

Women in horror stories in Java

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Abstract

Women in the horror genre are an attraction for readers in the world. In addition to the storyline, another thing that attracts attention is the suspenseful scenes that are able to leave an impression on the hearts of the viewers. The purpose of this research is to analyze the recurrence of things related to women present in horror stories in Java and explore the meaning behind this phenomenon with the study of Vladimir Propp's narrative structure. The object of this research is horror stories in Java. Data collection was carried out by studying documents on 10 horror stories in Java that have been published in the mass media. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model through three stages, namely (1) data reduction; Identify the structure of the story related to the function. After the recurrence is found, the meaning is carried out, (2) the presentation of data in the form of tables, and (3) the drawing of conclusions. The findings of this study show that there is a recurrence of female characters as the main character, a family member leaves home, a character enters the supernatural realm or meets supernatural creatures, a criminal troubles or injures one of the family members, the presence of a friend or family figure, the presence of a witch doctor or *pesugihan*, a family member lacks something or wants to get something, the character gets a magic tool, and the character is saved. This can be interpreted as a reversal of patriarchal understanding. Female characters in horror stories are described as good, strong, brave and curious about sacred places.

Keywords

Horror stories, Sacred, Women, Java

Introduction

Women in the horror genre are an attraction for readers in the world. In addition to the storyline, another thing that attracts attention is the suspenseful scenes that are able to leave an impression on the hearts of the audience. They show women who on the one hand seem helpless, but on the other hand they become brave figures who are actually able to dominate the male position (Sagita, 2018). Women in horror films in Indonesia retain dominant sexuality values so that the sacredness in the story is ambiguous and loses meaning (Halim, 2022). Generally, women are victims of incidents, both physical and psychological violence, as a result of which female characters have a grudge as if their death is an injustice (Azizah, 2022).

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The study of women in horror stories is not only shown through films but also through novels, folktales, and short stories spread across various newspaper and application media, as well as websites. However, the mapping results show that the studies generally focus more on three aspects. First, studies that discuss women as ghosts or monsters (Creed, 1993; Permatasari, 2019; Larasati, 2022; Wahid, 2021; Saputra, 2019). Second, a study that discusses women's revenge because of injustice (Lasty, 2020; Halim, 2022); third, a study that discusses subordinated women, sexuality and victims of violence (Hapsarani, 2018; Sugiarti et al. 2022; Wijanarko, 2018). Meanwhile, studies that look at how women in horror stories in Java are still relatively rare and go unnoticed.

There are several studies that have shown the figure of women in horror stories as independent, courageous, and powerful women who have the power to dominate such as *The Ring* dan *The Ring Two* (Sagita, 2018). Declaration of Indonesian horror films in the study Reception analysis (Debby, 2020). In addition, there are also studies that show women in Indonesian horror stories as *kuntilanak* and *sundel bolong*, stealth, and various terrifying supernatural creatures or studies film *Surat dari Praha* (Kusumaryati, 2011; Darajat, 2020). However, some of these studies did not lead to efforts to map women in horror stories in Java. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the recurrence of things related to women in horror stories in Java, including horror stories in West Java, Central Java, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and East Java and explore the meaning behind this phenomenon. The negative stigma against women in Javanese society strengthens the position of male power and places the figure of women as subordinate, weak, and lacking in intelligence. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the repetition of women-related issues present in horror stories in Java and to explore the meaning behind this phenomenon by examining Vladimir Propp's narrative structure.

