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Imagining How Literary Work Transforms as a New Form of Media in Providing Information about Islam and Islamic Laws and Values in the Future

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on analyzing some Indonesian novels to reveal the possibility of literary work as a new form of media that is preferred and trusted by readers in learning Islam, Islamic laws and values in Indonesia. The rise of Islamic literature since the booming of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy has brought many changes for Indonesian people especially novel readers. Literary works in fact is more preferable to read by readers than textbook. Moreover, the interesting thing to analyze is that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* contains many Islamic values presented through elements of fiction and has motivated Indonesian authors to create novels that contain Islamic values which later on recognized as new genre named Islamic novel.

The aim of this study is to explore more deeply about the Islamic values some nowadays-Indonesian novels contain.

This has been done by examining two novels from two different authors. They are, *Muhammad: Para Pengeja Hujan* by Tasaro GK and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy using Narrative Stylistics and Reader Response. Both novels were chosen as they were among Indonesian best selling novels.

The results show how literary work could really be used as a new form of media in providing Islamic lessons. Instead of reading *kitab* readers could get the lesson from novel with more pleasure and enjoyment.

KEYWORDS: New Form of Learning Islam, Literary work, Stylistics, Reader Response

Since the first coming of Islam and its teaching in Indonesia, many Islamic saints and scholars have taught Islam through *kitab kuning* for its people who want to study further about Islam and its values. *Kitab kuning* is a term used by Javanese Muslims that refers to books containing Islamic knowledge starting from history to

fiqh (Islamic laws). *Kitab* is book¹ and *kuning* is Javanese language of yellow. The term is used as the colour of the papers of those books – almost all books containing Islamic knowledge taught at Islamic boarding house – is yellow.

Kitab kuning is in Arabic. It needs at least two subjects to understand its contents known as *Nahwu* and *Shorof* which are parts of Arabic language system. Those subjects are taught only at Islamic schools and boarding houses. In another words, normally Muslims have to master at least the two subjects to know further about Islam from *kitab kuning*. Thus, not all Indonesian Muslims are able to get necessary knowledge about Islam easily.

The problem of language mastery faced by Indonesian Muslims has then made many Islamic scholars of the last decades translate important *kitab*s for Indonesian people. Some of which are *Fiqhul Islam Wa Adillah* and *Bidayatul Mujtahid* for Islamic laws and *Ar-Rahiq Al-Makhtum* for history of Prophet Muhammad. Unfortunately, most of Indonesian Muslims seem to be still reluctant to read them inspite of being translated. Regardless of the factors causing Indonesian Muslims unwilling to read Islamic books, there has been a new phenomenon in Indonesia since the booming of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* in 2003.

Learning Islam, Islamic laws and values from literary works started to become a new culture for Indonesian people. Readers are no longer enjoying literary works only for its joy of a world of imaginations and aesthetics. They start digging Islamic knowledge from novels which was then recognized as the birth of Islamic novel and literature in the country with the highest Muslim population.

The phenomenon needs to be analyzed further to know whether or Islamic contents in Indonesian novels have been foregrounded or just small parts of the

¹ <http://kbbi.web.id/kitab>. Downloaded on August 8, 2016.

literary works. Moreover, the way readers react to the novels would strengthen the conclusion whether or not it is possible for a literary work to be a new form of media in providing information about Islam, and Islamic laws and values in the future. The research was done by applying a qualitative and quantitative research using stylistics and reader response. Interview with the authors of the novel was done to support data.

BACKGROUND: DIFFICULTIES IN LANGUAGE AND BAD READING INTEREST VS THE NEEDS OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE IN INDONESIA

The population of Muslims in Indonesia is 88%², 3.65 millions of which are now registered as students of Islamic boarding house (*pesantren*)³. With the assumption that those students who are recognized as *santri* are between 12-18 years old there would be 25.55 millions of Muslims in Indonesia from all ages who have got Islamic lesson from Islamic boarding house at the maximum point if the average of Indonesian people live to 60. The reality that not all people who have ever been *santri* master *Nahwu* and *Shorof* very well has become the first problem in understanding Islam from *kitab kuning*.

