

## Similarities and Differences in Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Point of View of the *Jatisaba* Novel and the *Bekisar Merah* Novel

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### Abstract

Elements are important parts of a literary work. An element functions to build a framework in a literary work, for instance, the character element contained in the *Bekisar Merah* novel by Ahmad Tohari. The main character in this novel is a female. Her name is Lasi. A female main character is also found in the *Jatisaba* novel by Ramayda Akmal. Her name is Maemunah. It shows that the element in the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel is similar. This element is especially in the aspect of the character. The objective of this study is to find out similarities and differences related to the elements contained in the *Jatisaba* novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel. An intertextual and a structural approach were applied in this study. The data were collected through structural methods and semiotic reading methods. The data in this study are in the form of fragments of text of the *Jatisaba* novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel. Data analysis was carried out by using structural methods and semiotic methods. The results show that there are similarities related to the elements between the two novels. These elements include theme, character, setting, and plot. In addition, there are also differences between the two novels related to the theme, character, setting, and point of view. This research is beneficial for the community to find out the relationship between novels.

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## INTRODUCTION

Elements are important parts of a literary work. An element functions to build a framework in a literary work. For example, an element contained in the *Bekisar Merah* novel by Ahmad Tohari is that the main character is a female. Her name is Lasi. In the novel, Lasi is told as a person who is beautiful, tough, loyal, hardworking, and independent. It is reflected in the events that she had been through. Lasi was born in a village where most of the population is economically underprivileged. The people of the village are mostly tappers of sap water. Lasi grew into a beautiful woman. Her beauty came from the combination of her parents. Her mother is from Karangsoja, while her father is from Japan. Her beauty is considered to look alike *bekisar*. *Bekisar* is name for chickens that comes from cross-breeding between a jungle chicken and a native chicken. Lasi's life can be said to be difficult. She has a husband named Darsa. As a wife, Lasi is a kind and a caring person. She accepts her husband under any circumstances. However, her kindness is contrary to Darsa's treatment towards her. He committed an affair and betrayed Lasi.

Similar stories are also found in the *Jatisaba* novel by Ramayda Akmal. It has a female main character as well. Her name is Maemunah. Maemunah is from Jatisaba. It is a village whose population has a low economic condition. Therefore, many people of Jatisaba are migrant workers. Maemunah also became a migrant worker. In her attempt to become a migrant worker, it turned out that she was tricked by a migrant worker recruitment agency. They did not give her the job as promised. Instead, she was forced to become a prostitute.

The stories in the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel are similar in terms of the element. This element is in the aspect of the character. Both novels have a female main character. The similarity of the characters of both novels can be a sign of a relationship between these two. Not only the characters, but there are also several elements in the two novels

that can be used as a sign of the relationship between them.

The elements in the two novels that include themes, characters, setting, plot, and point of view will be analyzed in terms of their similarities and differences. These elements have indications that they have some similarities and differences. For example, the main character in both novels is a female character. Moreover, in terms of the theme, the two novels present more or less the same thing that is describing a social life, especially the social life that occurs in a village. It shows the similarities in the setting between the two novels. At the same time, these similarities also present several differences. Hence, the things explained above are the reasons to analyze the similarities and differences in the elements of both novels that include theme, character, setting, plot, and point of view.

A study that discusses the relationship or the development of a literary work with other literary works is called intertextual study. This study aims to examine a text or literary work that may have a relationship. To know the relationship between novels is important considering that it can describe a pattern in the writing of a novel. The pattern can be related to the background of the problem presented in the story. It can also be related to the description of the characters by the authors, and so on. The relationship between these novels can be examined by using intertextual study. It is a methodology that is able to provide free association to the previous reading experiences which allows to add richness to the text being read (Ratna 2015).

