theories from other scientific disciplines. In this study, there is more than one scientific discipline used to examine the embodiment of the aesthetic form of illustrated short stories. It used Feldman's aesthetic theory and studied the educational message *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah using a theory by Wicaksono. Methodologically, this study used a qualitative descriptive approach. Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2012) have defined *qualitative methodology* as a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviour. It aims to obtain a broad and in-

depth general picture of the embodiment of aesthetic forms and the educational messages expressed in the illustrations for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story. The research design used by researchers was a case study.

Data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation (Rohidi, 2011). The observations were made formally and informally to observe the embodiment of aesthetic forms and the educational messages expressed in the illustrations for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story. Interviews were conducted with Abdullah Ibn Talhah as the resource person. In the documentation technique, the researcher searched for supporting documents, including the 2011 *Suara Merdeka* short story archive, documents related to the biography of Abdullah Ibnu Talhah and books and journals on theory and the concept of illustrations, aesthetics, and educational messages. According to Miles and Huberman (in Rohidi, 2011), there are three steps in analyzing data: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data reduction has included selecting and simplifying data obtained in the field and grouping it into main units of thought related to aesthetic forms, as well as educational messages in the illustrations for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story. Furthermore, the data is presented in brief descriptions, charts, and relationships between categories. Finally, the researcher concludes the data obtained and processes it following formulation of the problem and the research objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Summary of *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* (Not Merely Tears) Short Story



**Figure 1.** The Illustration of *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* Short Story

A father walked thousands of kilometres on foot to meet President Klobodan. He brought the five skulls of his children who had died from dengue fever on his journey. His name is Rosoh. Rosoh wanted to ask the President for justice because the hospital did not want to accept poor patients when his children were sick, so his children passed away without treatment.

Krani, Rosoh's wife, tried to stop his intention to meet the President, but with all of his explanations, Krani finally let her husband go on the journey. He finally walked 1,500 kilometres long on foot, accompanied by the skulls of five of his children, which he hung around his neck with an iron chain. Every time he felt tired, he would look at his children's skulls as if they smiled happily at his journey. Because of that, Rosoh's enthusiasm to continue the journey grew stronger. He ate and drank with his own money and never asked others for mercy. Many people felt sorry for him; even dozens of journalists wanted to interview him, but he did not want to be interviewed because he felt he was not searching for a sensation. Without his permission, the news about him had spread widely that the city order troops planned to kill him with the help of dogs. Rosoh was about to be arrested, but he managed to escape.

He finally arrived in front of the State Palace. It turned out that he was not alone

because masses gathered brandishing human skulls while shouting for President Klobodan to ask for justice across the State Palace. The security forces stood guard vigilantly.

After waiting for the President for so long and he never showed up. In the end, the masses put down the skulls they had brought until they became mountains of human skulls. Then they held a moment of silence and prayed together by singing "Gugur Tengkorak". Suddenly the sound of gunshots was heard, and hundreds of officers joined the crowd to disperse the action violently. Many people bathed in blood because of the beatings of the security officers. Rosoh tried to save his five children's children's skulls, but in the end, he was shot and collapsed. He was crying, but it was not merely torn. He seemed to see his children smile and hug him. It was what made him happy.

#### **Aesthetic Forms of Illustration in Bukan Sekadar Air Mata Short Story**

Surajiyo (2015: 160) explained that aesthetics comes from the Greek word "aesthesis" or observation, a branch of philosophy about beauty. The object of aesthetics is the experience of beauty. In aesthetics, what is sought is the nature of beauty, forms of experiencing beauty (such as physical beauty and spiritual beauty, natural beauty and artistic beauty) and investigations about human emotions as a reaction to the beautiful, the sublime, the good, the touching, etc. In aesthetics, it is divided into descriptive and normative aesthetics. Descriptive aesthetics describes the symptoms of the experience of beauty, while normative aesthetics search for the basis of the experience.