Propp (1979) in his book *Morphology of the Folktale* based on the results of his research on 100 Russian fairy tales found 31 functions. The thirty-one functions are as follows: Function I. A family member leaves the house. Function II One prohibition is directed at the hero. Function III. The prohibition is violated. Function IV. The criminal investigates the victim. Function V. The criminal gets information about his victim. Function VI. The criminal tries to deceive his victim. Function VII. The victim was deceived. Function VIII. A family member lacks something or wants to get something. Function IX. Bad luck is known; heroes are sent. Function X. The searcher approves or decides to reply. Function XI. The hero leaves the house. Function XII. Heroes are tested, interrogated, attacked and others that lead to the receipt of magic tools or helpers. The function of XIII heroes is to react to agents or donors. Function XIV. The hero receives the function of a magical agent. XV function. Heroes are moved, carried, directed to the place of the object of the quest. Function XVI. Heroes and villains in battle. XVII function. Heroes are given titles. Function XVIII. Criminals are conquered. Function XIX. Early accidents or weaknesses are crushed. Function XX. The hero returns. Function XXI. Heroes are being chased. Function XXII. The hero is saved from the chase. Function XXIII. An unknown hero arrives in his country or another country. Function XXIV. The hero makes false demands. Function

XXV. Difficult tasks are prepared for heroes. Function XXVI. The task is completed. (28) Function XXVII. heroes are recognized. Function XXVIII. Fake heroes or villains are unmasked. Function XXIX. The hero is incarnate in a new form. XXX function. Criminals are punished. Function XXXI. Hero Married, ascended the throne (Berger, 2003; Burton, 2006; Stokes, 2007; Erianto, 2013).

The 31 functions above do not mean that they are always present in the story, but there are seven perpetrators who carry out certain functions in a story, namely: (1) The villain is a character who forms complications or conflicts in the story. The presence of criminals turns normal situations into abnormal and causes conflicts, (2) Donors/donors are characters who give something to heroes, help or gifts can help heroes in solving a problem. (3) The helper is a character who directly helps the hero defeat the villain and restore the situation to normal, the helper is also directly involved in fighting the villain. (4) The daughter and father are characters who receive direct treatment from criminals and the father is a character who grieves about it. (5) The sender/person who orders is a character who sends a hero to complete the task. (6) The hero is a character in the story who returns the chaotic situation to normal, and; (7) Fake heroes are gray characters between heroes and villains (Propp, 1970; Ratna, 2010; Trisari, 2021).

Yusantia (2019), horror is a genre of stories that are synonymous with supernatural and mystical things. In horror stories in Java, various mystery symbols are often used to express fears, beliefs, and myths that develop in society. Before becoming a written form, horror stories have been conveyed orally in the form of folklore, stories that are part of folklore that develop in a society (Ahmadi, 2013). The horror subgenre is divided into nine categories, including: rural, cosmic, apocalyptic, crime, erotic, occult, psychological, surreal, dan visceral (Prohászková, 2012).

Method

The object of this research is horror stories set in the Land of Java, including West Java, Central Java, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and East Java. There are 10 horror stories set in Java, recorded by Lis Suwartini, Alfred Pandie, Subagya, Seta RD, M. Yudha and Eldono, each titled: (1) “Tragedi Curug Seribu”, (2) “Kerajaan Gaib Pulomas”, (3) “Misteri Rawa Pening”, (4) “Misteri Gunung Sindoro”, (5) “Dirasuki topeng Ireng”, (6) “Horor Mencekam”, (7) “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa”, (8) “Sebelas tahun Menikah baru Bisa Hamil”, (9) “Andi dan Teman-Teman Pergi Ke Gunung Arjuna”, dan (10) “Horor di Atas Peteng”. The story was published in the mass media “Koran Merapi” which was published throughout 2024. The method used is library research by reading and studying and analyzing several sources, such as journals and books to get accurate sources. The data collection technique uses a document study technique. The data analysis of this study took place through three stages, namely (1) data reduction by identifying the story structure related to the function in each story. (2) the presentation of data in the form of tables and analysis through descriptions with Vladimir Propp’s theory of Narrative Structure. Analysis is carried out on horror stories related to the function or fixed

elements present in each story. Furthermore, after finding a fixed function or element that is repeated in each story, meaning is carried out, and (3) conclusion is drawn.