A study by Central Connecticut State University in the US has revealed Indonesia's ranking in 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest. Indonesia is just above Botswana in 61st position. The combination of the data gives such an assumption how difficult Islamic knowledge will reach Indonesian Muslims through books. Since the booming of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* in 2004 which has been sold out for

² <http://www.mapsofworld.com/world-top-ten/world-top-ten-countries-with-largest-muslim-populations-map.html>. <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/asia/>

³ <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/11/07/19/lokvps-di-indonesia-santri-ponpes-mencapai-365-juta>

more than 150 thousand copies within 2 years of its first launching⁴, has given a new hope in finding new media in providing Islamic knowledge.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Stylistics has been used in analyzing literary works for its “objective” and “scientific” standards of the style. It used to focus on language features like phonological, lexical, or rhetorical aspects but the recent developments have brought it to a wider scope of style: from formalist to cognitive stylistics (Missikova, 2003: 18), from feminist to discourse stylistics (Simpson, 2004: 2), and even to forensic stylistics in criminological case (Ogunsiji, 2012: 34). In prose analysis, supported by Saito⁵, Simpson (2004) has introduced narrative stylistics which focus is no longer merely on the language features of a story. It explores how the story is presented from all of its elements (aspects of fiction).

Reader response is now an important part in analyzing a literary work. It has improved much to give more data about the quality of a literary work from wider aspects. Eagleton said one might very roughly periodize the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years coming to a conclusion that literary texts do not exist on bookshelves: they are processes of signification materialized only in the practice of reading. (Eagleton, 2006: 65). Readers have been an important key in analyzing a literary texts especially in its acceptance. There could be much information gained from the reaction of readers towards a text in many aspects to measure its quality including the quality of its contents or messages.

⁴ El-Shirazy, Anif Sirsaeba. 2006. *Fenomena Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. Republika. Jakarta

⁵ Saito, Yosliifuni. 1997. *Style and creativity: Towards a theory of creative stylistics*. Nottingham. University of Nottingham. 1. <http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk/2549/>

It is said to have turned from the traditional conception of a work as an achieved structure of meanings to the ongoing mental operations and responses of readers as their eyes follow a text on the page before them. (Abrams, 2005: 265). Thus, it could be used as a measurement whether or not a literary work is successful – for one of its aspects.

ISLAM AND ISLAMIC LAWS AND VALUES IN *MUHAMMAD PARA PENGEJA HUJAN* AND *AYAT-AYAT CINTA 2*

Muhammad Para Pengeja Hujan, which later is written as *MPPH*, is a 682 pages novel, divided into 81 chapters, telling about the life of the main characters; Muhammad, his family, his Companions and Kashva. The last is a fictional character while the rest are real characters based on valid historical data. The life of Muhammad, his family, and his Companions as the main characters is portrayed meticulously for all of its aspects from different points of view and periods of time. Nothing is special with the style of the author in telling the story. The plot used could be seen as a combination of some types though flash forward is the main as on some chapters readers may see it as an episodic plot. Those chapters can stand alone and look independent but have connection with the others.

What then makes the story become so special is that actually the style applied, regardless of just “normal”, could transform a non fiction text into a fiction one. Readers who know the history of Muhammad as the last Prophet in Islamic Prophethood will easily find so many pieces of trusted information about Muhammad and other figures of his period which are normally found on Hadith. The reality of Muhammad’s life, which in Russian formalism would then be regarded as *Fabula*, has been served to the readers by Taraso in a brilliant way, making it a very

beautiful *Sjuzet*. Readers will feel more realistic when they read this novel as if they were living a real life with Muhammad in around 630's.

In a simple way, this is a history book about Muhammad and his Companions served as a Novel. The life of Muhammad and some of his Great Companions is shown on 50 chapters of 81 meaning that it is the main content of the novel as the rest which was admitted by the author as a fiction or his imagination about the situation out of Mecca and Medina in that period.⁶ We could see how *MPPH* is actually a history book in a form of novel from the data contained on each chapter from Table 1.