Beauty in art is an arrangement of various harmony and resistance (contrast) of the elements of line, colour, shape, and tone. The medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas defined beauty' as' *id quod visum placet*' or something that is said to be beautiful when it pleases the eye of the observer. Another formulation of Thomas describes three

qualities that must be present in beauty: integrity or completeness, correct proportion or harmony, and brilliance. Harbert Read, in his book *The Meaning of Art*, explained that art is a human effort to create works of art that are fun based on humans' sensitivity to feelings and their ability to unite various elements of art to create harmony as the result of the process of creating works of art (Dharsono, 2007).

Feldman (1967) stated that an art style is a grouping or classification of works of art (by time, area, form, technique, and subject matter), which makes further study and analysis possible. Functional aspects are also discussed in this regard: art is an individual need for personal expression. According to Feldman, art forms include: (1) visual elements discuss line, shape, darkness, and colour; (2) organizational elements discuss unity, balance, rhythm, and proportion; (3) the sensory elements discuss empathy, distance, psychic, combination and founder, and perception of works of art.

In the aesthetic theory by Feldman (1967), there are three steps in the analysis process, namely:

##### 1) Description

At the description stage, appreciation is achieved by giving an accurate picture of something based on what is seen. The description based on what is seen includes sensory elements such as colour, line, shape, and space, or in other words, the emphasis is given to the elements of art. Explanation of the visual description of the image is displayed clearly and explicitly.

In the illustration of *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata*, there are three objects, namely a human (male figure), a human skull, and a boat. A male figure is depicted hugging a human skull. His face looked sad with his eyes closed and his mouth flat.

His body is wrapped in a cloth exposing his chest and right arm. His body is also tied to a cloth tied to a boat, which is made of wood and has an irregular shape. On the head of the male figure are a cloth headband and two

circular hollow wings of various sizes on his back.

## 2) Formal Analysis

Formal analysis analyses the object as a whole regarding the quality of the visual elements. It also analyses it part by part, such as explaining the procedures for organizing elementary artistic elements such as the quality of lines, areas, colours as well as textures, and explaining how the composition of the work as a whole with balance issues, rhythm, the centre of attention, elements of contrast, and unity.

Furthermore, Wardani (in Yuniarti, 2015) stated that shape is the main thing that observers see because it has elements of visual elements such as line, shape, value, texture, colour, and space. The form is considered essential and stands alone as a closed and structured element in the visual world.

The formal analysis of the illustrations for Bukan Sekadar Air Mata can be described as follows.

### a) Analysis of Visual Elements

In the illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata, the figure of a father, a human skull, wings and a boat are depicted realistically. There is a dot element in the entire object of the Bukan Sekadar Air Mata illustration.

Each object has a curved line element. On the boat and the piece of cloth that binds the body of the figure of the father to the boat, there is an element of a diagonal line (tilted line). On the wing, there is a hole in the shape of a circle. There are non-geometric elements on the wings and the arrangement of the wood that forms the boat.

The boat has an element of space, namely where the father figures kneel. The boat has a rough texture, with visible wood grain formed from the shading of line elements. Meanwhile, the cloth covering the father's body and the wings on his back are soft.

Light and dark elements are seen in the main subject (the figure of the father), the human skull, boat, wing, and the cloth covering the human body. The dark light

element is obtained from the intensity of the stroke density of the line elements. The illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata is in black and white. The colours are used to form dark and light objects. The black and white colours give a dramatic impression.

Overall, the illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata is in a surrealistic style. The main element in the illustration is the figure of a father with wings on his back, an imaginative creature as the main subject in a representative form. At the same time, the supporting subjects include human skulls, cloth, and boats in a representative form.

### b) Composition Principle Analysis

The illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata contains elements of unity in size, black and white colour, the direction of attention, and form.

In the illustration, the elements of harmony can be seen in the alignment of lines and shapes, size, rough and soft textures, concepts, black and white colours, and functions in the placement of illustration images and short stories in newspapers.