This study is relevant to the previous research conducted by Suseno and Qomariyah (2010) entitled "Intertextual Relationship between Film and Novel of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy". The research aims to see the variations and changes in the functions contained in the *Ayat Ayat Cinta* film based on the original novel as its hypogram by reviewing the literary and the film system through an ecranization study. Another previous research that is relevant to this study is the

research conducted by Kusuma, et al (2018) entitled "The Calabai Confession: An Intertextual Analysis of Okky Madasari's Pasung Jiwa Novel and Pepi Al-Bayqueni's Calabai Novel". It explains the similarity of themes in the two novels, namely the theme of self-actualization and the theme of family and friendship. The two researchers also use the same characterization, namely a masculine and a feminine character. The difference between the two novels lies in the plot and setting. The research from Kartika, et al (2018) entitled "Eternal Love in Nizami's Laila Majnun Novel and William Shakespeare's Romeo Juliet Novel Intertextual Studies" is also relevant to this study. It describes the eternal relationship of love between Nizami's Laila Majnun and William Shakespeare's Romeo Juliet. This research explains the condition of falling in love at first sight at a young age, getting drunk, covering up their love story, having to suffer for love, struggling to be able to meet, and eternal love. Maydita and Supriyanto's (2021) research entitled "Efforts of Lasi Character in Identity Control in Ahmad Tohari's Bekisar Merah Novel" also has relevance to this research. In this study, it was found the identity that Lasi, the main character in the Bekisar Merah novel by Ahmad Tohar, was fighting for. The research conducted by Pahlewi, et al (2020) entitled "The Self-Actualization of the Main Character in the Novel Anak Rantau by Ahmad Fuadi", is also relevant to this research. It describes the process and characteristics of the main character's self-actualization in the novel of Anak Rantau. The relevance of these two studies is examining novels. The article written by Arifiyanto, et al (2020) entitled "The Realizations and Functions of Figurative Speeches in Novels Written by Prasetyo Utomo" is also connected to this research. It describes the forms and functions of language style in three novels written by Prasetyo Utomo. The relevance of the two studies is that the use of novels as the research materials.

The research carried out by Hasyim and Nuratin (2018) entitled Educational Values in the Novel Trilogy "Dahlan Shoes, Dahlan

Letters, and Dahlan Smiles" by Kharsna Pabichara is relevant to this study. Educational values are found in the novel trilogy by Kharsna Pabichara. The relevance of the two studies is that the use of novel as the research materials. Moreover, research from Habiba and Nuryatin (2018) entitled "The Islamic Values Representation of Female Main Character in Novels by Habiburrahman El-Shirazy" also has relevance to this study. It analyzes the Islamic values of female characters in the novel by Habiburrahman. The relevance of the two studies is the use of novels as the research materials.

The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between the Bekisar Merah novel and the Jatisaba novel by using an intertextual study. This relationship can be seen from the similarities between the two novels. In addition, the relationship can also be seen from the differences between the novels. This study has several benefits. The benefit for the community, especially novel fans, is that they can find out more about the relationship that exists between novels. This relationship can be seen from the similarities and differences of two or more novels. This research is also beneficial for literature. It enriches the repertoire of studies, especially intertextual studies contained in Indonesian novels.

## METHODOLOGY

A structural technique is applied to collect data in this study. It is used to obtain data contained in the structure of a literary work, specifically in the Bekisar Merah novel and the Jatisaba novel. By using this technique, it can obtain data of story elements contained in both novels. The data obtained was deeply analyzed by using semiotic reading techniques.

The data in this study are in the form of fragments of text in the Jatisaba novel and the Bekisar Merah novel. The structural technique is applied as the data analysis method. It is a technique whose work is based on structural principles. It focuses on the network between elements. This technique is used because it pays

attention to and bases itself on the theory of structuralism. This technique is usually carried out by researchers at the earliest stage to analyze literary works (Supriyanto, 2014). It is the first technique used by the researcher to analyze the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel.

The second technique used to analyze the data in this study is a semiotic technique. It is generally the same as the structural technique because the two techniques are one unit. The semiotic technique is more engaged in interpreting signs and making sense of them, while the structural technique is more engaged in how to obtain meaning. Whereas, reading and interpreting signs are carried out through hermeneutics (Supriyanto, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Similarities between the *Jatisaba* novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel

