

An Analysis of Formulaic Structure in Stephenie Meyer's Twilight **(Analisa Struktur Formulaik dalam Novel *Twilight* Karya Stephenie Meyer)**

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang kepopuleran novel *Twilight* karya Stephenie Meyer dengan menitik beratkan pada struktur yang membangun novel tersebut. Novel *Twilight* telah menjadi novel yang populer sejak novel tersebut dipublikasikan pada tahun 2005. Walaupun strukturalis-strukturalis mengkritisi bahwa setiap karya sastra merupakan karya-karya yang tidak asli (original), *Twilight* menjadi novel best seller dunia. Kemudian muncul pertanyaan dalam hal apa *Twilight* berbeda dari novel-novel lain dengan kategori yang sama. Untuk mendapat jawaban yang jelas, teori sastra formulaik yang dicanangkan oleh John G. Cawelti digunakan. Menurutnya, selain pola-pola konvensional, nilai-nilai budaya yang dinikmati oleh masyarakat berperan penting dalam hal popularitas. Oleh karena itu, dengan menggunakan teori Cawelti penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk menemukan formula *Twilight* serta budaya yang menjadi latar novel tersebut yang membuat novel tersebut populer dan bestseller. Penelitian ini menghasilkan bahwa *Twilight* menjadi novel populer karena penggabungan formula gothic, romansa serta fantasi dan dengan mengedepankan romansa diatas gothic dan fantasi, *Twilight* lebih menarik minat pembaca terutama pembaca wanita melalui proses identifikasi.

Kata kunci: Formula, Nilai-nilai Budaya, Popularitas

Abstract

This article deals with the popularity of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* focusing on the structure constructing the novel. *Twilight* has become the most popular novel since it is published in 2005. While structuralists criticized if every literary work are pieces of unoriginal works, *Twilight* becomes world best seller novel. The question then rises in what extend *Twilight* becomes different to the novels with similar category. In order to have a brief answer, formulaic literature theory addressed by John G. Cawelti is employed. In his opinion, he illustrates that the patterns and the cultural values people enjoyed play significant role in terms of popularity. Therefore, based on his theory, this research is aimed to discover *Twilight's* formula and the culture behind the formula brought the novel to become popular and bestseller novel. The research results that *Twilight* becomes popular due to, first, the blending formula of gothic, romance and fantasy. The last, by emphasizing romance above gothic and fantasy, *Twilight* attracts more readers, especially women, through identification.

Keywords: Formula, Cultural Values, Popularity

INTRODUCTION

Structuralists argued if there is no original work. In their opinion, the structures that underlie narrative structure of literary texts are based on unoriginality. Writers do not invent something new in their writing. They only mix and redeploy existing materials. As what Sheldon (2005:62) said that "the writers only to draw upon that immense dictionary of Language and culture which is already written." Thus, as

unique as the setting and the characters within literary texts, the structures constructing the texts, which make up the text as a whole, are essentially similar. On Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*, Bella Swan and Edward Cullen are in love. Bella is a human and Edward is a vampire who thirsts for her blood. Rather than giving into his hunger, Edward controls himself so that he and Bella can be together. A story that focuses on this human and vampire relationship is not so special. Before *Twilight*, there are many other novels using this type of

relationship as the main theme, such as J.L Smith's Vampire Diaries and Anne Rice's Interview with Vampires. The problem is *Twilight* with its ordinary theme becomes so much popular and even become the world bestseller novel. Since it is published in 2005, *Twilight* reached #5 on the New York Times Best Seller list and reached #1 actually month later in the same year. The phenomenality of this novel is because *Twilight* is named as one of the Publishers Weekly's Best Children Book of 2005 and in 2008, the novel has been translate into 37 languages and has been sold for more than 17 millions copies in the world and has won as The Biggest Selling Books of 2008. Today, the book has been sold for more than 120 billions copies and is reprinted many times and grossed 370 millions dollars. Therefore, the central aims of this research are to examine the reason of *Twilight* popularity, focusing on the structures and the culture, and to argue that the patterns of the text and the culture of the people may attracts readers' unconsciousness (Vambooks, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research which is presented in descriptive way. In collecting the data, library research strategy is employed. This paper analyzes the phenomena of *Twilight* popularity by analyzing the pattern of the text structure and the cultural background of the pattern. The data is collected from documents, observations, and any other written materials that are usually used as part of the research strategy. The primary data is taken from *Twilight*, focusing on the facts and events in the story. The secondary data are those which relate to *Twilight*'s popularity, the data showing the patterns of gothic, romance and fantasy. The secondary data involves postmodern culture which becomes the cultural background of *Twilight*. In order to achieve the aims, this research employs John G. Cawelti's formulaic literature theory.