Results and Discussion

The function in Vladimir Propp's theory can be found through the plot in the story so that the sequence of events of each character's actions is known. The repetition of fixed elements or functions in ten horror stories in Java is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. The recurrence of fixed elements or functions in ten horror stories

No	Horror Story Titles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Tragedi Curug seribu	v	v	v	v	v				v
2	Kerajaan Ghaib Pulomas	v	v	v	v	v	v			v
3	Misteri Rawa Pening	v	v	v	v	v				v
4	Misteri Gunung sindoro	v	v	v	v	v				v
5	Dirasuki Topeng ireng	v	v	v	v	v				v
6	Horor Mencekam	v		v	v	v				v
7	Dendam Korban Rudapaksa	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
8	Sebelas Tahun Menikah Baru Bisa Hamil	v	v			v		v	v	v
9	Andi dan Teman-Teman Pergi Ke Gunung Arjuno		v	v	v	v		v		v
10	Horor di Atas Peteng		v	v	v	v				v
Total		8	10	9	9	10	2	3	2	10

Information:

1. Women as the main characters
2. A family member leaves the house
3. Characters Entering the supernatural realm or meeting supernatural beings
4. The criminal troubles or injures one of the family members
5. The presence of friends or family figures
6. The presence of witch doctors or Pesugihan
7. A family member lacks something or wants to get something
8. Characters get magic tools
9. Rescued figures

Women as the main characters

A female character who has the ability to see the supernatural world, appears in the story "Tragedi Curug seribu", "Kerajaan Ghaib Pulomas", "Misteri Gunung sindoro", and cerita "Dirasuki topeng ireng". The characters featured in the four horror stories are young women as students. Various events befall those who enter the supernatural world. There are characters Euis and Ais who disappeared for a few hours during a visit to the haunted place and were rediscovered unconscious. There is a figure of Rumi who is possessed by a jinn while watching a black mask a tradition in Central Java. Laksmi's character has the ability to see the supernatural world and even helps the missing victim in the story "Misteri Rawa Pening". Ghost characters appear in two stories "Horor Mencekan" and cerita "Dendam Korban Rudapaksa". Both were victims of violence and rape. Meanwhile, the female character who is patient and has faith in the Almighty for what happened to her appears in the story "Sebelas Tahun Menikah baru Bisa Hamil".

The female characters in horror stories are young and courageous characters and have a high curiosity about a mystery. This is different from the understanding that exists in society that women are timid, weak and independent figures. The change in the role of women in literature from the past to the present shows the evolution and empowerment of women (Awuzie, 2019). Some portray women as a symbol of power and unity, some use women as objects of pleasure (Singh, 2019). Patriarchal culture in literature shapes men to be rational, strong, and assertive, while women are placed in a weak, protective, and submissive image (Alvira et al., 2021).

A family member leaves home

Ten horror stories fulfill this recurring function, which is that a family member leaves home. The characters Euis, Ais, Rara, Andi, and their friends went on vacation to the mountain or sacred tourist attractions. Meanwhile, Laksmi left the house for study purposes. Daliyem's character in the story "Dendam Korban Rudapaksa" which is set in the Japanese era, left home because of an unsafe situation so he had to evacuate to another village. Yu Remi in the story "Next Year of Marriage Can Only Get Pregnant" came out of the house to help her neighbor who had a wish to marry her child. In the tenth story titled "Horror on the Tiger", the character Jarot leaves home with his friends to play in the next door village which is famous for its haunted forest.

Women in literary works are represented in a relational framework that is equivalent to a set of marginalization systems and subordinated values such as sentimental, emotional, and spiritual. In this case, literature positions women as emotional subjects who have spiritual sensibilities. Furthermore, the gender relationship between men and women is a symbolic and patriarchal issue (Robert, 2017).