#### 1.1 Similarities in Theme

There are several similarities between the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel. The first one is related to the theme of both novels. The theme of the two novels is basically related to the social life of people in a village. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, it illustrates the social conditions in a village named Karangsoga. It is a village that has fertile soil. Considering that Karangsoga is located at the foot of a volcano, many plants are easily grow. One of these plants is coconut. It is a favorite plant for the people of Karangsoga. Thanks to the coconut trees, they can earn income from the trees. Most of the people of Karangsoga work as a tapper of coconut sap water. Therefore, coconut trees are important parts of the life of the community. The sap water is used as raw material for making brown sugar. The results from the sale of brown sugar are not commensurate with the risks received from the business of extracting the sap water. This is due to the price game set by the middlemen. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, it is described in detail how poverty occurs in the Karangsoga community. The life journey of Kanjat describes the causes of poverty experienced by the people in Karangsoga. It is

told that Kanjat was a child of a brown sugar middleman who learned agriculture majoring. Based on Kanjat's close relationship with the tappers, he wrote a final assignment with a theme about the poverty felt by the tappers. From the story of Kanjat during the process of completing his final assignment, it is illustrated how arbitrary price game causes poverty for the tappers. Whereas, with the many risks and benefits of brown sugar, the tappers should have been more prosperous.

Similar theme is also found in the *Jatisaba* novel. Its main theme is about social life in a village. Its name is *Jatisaba*. It is a village located near the beach. More precisely, it is not located right next to the beach. Similar with the *Bekisar Merah* novel, most of the social life described in the *Jatisaba* novel is about poverty. Mostly, the people of *Jatisaba* work as farm laborers. While working as farm laborers, they sometimes work as brick-makers. Looking at what they do, it can be concluded that the they mostly are poor. Poverty in *Jatisaba* village was then exploited by several parties. Some of them are the candidates for the village head who accidentally are rich people. They used the people of *Jatibasa* as their success team. Being the success team for the *Jatisaba* village head candidates is quite risky. Lives are at risk when being the success team. This is due to the friction between the village head candidates. In addition, they have to fully support the candidates they carry. When the tense situation goes down, the failed candidates will live their lives normally with luxury, unlike their success team. Some people of the success teams went to jail due to the friction that occurred during the election process. Furthermore, there are some families who lost their members because of the tense situation in *Jatisaba*.

The main theme of both novels is about social life in a village where most of the people experience poverty and they are exploited by the rich. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, the middlemen exploited the tappers by charging the price of brown sugar arbitrarily. The *Jatisaba* novel provides the same picture. The poor are exploited to become a success team and to

support them even if they have to go to prison or even die. After all the processes are completed, the success teams and their families are abandoned by the village head candidates.

Besides the main theme, there is an additional theme that is similar in the two novels. This additional theme is romance or love. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, there is a romance between the main characters, namely Lasi and Kanjat. Their love story develops the narration of the novel. It brings the *Bekisar Merah* novel to the end of the story. In the *Jatisaba* novel, the romance story takes place between the main characters, namely Mae, Malim, and Gao. Mae's romance story with several men creates various conflicts in the novel. The theme of romance in the two novels makes the story more conflicted and interesting to read.

### **1.2 Similarities in Characters**

The next similarity found in the two novels is related to the main character. The main character in the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel is a female. The main character in the *Bekisar Merah* novel illustrates the struggle of a woman to stay strong and live her life amid the difficulties that never stop coming. This condition is also seen in the *Jatisaba* novel. The main character in the *Jatisaba* novel, Mae, describes the struggle of the female figure. The difficulties that never stop coming make her tough to continue her life. Both novels also have similarities in having the main character of a female who is strong in undergoing various difficulties of life. This explanation shows that the main characters in both novels have similar aspects of characterization. They have characterizations as strong women. The strong characterizations in the two main characters can be seen from the problems that keep coming as if they never stop approaching the two main characters. The problems presented were faced by both characters with full strength so that they could get out of those problems.

### **1.3 Similarities in Setting**

Another similarity found in the *Jatisaba* novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel is related to the setting of the place. The setting of the two novels is a village, even though the villages are different. From the setting of place that occurs in a village, it presents the same setting of atmosphere between the two novels. The setting of atmosphere is related to the economic situation in the two novels. For instance, in the *Bekisar Merah* novel, most people in Karangsoga village work as a tapper of coconut water used as raw material for brown sugar. This livelihood puts the economy condition of the Karangsoga community at the poverty line. The same thing happened in the *Jatisaba* novel. Most people in *Jatisaba* village work as farm laborers, sellers of grass jelly ice, and brick makers. Based on these livelihoods, it can be considered that they are poor. The poverty factor has made many people in *Jatisaba* decided to become migrant workers even though they end up experiencing a lot of scams which lead them trapped in an illegal route. In addition to the setting of the place in the two novels, the setting of the atmosphere is also similar. It is about the romance presented in both novels.