After the novel is read, it is found that Meyer's *Twilight* is constructed by three different patterns. Those patterns are blended in certain ways so that the novel can be read as something new. The novel shows that the setting, mood, suspense and the characters are formerly following the gothic pattern while the way how the story is narrated and the main characters development embody the romance convention. Moreover, through the development of the story-telling, there is a sense of fairy tales which implies within the text. Therefore in conducting the discussion, these three aspects are analyzed to find the formula of *Twilight*. First, four basic features which are presumed making the novel considered gothic are determined. These elements consist of the setting, the atmosphere, the female protagonist and the evil villain. Second, romance pattern is analyzed by employing the romance convention formula proposed by Janice Radway. Third, the element of fantasy is explored by relating the unrealistic concept of fantasy with the vampire. The analysis is focused on the characteristics of the

vampires, such as immortality, inhuman strength and extraordinary ability. The final part of the discussion is to analyze Meyer's *Twilight* according to the culture represent it.

RESULTS

Formula of *Twilight* is constructed by three types of patterns; those are gothic, romance and fantasy in which the development of romance relationship is more emphasized. The phenomena of *Twilight*'s popularity is due to postmodern women have been dominated by the idea of hyper-reality around body-image concept. Through reading activity, the women readers can identify themselves into Bella's magical world of *Twilight*.

DISCUSSION

A. Pattern of the Formula

The idea is that every literary text has specific elements that are universal. Formula literature suggests if every work is similar. There is no original work. Whether it is adventure stories, romances novel or even detective stories, those works follow certain rules or formula. There are variations of course but the core is that the formula constructing the text is not different. The detective stories, for example, have certain elements in common; the crimes, the perpetrator, the investigation and how the stories are finally ended in which the crimes are rationally and clearly solved. However, the mysteries that covering the way of the stories are narrated do not all alike. Related to certain work popularity, Cawelti proposed that there is certain element among these unoriginal elements that attract the readers to consume this "unoriginal" text.

The fantasy type story that usually involved vampire commonly is called gothic. In most gothic stories, the locale usually sets around a castle, particularly a castle with secret passageways. Cawelti (1976:100) stated if gothic's readers often "found themselves lust in the maze of rooms, secret passages and underground chambers that formed the locale of the villains' devious plot and stratagems." Punter and Byron (2004:261) also proposed if the gothic setting could be a place of "womb like security, a refugee from the complex exigencies of the outer world." It becomes a shelter for the supernatural beings, a place where they are protected from the outer world. Moreover, the goal of the dark gloomy setting is to emphasize a sense of unease and foreboding which has contribution to the atmosphere of gothic.

The setting in Meyer's *Twilight* is far different to earliest gothic locale. *Twilight* is set in small remote town called forks, Washington. According to Bella, Forks is a town which has the highest rainfall per year in USA. The town is constantly dark, rainy and foggy for almost all the time. She describes how the town is terribly gloomy and how the town is often covered by thick clouds.

It was from this town and its gloomy, omnipresent shade that my mother escaped with me when I was only a few months old. (Meyer, 2005:3-4)

The quotation above explains how Forks serves similar function as gothic locale. The gloomy atmosphere that usually identified the setting, Forks has it also. The weather of the town undoubtedly suits to the gothic. The town is dark and foggy. In addition the rain that seemingly never stops. The essence of gloomy is perfectly drawn in this town.

In earliest gothic stories, the castle usually used as the lair of the monster, like in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the Count Dracula lives in the castle. The Cullens settle deep in forest, far away from human settlement. However differ to the Count Dracula's castle, the Cullens live in a modern house, far from gothic castle features. As Bella describes,

"I don't know what I had expected, but it definitely wasn't this. The house was timeless, graceful, and probably a hundred years old. It was painted soft, faded white, three stories tall, rectangular and well proportioned. The windows and doors were either part of the original structure or a perfect restoration. My truck was the only car in sight. I could hear the river close by, hidden in the obscurity of the forest." (Meyer, 2005:321)

Although the house is settled deep in forest, the house is described different to gothic. The inside of the house is not gloomy and dark. It is very bright, open and very large. There is no single spider's web that usually identified as the house of the monster. There is no coffin which also implies that the house is vampire lair. It is a huge modern house which has spectacular view of Olympic Mountain range and beautiful nature. In short, the gothic sense within the setting of *Twilight* has been vanished.

The essence of gothic is to make the reader feel the emotion of fear and terrorize them with something frightening. This essence has been parodied in *Twilight*. "'You spied on me?' But somehow I couldn't infuse my voice with proper outrage. I was flattered" (Meyer, 2005:293). The idea of vampire spied through the window and appears in bedroom making intense fear to the victim has been interchanged into some romantic moment. The emotion of horror that usually follows *Dracula* is vanished. The existence of the monster that is aimed to create fears becomes something desire and love today. As it shows when Bella and Edward, the vampire, cuddling

"And then his cold, marble lips pressed very softly against mine. What neither of us was prepared for was my response. Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in a wild gasp. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching

him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent." (Meyer, 2005:282-83)

Early vampires are feared, to be avoided. Nobody would consider to be close enough for a kiss. However, on this novel, the best romantic characters are the vampires. If in previous gothic stories these vampires are described to be the most terrifying, today these creatures' role has changed. Those who at first is concluded to be dangerous, Meyer make it to be attractive and desirable.