The elements of rhythm in the illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mara can be found in the wooden arrangement that forms the boat, the wings on the father's father's back, and the cloth used to cover the father's father's body. The element of domination in the illustrated image is the figure of the father, who is the centre of interest (the object that is the centre of attention).

The element of balance contained in the illustration of Bukan Sekadar Air Mata is a gap balance, namely having unequal parts between the left and right hemispheres but still in a state that is not one-sided. The proportion element in the illustration does not show any shape, size, or colour irregularities between one part and another.

### 3) Interpretation

Interpretation is interpreting the things behind a work and its meaning, message or value. Each interpretation can reveal things related to the statement behind the structure of the form, for example, the psychological

elements of the creator of the work, the socio-cultural background, ideas, abstractions, stances, considerations, desires, beliefs, and certain experiences of the artist. Interpretation is one way to clarify the message, meaning and Value contained in work by expressing every detail of the interpretation process in the right language.

A father named Rosoh fought for justice from President Klobodan because his five children died from not getting medical treatment when they had dengue fever. A human skull depicts his dead children. The hospital that he went to refused because of his poor economic situation.

Rosoh's passion for justice is illustrated by the wings on his back and the cloth headband. Meanwhile, the holes in his wings illustrate his limitations or imperfections, namely his family, which belongs to a poor community. In addition, his limitations are shown in the use of a piece of cloth used to cover his body as clothing.

Despite his limitations, Rosoh remains passionate about fighting for justice for President Klobodan. Some of the cloth ropes that tied his body to the boat illustrate a high determination to demand justice even though in an imperfect state. Furthermore, his sadness at the loss of his children is shown in his sad and somber expression by embracing his child's skull with great affection.

The boat Rosoh is on board illustrates his fighting spirit to navigate his life, including in demanding justice. He is willing to walk 1,500 km to the State Palace of Klobodan with his children's skulls. The boat is made of wood. Ibnu Talha revealed that the wood shows ancient traditions that relied on wood for their daily needs and illustrates the life of underprivileged people (poor people).

### **Educative Messages Illustrated in Bukan Sekadar Air Mata Short Story**

*Short stories* are stories originating from social conditions and social values of the society that have educational messages either implicitly or explicitly. In short stories, the

author conveys educational messages through the characters and events he tells. This educational message can be made by humans as role models and learning in a better direction.

In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, a *message* is defined as an order, advice, request, and mandate that must be carried out or conveyed to others (Depdikbud, 1999). According to Wijdaja (1997), a message is a whole of what is conveyed by the communicator. Delivery of messages can be done verbally, face to face, or using written media. The content of the message can be in the form of input or suggestions.

The forms of messages can be informative, persuasive, and coercive. The informative messages provide facts; the communicant draws conclusions and decisions. In contrast to informative, the form of a message that is persuasive contains persuasion. It means it awakens human understanding and awareness that what is conveyed will change attitudes. Meanwhile, coercive messages are coercive messages using sanctions if they are not implemented (Wijdaja, 1997).

The word educative comes from the English word "educate", which means nurturing or educating. Education means education, and people who do education are called educators. Educative means educational related to education (Depdikbud, 1999). According to Hadi (2013), the term educative etymologically comes from the Greek word "paidagoge", which consists of the word *pais*, which means child and the word *agi*, which means guiding. Therefore, paidagoge means guiding children.

Triyanto (2017:79-80) argued that as a social institution, education is a process for cultivating humans towards maturity so that they can live independently and contribute to responsibly building community life. In line with this, Soyomukti (in Triyanto, 2017) explained that education is a process to provide humans with various situations to empower themselves. The self-empowerment

is carried out through awareness and enlightenment, which results in the expected behaviour change. The change in question is the formation of human beings who have noble characters and can build a national civilization.

In educating, choosing the right media that contains educational value is necessary. A short story as literature and artwork also requires consideration and assessment of the art (Pradopo, 2005). Ratna (in Yulismayanti et al., 2020) explained that etymologically, literature is defined as a tool for educating. Concerning the message, a whole literary work is a means of ethics. It means that both educative and literary works (short stories) are interrelated.