Characters enter the supernatural realm or meet supernatural beings

Ten stories fulfill this function, namely the character enters the supernatural realm and/or encounters supernatural beings. There are figures who are aware of the presence of supernatural creatures, some are unconscious. Ais characters in horror stories "Kerajaan Gaib Pulomas" is a woman who is able to see supernatural creatures without feeling too afraid. Euis is a female character in the story "Tragedi Curug Seribu" which became a medium for spirits who asked for human help. So is Rumi's character in the story "Dirasuki Topeng Ireng". These two female characters become intermediaries for the spirits of the deceased asking for help and conveying messages to living humans. Andi on the story "Andi dan Teman-Teman Pergi ke Gunung Arjuna" It is also a medium for waiting for forests to convey a message to humans so as not to disturb the balance of nature. My character meets the Female Ghost in the story "Horor Mencekam" to uncover the mystery of the family that has been stored for decades.

The ghost of a woman as a spirit creature who haunts because she is a victim of rape and murder is also depicted in the European ghost story Noni eliise Edwind Rikkar (Deriza, 2022). It is different with Indonesian horror stories and films that cannot be separated from three things, namely comedy, sex, and religion (Herawati, 2011). In

addition, the presence of religious symbols and religious figures as protagonists is often shown (Heeren, 2007). The repetition of this function occurs in ten horror stories in Java. The presence of supernatural creatures in horror stories is the most awaited part by readers. This fixed element is very important and becomes the attraction of the horror storyline. It can be said to be a characteristic of horror stories and can be grouped in the subgenre of rural horror because it raises the theme of horror around a certain location.

The criminal troubles or injures one of the family members

Nine stories fulfill this function, which is that the villain troubles or injures one of the family members. Andi's character in the story "Andi dan Teman-Teman Pergi Ke Gunung Arjuna" who was on vacation to the mountain was disturbed by creatures waiting for the tree. The disorder causes them to be very scared and unable to enjoy a pleasant vacation. Something like that happened to Rara et al in the story "Misteri Gunung Sindor" Euis character in the story "Tragedi Curug Seribu"; Lasmi on the story "Misteri Topeng Ireng". The character of Jarot et al in the story "Horor di atas Peteng" being bullied while playing hide and seek. In fact, this creature not only bothered but three other children became victims and did not save their lives. Only one story titled "Sebelas tahun Menikah Baru Bisa Hamil" does not present supernatural beings overtly but is still a mystery story.

The appeal of horror stories is closely related to the soul of the Indonesian people and is generally attached to eastern culture which is considered synonymous with mysticism and the occurrence of supernatural beings and mystical events (Heeren, 2012). This horror story is growing rapidly along with the development of trends, genres, and technology (Sukatno & Bazaleel, 2014). Even horror stories can be found on various internet media, such as Youtube, Nefflix, Iflix, WeTV and which are easily accessible to all people (Cangga, 2009).

The presence of friends or family figures as helpers

This function is present in ten horror stories in Java. The presence of friends or family is present in all stories. The characters of father, mother, grandfather, uncle, best friend are the people who are directly involved in the story. They are actually the trigger for the formation of a plot towards a story full of horror. They are also the ones who help save the characters back to the real world after unconsciously entering the supernatural realm. So that it can be said to be a helper as well as a hero. In the concept of Propp, the helper is a character who directly helps the hero defeat the villain and restore the situation to normal, the helper is also directly involved in fighting the villain. The hero is a character in the story who returns the chaotic situation to normal. These two roles in the ten horror stories in the land of Java are held by the presence of friends or family.

The presence of shamans sanket or pesugihan

This function is found in horror stories in Java. Witch doctors and witch doctors are two things that are thick with the work of witch doctors. The two stories that have this function are stories "Kerajaan Ghaib Pulau Mas" and "Dendam Korban Rudapaksa". The

presence of witch doctors and *pesugihan* is a characteristic of horror stories in Java. Witch shamans involved in horror stories “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa” as a medium to take revenge from a family whose daughter was a victim of rape and murder. This revenge was carried out because he felt that he did not get justice for his son. While *pesugihan* is in the story “Kerajaan Ghaib Pulau Mas” which involves one of the members of the community looking for a shortcut to get wealth. The presence of witch doctors and *pesugihan* in horror stories in Java is a characteristic that does not appear in the function in Vladimir Propp’s concept of narrative structure. The woman who became the ghost in the story “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa” are victims of rape and murder. Ghosts are considered irrational so they are shunned by society. Ghosts initially occupied haunted, deserted, and remote areas, but now the ghost locations are transforming into cities (Nasrullah, 2018; Fajar, 2021).