Table 1
Factual and Fictional Data of MPPH

Chapter	Type of Data	Content
1	Factual	The birth of Muhammad
2	Factual	The big family of Muhammad
3	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
4	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
5	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
6	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
7	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
8	Factual	The death of Muhammad's mother
9	Factual	Muhammad's Grandfather
10	Factual	Muhammad's childhood
11	Factual	Muhammad's life after prophethood
12	Fictional	Author's Imagination
13	Fictional	Author's Imagination
14	Fictional	Author's Imagination
15	Factual	Muhammad's life after prophethood
16	Fictional	Author's Imagination
17	Fictional	Author's Imagination
18	Fictional	Author's Imagination
19	Fictional	Author's Imagination
20	Factual	The Companions
21	Factual	The Companions
22	Fictional	Author's Imagination
23	Fictional	Author's Imagination
24	Factual	The conquest of Thaif
25	Factual	The mercy of Muhammad for the murderer of his uncle
26	Fictional	Author's Imagination

⁶ A short interview with the author.

27	Fictional	Author's Imagination
28	Fictional	Author's Imagination
29	Fictional	Author's Imagination
30	Fictional	Author's Imagination
31	Fictional	Author's Imagination
32	Factual	Signs from Muhammad, introduction of Khalid bin Walid
33	Factual	Ali Bin Abi Thalib
34	Factual	The marriage of Ali to Muhammad's daughter
35	Fictional	Author's Imagination
36	Fictional	Author's Imagination
37	Factual	Muhammad's life
38	Fictional	Author's Imagination
39	Fictional	Author's Imagination
40	Fictional	Author's Imagination
41	Factual	The death of Muhammad
42	Factual	The death of Muhammad and the election of Abu Bakr
43	Factual	Abu Bakar as <i>Khalifah</i>
44	Fictional	Author's Imagination
45	Fictional	Author's Imagination
46	Factual	The companions after the death of Muhammad
47	Factual	Arab after the death of Muhammad
48	Fictional	Author's Imagination
49	Factual	Period of Abu Bakr as <i>Khalifah</i>
50	Factual	The death of Fatimah, Muhammad's daughter
51	Fictional	Author's Imagination
52	Factual	Abu Bakr and Ali bin Abi Thalib
53	Factual	The betrayal of ethnics in Arab
54	Fictional	Author's Imagination
55	Factual	The companions: Abu Bakr, Khalid, Ikrimah
56	Factual	Abu Bakr and Khalid: a war in Bazakhah
57	Fictional	Author's Imagination
58	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and wars in early period of Islam
59	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and wars in early period of Islam
60	Factual	Abu Bakr after war of Yamamah
61	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and wars in early period of Islam
62	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and wars in early period of Islam
63	Fictional	Author's Imagination
64	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and the conquest of Persia
65	Factual	Medina after the conquest of Persia
66	Fictional	Author's Imagination
67	Factual	Khalid bin Walid's life in Persia
68	Factual	The journey of Khalid bin Walid
69	Fictional	Author's Imagination
70	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and the conquest of Daummah al Jandal
71	Factual	Khalid bin Walid and the conquest of Daummah al Jandal
72	Factual	Khalid's Journey: Suria to Irak
73	Fictional	Author's Imagination
74	Factual	Khalid's Journey: Dryness

75	Factual	Abu Bakr: Dying
76	Factual	Abu Bakr: The exhortation
77	Factual	Khalid bin Walid: war of Yarmuk
78	Factual	The death of Abu Bakr
79	Factual	Umar bin Khatab as <i>Khalifah</i> , the replacement of Khalid
80	Fictional	Author's Imagination
81	Factual	Khalid bin Walid: the sensational dismissal _____

From the first chapter until chapter 81, the life of Muhammad from *The Year of Elephants*, when he was born, until the period of the second *Khalifah* after him (Umar ibn Khattab) has been beautifully told as if it were a fictional story. The very detail information about the most important events in Islamic history in the novel, support by the attachment of 125 quotations from 16 different books, *kitab*s and Quran, is considered to be trusted information. Titles of the books, *kitab*s, and *Surah* of Quran could be read at the end of the book. Hence, it is unfair, since then, to call this book as a novel containing an Islamic value, it's history. This book is rather an Islamic book in the form of novel. The author has successfully transformed an Islamic history book into novel by adding 24 percents of his imagination to serve factual data to readers of fiction work. The fictional parts of 76 percents factual data could clearly be regarded as aspects of fiction as they play merely as tools of narration.