Literary works can provide awareness to readers about the truths in life. From literary works, readers can gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of humans, the world, and life (Sumardejo in Gusal, 2015). Furthermore, Waluyo (in Gusal, 2015) added that the Value contained in literature is a good value in the meaning of literary works and life. Various insights in literary works, especially short stories, contain educational values that benefit readers in their lives.

According to Wicaksono (2017), there are four educational or educational values within the scope of literary works, which are as follows.

#### 1) Religious Value

Being religious is hope and faith in God, which makes humans have obligations and prohibitions to God to have emotional balance. It is seen as the basis for good behaviour in community life.

The religious Value in the illustration for the *Bukan Sekadar Air Mata* short story is seen in the struggle of Rosoh, a father who fought for justice for his children. He was willing to travel thousands of kilometres on foot to meet President Klobodan. The hospital refused to treat poor patients when his children were sick with dengue fever. Furthermore, his children passed away. Doing justice is God's God's commandment. In

carrying out something, one should not be one-sided or only take one side with one of the people because it can trigger social jealousy in society.

#### 2) Moral Value

The moral is everything considered good, which is the basis for humans to become civilized. In literary works, morality is the author's author's view of the values of truth to be conveyed to readers. These moral values must be absorbed properly to shape the reader's character.

According to Partiwintaro (in Indrawan et al., 2016), moral teachings contain values which include morals in human relations with God, morals in human relations with other human beings, morals in human relations with nature, and morals in human relations with oneself.

The moral values in the illustration above are shown by Rosoh, a father who fought for justice for his children who died because they did not receive medical treatment. He was willing to walk tens of kilometres to meet President Klobodan to convey his anxiety regarding medical treatment that looked at social status, which resulted in a victim, namely his children. Rosoh's behaviour is a moral teaching in human relations with other humans.

#### 3) Social Value

Social Value is a value held by a society that is considered good and bad in a community group. It needs to be instilled in each individual, so that good social relations can be established with other individuals.

Social Value is reflected in the behaviour of Rosoh, a father who shows affection to his children, even though his children have died. His persistence in meeting President Klobodan was proven by his act of walking thousands of kilometres. He demanded justice for the death of his children, who died without medical treatment due to his poor economic conditions.

#### 4) Cultural Value

Cultural Value is something that is considered valuable by a group of people. This



Value is described as sacred natural life with rules that are seen as a way of life.

The Bukan Sekadar Air Mata short story's illustration has a cultural value reflected in the habit of the people holding demonstrations against the government to convey their aspirations. It was done by Rosoh and local residents who gathered by brandishing human skulls while shouting for President Klobodan to ask for justice. However, President Klobodan was reluctant to meet them. In the end, the residents arranged the skulls they had brought to become mountains of human skulls. Then they held a moment of silence and prayed together by singing "Gugur Tengkorak".

## CONCLUSION

There are three stages in the visual analysis of short story illustration, including description (a depiction of words presented in works of art without concluding), formal analysis (the object under study with the support of some visually visible data, such as visual art elements and the principles of composition in fine art), and interpretation (interpreting a message, meaning, and Value in work). The embodiment of the aesthetic form of the illustration for the Bukan Sekadar Air Mata short story by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah in 2011 in a surreal style with black and white dominance. Each object drawn has a hidden meaning in it.

The illustration for the Bukan Sekadar Air Mata short story by Abdullah Ibnu Talhah in 2011 contains educational messages, including religious, moral, social, and cultural values. The educational messages revealed in the short story illustration are expected to educate and awaken people to behave better in social life.

This research can break the expression that "the short story text acts as the Master, while the illustration acts as the Servant". A work of art, especially a short story illustration, is not just a decoration on a newspaper page. However, it has an implied

meaning conveyed by the illustrator with their characteristics.

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