### **1.4 Similarities in Plot**

Both the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel have the same plot. These novels apply a linear plot. The plot in the *Bekisar Merah* novel which moves forward tells the story of the main character, Lasi. Lasi's journey of life began from Karangsoga village. Due to the problems she faced, Lasi decided to go to Jakarta. In Jakarta, it is told how the sequential process happened when Lasi unknowingly arrived at a pimp's house until she was unknowingly sold to a rich man. In certain parts, there are some flashbacks that tell Lasi's past when she was a child or teenager. The flashbacks, however, do not make the plot in the *Bekisar Merah* novel a flashback or mixed plot. It can be concluded that in the *Bekisar Merah* novel, the dominant plot is linear.

The *Jatisaba* novel also presents the same plot as the *Bekisar Merah* novel. The linear plot is very dominant in the *Jatisaba* novel. In this

novel, the plot moves forward telling the story of Mae as the main character. It started with Mae returning to Jatisaba to recruit people to be sold. Her journey in Jatisaba is lots of dynamics considering that her presence coincided with the election process that took place in Jatisaba. The story of Mae's journey in Jatisaba continued until she was able to recruit people and bring them into a car to be sold. The story is told chronologically. Similar to the *Bekisar Merah* novel, there are flashbacks in some parts of the Jatisaba novel. These flashbacks tell of Mae's past as a child or teenager in Jatisaba. Nevertheless, it does not make the plot in the Jatisaba novel a flashback or mixed plot because the dominant plot is linear.

### **2.1 Differences between the *Jatisaba* novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel**

The Jatisaba novel and the *Bekisar Merah* novel not only present similarities but also some differences. The followings are several aspects of differences in the two novels.

#### **2.1 Differences in Theme**

The first difference is seen in the element of the theme. Although both novels present the same theme, namely the social life contained in a village, but the social life condition in the two novels is different. There are differences about people's social life, especially related to poverty in the two novels. The main difference lies in how to change the fate of poverty. In the Jatisaba novel, people choose to become migrant workers to escape from poverty. The desire to change their fate by becoming a migrant worker has led them trapped in human trafficking. It is illustrated in the life journey of the main character, Mae. She is recruiting people who are interested to become migrant workers that will actually be sold. The poverty experienced by the people of Jatisaba makes them easily tempted by the invitation to become migrant workers. It is as if they do not care that many of their neighbors died after deciding to become migrant workers. It is closely related to human trafficking. If you become a migrant through illegal agencies, you will eventually be trapped

in human trafficking. Meanwhile, The *Bekisar Merah* novel does not present such a thing. It illustrates how the tappers remain on the poverty line even though the brown sugar is selling very well in the market.

Besides the main themes, the additional theme in the two novels is also different. The additional theme of both novels is related to the love story. However, the romance between the two novels is different. The *Bekisar Merah* novel has a love story that is finally legalized in a marriage to avoid negative things viewed from the point of view of religious norms, especially Islamic religion. This is contrary to the love story in the Jatisaba novel. In the novel, Mae experienced romance with two men, Malim and Gao. It presents scenes of Mae's intercourse with several men even though they are not married. The two novels present additional themes about romance, but the romance story in the two novels is different.