Romance story is a story of love relationship between man and woman in where the development of love relationship is the essence of romance (Radway, 1991:120). On her book, Radway composes an ideal romance formula based on her investigation on Smithton's women. The details could be different from one work to others but they essentially have constructed by this formula. According to Radway, the ideal romance begins with the heroine removal from her familiar comfortable place. This situation lead this heroine to feel alienated or isolated from the world as she is forced to lose the connection with familiar life and pushed to lose her identity either. The similar situation holds true in *Twilight*. The novel is opened by Bella's entrance to Forks to stay with her father. She feels isolated from the outer world. Far from her comfortable and familiar realm, the hatred to the weather, the feeling to be alienated in the remote town, the loneliness and sadness, she releases these all emotions every night since her arrived (Meyer, 2005:11). In Forks, she is just feeling trapped in a cage-like called town. *Twilight* begins with the destruction of heroine identity which is marked by her removal from familiar realm.

Ideal romance usually shows an aristocratic male, a man that is socially above the heroine which usually comes up to save this trapped woman. Edward has similar descriptions as this aristocratic male image. As a vampire, he has lived for decades, in that he has many years to accumulate wealth and experiences. In addition to his beautiful appearance, he impresses Bella with his impressive knowledge, professional-like skill on piano (even he composes his own music), and family wealth. However it is different to earliest vampire literature, these inequalities lead Edward to protect human than to haunt them for their blood. With him, Bella sees nothing but perfection.

Ideal romance also involves physical and emotional conflict. These conflicts emerge as barriers to keep the hero and heroine finding true love. Along the romance story, there will be many barriers standing between the two keeping them apart. As a vampire Edward realizes how dangerous he is to Bella. She is "some kind of demon summoned straight from his own personal hell" (Meyer, 2005:270). She is the strongest temptation he never faces in 100 years of his life. The smell of her blood is incredibly intoxicating. Therefore, he chooses to spend little time with her. Bella, in other hand, interprets his action as hatred though what he does is just merely trying to protect her.

Radway (1991:148) stated if “later in the text when hero and heroine are finally united, he confesses that it was the prospect of losing her that frightened him and prompted his decision to woo her with tenderness.” Ideal romance narrative usually shows how the heroine learns to trust her man, to believe that he loves her deeply. By giving such trust, this hero will finally declare his commitment to her. Once the commitment is expressed, the heroine will respond the feeling emotionally and sexually, establishing the connection with the hero whom she has known all about. Bella’s succeed to reveal Edward’s identity leads the two spend more time together.

The story provides the final obstacles to test the bonds of their love by the unexpected arrival of small pack of non vegetarian vampires; James, Victoria and Laurent. Once James catches Bella’s scent and realizes how important she is to Edward and the rest of his family, he plants to haunt her. To save Bella, Edward decides to hide her in Phoenix under Alice and Jasper protection while the others lure James. However, James is able to evade their traps and successfully finds Bella. Yet, this separation between Edward and Bella does not take too long as James is finally got destroyed before he could kill Bella and then two lovers is reunited.

Ideal romances usually end the story with a happy ending. Happy ending to the romance story is the main focus which is universally recognized as one that defining and distinguishing romance type story to other types of fantasy. The reunion with Edward makes Bella covered in happy idyllic life. She feels comfort staying in Forks environment and its people as long as there is Edward by her side. Even when her mother persuades her to leave, she refuses. It could be defined as Bella’s identity that has been destroyed before is restored by Edward’s presence.

Fantasy can be defined as a story contains unrealistic elements. The fantasy literature revolves around alternative reality and seems have no relation to the past. However, this type of story is also influenced by folklore motifs and traditional literary genre. C.W Sullivan pointed on the relation between folklore and fantasy. He stated if “the writer of fantastic literature, the creator of impossible worlds, has need of and uses folklore to make these imagined worlds accessible to the reader (Havirova, 2007:27). The fantasy stories have a close connection to traditional materials because these folklores can help the readers to understand the impossible world the writer created.

Vampire as a supernatural creature is one of the elements of fantasy. In many vampire stories, vampire existence is essential in part of the narration. The important point is that no matter other characteristics or powers possessed by the vampires on certain stories, three main things are consistent. First, they are immortal. Second, they drink blood to survive. Three, they are a lot stronger than

human. In any folklore or vampire literatures, including *Twilight*, these three things are always ascribed to vampires.