A family member lacks something or wants to get something

This function is only found in two horror stories, namely a story titled “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa” and “Sebelas Tahun Menikah Baru Bisa Hamil”. A family member lacks something and wants to get something. The character shown is named Yu Rame, a wife who has been married for eleven years, feeling incomplete in her happiness. He also really wanted the presence of a child. Yu Rame had tried in various ways so that she could get pregnant and give birth to a child, however, it was only at the eleventh age of marriage that her wish was realized, which was to get pregnant. The struggle of the characters Yu Remi and Daliyem in the story above is in line with the struggle that the characters of Jaya have admitted in the film Surat dari Prague to survive and get their wishes (Darajat, 2020).

Characters obtain magic tools

This function is only found in two horror stories, namely in Stories “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa” and “Sebelas Tahun Menikah Baru Bisa Hamil”. These two horror stories have the same function, namely the function of a family member obtaining a magic tool. In the first story, the magic tool is in the form of a doll that is used by a shaman. This tool is a medium to retaliate for the treatment of crime to the perpetrators. At the end of the story, this magic device manages to kill the victim according to the target. This is a characteristic of horror stories in the land of Java that involve tools as a medium for murder to criminals. Yu Remi also pedaled her husband’s rickshaw to the Gantang river to then release the eel placed in the bucket. The magic tool in the story can be in the form of an object that is considered sacred, such as a kris that is considered magical to help the characters achieve the goals in the story of Abu and the Akti keris (Janna, 2023).

Rescued figures

The function of this rescued character is found in the entire horror story studied. The characters in this story at the end of the story can be saved. As is characteristic of horror stories, the dominant evil characters who disturb humans are supernatural creatures. In various ways, the characters are harassed by possession as in the story “Dirasuki Topeng

Ireng” or when the story characters are on a journey such as “Tragedi Curug Seribu”, “Kerajaan Ghaib Pulomas”, “Misteri Rawa Pening”, “Misteri Gunung Sindoro”, “Andi dan Teman-Teman Pergi Ke Gunung Arjuna” and “Horor di Atas Peteng” or the female ghost character in the house in the story “Gripping Horror”. In the end, the character can be saved from various disturbances of supernatural beings and return to the real world. The role of friends and family as helpers who have tried in various ways and prayers to return the figure safely. Another character who is saved from the sexual cruelty of the Japanese army is a village female character named Daliyem in the story “Dendam Korban Rudapaksa”. The father can be categorized as a hero because he can save his daughter. Yu Remi’s character in the story “Sebelas Tahun Menikah Bari Bisa Hamil” It can be interpreted as a figure who is “saved” and given happiness with the presence of a fetus in his womb. The hero is a character who returns chaotic situations to normal (Eriyanto, 2013). Like the character Momotaro in Japanese folklore who became a hero because he had the power to eradicate thieves (Andari, 2024).

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that there is a recurrence of elemental functions in ten horror stories in Java, including: (1) Women as the main characters, (2) A family member leaves the house, (3) Characters enter the supernatural realm or meet supernatural creatures, (4) Criminals trouble or injure one of the family members, (5) The presence of friends or family figures as helpers, (6) The presence of witch doctors or *pesugihan*, (7) A family member lacks something or wants to get something, (8) The figure gets a magic tool, and (9) The figure is saved. Of the ten horror stories, eight female characters are shown as good, strong, brave and curious characters to sacred places. This is marked as a reversal of the understanding of patriarchy that has been pinned on women as weak, chatty, independent, and timid individuals. There are two functions that are not found in Vladimir Propp’s narrative structure theory but are characteristic of horror stories in Java, namely the function of the presence of witch doctors or *pesugihan* and the presence of friends or family as helpers as well as heroes.

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