Similarly, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2*, later is written as *AAC2*, is also full of Islamic values including its laws. *AAC2* is a 690 pages novel with 42 chapters as the continuance of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*. Like *MPPH*, *AAC2* contains much information about Islam especially for Muslim's daily life. It is noted that Islamic knowledge could be read in all chapters. The difference is on the content and the way it is served. While *MPPH* says much about and only about history of early period of Islam, for its Islamic content, *AAC2* shows different aspects of Islam which seem to be dedicated to teach its readers how to behave as a Muslim in facing nowadays situation. There are at least 30 references attached from Quran, Hadith, *kitab*s, to

modern books. Readers could see a stereotype of a Muslim in modern period; the way he manage his private life, relationship with neighbours, until the way a Muslim should do in facing offensive news against his belief. The detail of the Islamic information in *AAC2* is on Table 2.

Table 2
Islamic Contents in Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2

Chapter	Islamic Contents	Reference
1	1. Islam doesn't teach suicide bombing. 2. A lesson as a good Muslim. 3. The teaching Allah as The One.	Quran – Exclamation of an old Manuscript of Qur'an by Quthbuddin Asy-Syirazy entitled <i>Fath Al Mannan</i> . A text from Habib Hasan Al-Bahr QV. Thaaha (20): 98
2	Lesson about <i>Himmah</i> .	<i>Majmu' Washaya</i> by Habib Hasan Al-Bahr
3	Verses of Quran	QV. Az- Zukhruf (43): 89 Hadith
4	Lesson about greeting to non-Muslims in Islam.	<i>Fathul Bari</i> ch. 11 p.50
5	Lesson about what Muslim should do when he is sad	QV. Yusuf: 86
6	1. Lesson about controlling desires and lust 2. Lesson to care with other Muslims	Saying of Syaikh Utsman Hadith.
7	Lesson about the importance of Quran for Muslims	Analysis based on the speech of William Ewart Gladstone after The World War I.
8	1. Massacres in Palestine by Israel. 2. Conflicts between Palestine and Israel	Facts: Hebron massacre in 1994 by Baruch Goldsten. Many sources
9	Massacres in Palestine by Israel	Many sources (news) Hadith
10	1. The Unity of Muslims 2. Knowing Allah	Hadith <i>Sirrur Asrar</i> by Syaikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani.
11	1. How to behave to non-Muslims. 2. Lesson not to drink alcohol.	Many sources Hadith, <i>Madzhab Asy-Syafi'i</i> , <i>Hanafi</i> , <i>Hambali</i> , <i>Al-Muhadzdzab</i> , Ar-Rum: 1-5
12	How to behave well towards non-Muslims who have done wrong	Through the behaviour of the