Formula *Twilight* basically based on romance narrative formula. However, the formula is made different to ordinary romance narrative. The romance is blended by other type of pattern, in this they are gothic and fantasy. The deployment of gothic and fantasy pattern, however, makes *Twilight* to be more attractive than ordinary romance. Since these two patterns not only make the atmosphere darkened but also dramatize the love relationship so that the bond becomes more magical.

B. Cultural Background

Related to the culture behind the formula, postmodern era is a result of a long term crisis of meta narratives resulting from modern period. It is more about a set of collective thoughts than a single solid philosophy (Lyotard, 1987:xxiv). The pinpoint is that as an individual, we seem have freedom to choose or do anything we want. Everything goes in today’s culture. In that, in postmodern culture the writer is not bounded by any conventions, they are not limited by the universal truth and the value of actual world. For this culture, the writer is able to create new possible world apart from the actual ones.

Jean Baudrillard worked on the assumption that commodities must be understood as a sign in the Saussurian sense which the consumer objects being a network of signifiers that stir up the desire of society. He believed that through objects, persons search their place among the society they want to be part of. The function of commodities is not just to fulfill individual needs anymore but also to separate to relate them to the social order. The main focus of his opinion is related to mass media which has become dominant feature of the world today and also has rearranged people sense of space and time (Sarup, 1993:166).

Media has a significant role to the construction of the individuals’ identities. Postmodern theory claimed if identity is not fixed and here it implies if identity can change, through media representation the hyper-reality, of images which is the result of the reflection of the real one, to give a reality sense to the people. The feminist movement during the latter half of the 20th century changes the expectations for women. By giving rights to women there are no longer any barriers for women’s achievement. Women are not seen to be weak or even dependant anymore. They are now are viewed as able to do anything. The result is that the women’s freedom becomes the source of new opportunities and new problems for women especially around body image.

Images in media today project an artificial concept of the standard of feminine beauty. From the perspective of media, the more thinness (which is also accompanied by large breast) the more idealized. Women have to see the same images over and over and begin to believe the version of hyper real is a version of the reality. Even though the images is presented as a free choice, whether women want to

attain or not, yet the images have been spread and dominate the perception of today culture about what is considered beauty (Cash, Pruzinsky, 2002:93-94).

Through *Twilight*, Meyer focuses her story on Bella's ordinary characteristics. She is introduced to be good in academic and a very good care taker of her family. In addition of that, she is also portrayed to have no special physical appearance. Bella's fragility and ordinary characteristics can be best understood as a symbol of women uneasiness with their bodies. She is not perfect and she does not have that gorgeous ideal body promoted by media today. Yet, Edward with his extraordinary perfection values and worships her to be perfectly special. Through romance reading act, which featured by predictable happy end, female readers may find that it is exciting when an ordinary girl like Bella find happiness. Moreover, by identify themselves with Bella, the female readers can picture themselves and start to believe that it is possible for something special happen to them too, despite of what their body look like and media or other people tell about, as what happened to Bella.

CONCLUSION

It is discovered that the novel is built up by blending three types of formulas by emphasizing the romance instead of gothic or fantasy. *Twilight* is popular because of two things. The first is due to the combination of the three formulas which make the story line more interesting. The second one is due to transformation of vampire making the story can be made into love story between human and vampire.

Romance is the most popular genre especially among women. By emphasizing the romance aspect within the story, the attractive of romance which has been so much popular can be attached to *Twilight*. Postmodern people's identities are not fixed and always change. The reason is that because nowadays society cannot be apart from the influences of media. Today, media has transformed into a very strong instrument so that it have ability to alter the illusion to be believe as the reality. I provided body image as the reason of *Twilight* popularity. Media has defined of how women should look in order to be considered beauty. It is argued if the standardized beauty has become a universal truth among women to have fixed identity. Yet, few women can attain it naturally. In that, through romance reading acts, *Twilight* serves an escape from this anxiety by the process of identification. Thus, female readers can be taken out from the dissatisfaction of life and brought to a magical imaginary world of *Twilight* in where their physiological needs are then fulfilled.

As its best, this thesis only addresses its discussion on identifying the reason behind *Twilight* popularity. The analysis focuses only to several aspects that are assumed to have significant role within the bestselling novel. Moreover, it is strictly limited on the construction of the formula and how women see their bodies which considered related to the

easiness on the process of identification. Radway (1991:20) informed us if the increase of romance popularity interrelates well to women's changing beliefs and needs. It is possible that some readers have other reasons forcing them to love *Twilight*. In addition, this thesis does not provide the answer related to male readers either and also though postmodern is discussed in this thesis, the answer whether *Twilight* is postmodern product or not is not provided either. Therefore, future research in this area should investigate other possibilities in the way certain novels be a popular and the impact caused by the novels' popularity.

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