#### **2.2 Differences in Characterization**

Another differences can be seen from the character element. Although both novels have a female main character, but the two characters have different characterization. In the *Bekisar Merah* novel, the main character, Lasi, is told as a strong character but tends to be innocent. Lasi's innocence is seen when she is not aware that she has been sold or victimized. Lasi is told as beautiful woman. Therefore, she is the dream of men who already have a wife and a lot of money. To get a Lasi, a man has to pay a certain amount of money or goods to a character named Bu Lanting. Lasi is just an object that Bu Lanting will sell to rich men. Bu Lanting treats Lasi well so that she empathizes with Bu Lanting for her kindness. Lasi's innocence made her not aware of the cunning nature of Bu Lanting. Lasi's innocence character is not seen in Mae, the main character of the Jatisaba novel. Mae is indeed a strong character in undergoing difficulties in life that keep coming to her, but she is not an innocent person. She also experienced being sold like Lasi, but she realized when she was being sold. She is aware when being forced to serve the lust of men who have

paid for her. Trying to get out of human trafficking is a tough thing. In order to get out of the human trafficking, she actively involved in human trafficking itself. Mae ended up working to look for people who will be sold with the temptation to become a migrant worker. The temptation to become a migrant worker with a lot of income is indeed a tempting offer. It is very effective when applied. The interesting part in the story of the Jatisaba novel is when Mae had to recruit Jatisaba people who accidentally are her hometown, even though Mae had left in Jatisaba for a long time. This explanation illustrates the differences in the characterization of the main characters of the two novels. The characterization of Lasi's character is described as a strong character and still holds the principles of goodness. In contrast to Mae, she cannot uphold the good principles so that she becomes a bad person.

### 2.3 Differences in Setting

The setting of the two novels is also different. The difference lies in the setting of the atmosphere. The atmosphere of romance in the Bekisar Merah novel still pays attention to the norms that apply in Indonesia. For example, when Lasi and Kanjat were about to travel for days together, from their own self-awareness and advice from others, they got married first. This is done to avoid something negative. It is related to the prevailing norms in Indonesia in general. It is different from the romantic atmosphere in the Jatisaba novel. In the Jatisaba novel, Mae's romance with Malim and Mae with Gao is done with full freedom. For example, Mae and Malim had sex without going through the marriage process first. Mae also did the same thing with Gao. Even at that time, Gao was already married to someone else. Sexual intercourse is often found in the Jatisaba novel. Therefore, the atmosphere of the romance contained in the two novels is different. The romance story of the Bekisar Merah novel still shows the norms that exist in Indonesian society, while the story in the Jatisaba novel shows norms that do not exist in Indonesian society. Based on the atmosphere of the romance contained in the two novels, it

describes an ideology. In the romance story, the Jatisaba novel describes an ideology of liberalism that prioritizes individual freedom, while in the Bekisar Merah novel, the romance story describes the ideology of Islam. This is evidenced by the marriage of Lasi and Kanjat before they left for days together. Furthermore, the Islamism contained in the Bekisar Merah novel is also described by the figure of Eyang Mus. He is an Islamic religious leader in Karangsoaga. From the figure of Eyang Mus, it is illustrated that Islam is developing on the island of Java. By bringing suluk, Eyang Mus always inserts religious messages through it.

### 2.4 Differences in Point of View

The next difference in the two novels is related to the point of view used by the author. In the Bekisar Merah novel, the author applies a third-person point of view. This is evidenced from how the author often mentions the name of the main character in telling the events that she went through. In the Jatisaba novel, the author uses the first-person point of view. This is evidenced in the novel that the author seems to be telling himself or by using the pronoun I in telling the events experienced by the main character.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis found that there are similarities and differences in the Jatisaba novel and the Bekisar Merah novel. These similarities and differences are related to the structure or elements of the two novels. One of these element is the theme contained in the Bekisar Merah novel which turns out to have similarities with the Jatisaba novel. The similarities of theme in the two novels consists of the main theme and additional theme. In some other parts, the theme of the two novels also have differences. The differences are also found in the main theme and additional themes. In the element of character, similarities are also found between the Jatisaba novel and the Bekisar Merah novel. The main character in both novels is a woman. Although the main

characters in the two novels have similarities, but there are also differences between them. The differences are related to the way the main character in each novel solves the problems. In addition to the character elements, in the *Bekisar Merah* novel and the *Jatisaba* novel, similarities are also found in the element of setting, especially the setting of the atmosphere. However, the setting in the two novels also presents differences. The difference between the two novels is also seen in the element of point of view. The *Jatisaba* novel uses the first-person point of view, while the *Bekisar Merah* novel uses the third-person point of view.

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