Chapter	Islamic Contents	Reference
13-17	1.Helping non-Muslims even though they dislike Muslims. 2.Helping other Muslims we haven't known yet.	main characters Hadith Through the behaviour of the main characters QV. Al-Baqarah (2):286
18-22	1. Lesson how to face proposals of marriage. 2. Lesson how to live together with non-Muslims 3. Lesson how to behave when is challenged by non-Muslims 4. Lesson of daily Muslims activities related to all aspects of life especially in being generous as a Muslim.	Author's point of view through characters of the novel.
23-28	1. Lesson about Quran for Muslim 2. Lesson about marriage in Islam 3. Lesson about guidance in Islam for Muslims and non-Muslims. 4. The oppresion of Palestinians/Muslims by Jews. 5. Lesson about fasting in Islam and Jew. 6. The truth of Islam compared to another religion seen from Qur'an and Bible.	Quran (Al-Baqarah [2]: 47, 122 dan 124, Ali-Imron: 110, Hadith, stories from Islamic history; story of Abu Thalib, Ikrimah, and Syaikh Muhammad Abduh, Bible, author's point of view.
29	Lesson about what to do if a non-Muslim neighbour dies	Author's point of view.
30	1. Lesson about marriage. 2. Lesson about how to live together with non-Muslims and face the conflicts.	Hadith, story of Imam Ibn Hambal, author's point of view.
31	1.About the chastity of Muhammad. 2.Lesson about keeping woman's purity/chastity in Islam.	From author's point of view
32	How to bahave to other people.	From author's point of view.
33-34	Lesson about relationship between male and female in Islam regarding to the process before marriage.	From author's point of view.
35	1.The truth of Islam compared to another religion seen from Qur'an and Bible. 2.Rules of giving arguments and debate in Islam.	Ibn 'Arabi, Bible, <i>Dzakhair al-Alaq syarh Turjuman al-Asywaq</i> , Ali-Imran: 31, <i>Al Futuhat al-Makiyyah</i> , <i>The Black Book of Communism – Crimes, Terror, Repression. Religion and Society Report, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.</i>
36-38	Marriage and household in Islam	Hadith, life story of the Companions.
39-40	1.Islam doesn't teach and produce terrorism. 2.How to manage jealousy in Islam.	<i>Risalah al Mustarsyidin</i> , by Al Haris Al Muhasibi.

Chapter	Islamic Contents	Reference
41	Islamic law: Face transplantation from dead body.	Hadith, <i>fatwa</i> (instruction) from Islamic scholars. From author's point of view.
42	Islamic law: Marital relationship in Islam	

Note: The author is a graduate of Al-Azhar University, the biggest and oldest Islamic University in the world and is known as an Islamic scholar who is used to giving Islamic speech in Indonesia and some other countries. He know much about Islam and Islamic knowledge so that there hasn't been any doubt so far regarding to his arguments or decicions related to Islamic laws/deeds.

AAC 2 teaches readers how to live as a real Muslim in the middle of varied situations. It opens the mind of readers with the issue of terorism recently labeled to Muslims on the first chapter, continued by several Islamic lessons on every chapter following and concludes the “Islamic course” with lesson related to marital relationship in Islam. The trusted references provided in both novels, supported by the background of the authors have succesfully transformed lessons or knowledge from textbooks into joyful novels to read.

THE RECEPTION

Following the success of the previous novel, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* hit 10 thousand copies sold on it's fourth day since it's launching and 80 thousand copies within a month after⁷ while the previous novel was sold more than 150 thousand copies for the original version. The same amount of pirated copies was estimated to have been on its readers hands. Due to the bad reading interest in Indonesia, it is totally an extraordinary fact, to show that it is more than just best selling, for a book to reach such a level of sales.

⁷ <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/15/11/30/nym20k301-4-hari-ayatayat-cinta-2-terjual-lebih-dari-10-ribu-eksemplar>, the news has been confirmed to Habbiburrahman El Shirazy trough an interview.

There hasn't been any valid data reporting the sales of *Muhammad Para Pengeja Hujan* from the publisher nor from the author but still, this novel is considered as a *best selling* book. The assumption came from the response of its readers, the label of "best seller" from book stores, and the continuance of the book to the fourth as a tetralogy. In simple way, using the very basic aspect of reader response/reception, it is clear that these novels are accepted by Indonesian readers very well.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, three main facts could be concluded. They are:

1. The needs of Islamic knowledge mastery for Indonesian Muslims together with the fact about bad reading interest in Indonesia needs solution, one of which is a new form of book which is more interesting.
2. There has been a successful transformation from textbooks into novels by some Indonesian novelists which content is Islamic knowledge.
3. The reception of Indonesian readers for those novels is good.

From the facts above, an imagination about the transformation of literary work as a new form of media in providing information about Islam and Islamic laws and values could no longer become only imagination. Two novels from different authors have proven how it is such a strong potential for a literary work to be a new form of media in providing knowledge about Islam and Islamic laws and values; an alternative media after *kitab kunings* and Islamic speeches. It will be just then to wait for the coming of a massive movement by Indonesian authors, inspired by these novels, of transforming their literary works to fulfill the needs of Indonesian Muslims.

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