

THE INTERTEXTUALITY OF THE MYTH OF TIMUN MAS IN THE SHORT STORY WHY DID GOD CREATE A BLACK CAT? WORKS BY SASTI GOTAMA

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Abstrak

Keywords:

Timun Mas Myth,
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This study aims to analyze the intertextuality of the Timun Mas myth in the short story "Why Did God Create Black Cats?" by Sasti Gotama. This study is motivated by the tendency of contemporary literature to utilize myths as a source of creating new meanings as well as a means of reflecting social reality. The study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretative method and Julia Kristeva's intertextuality theory. The research data are in the form of words, sentences, dialogues, and events that show the relationship between the short story and the Timun Mas myth. Data collection was carried out through reading and note-taking techniques, while data analysis was carried out by identifying forms of intertextuality, analyzing the transformation of myth elements, and interpreting the resulting meaning. The results show that the Timun Mas myth is present as a hypogram that builds the meaning structure of the short story. The character Buto Ijo undergoes a transformation from an antagonist figure to a symbol of a victim of social labeling, while Timun Mas is represented as a symbol of a vulnerable group experiencing violence and marginalization. In addition, the moral structure of the myth, which was originally based on a binary opposition between good and evil characters, has shifted to a critique of identity stigmatization and collective violence. The research findings confirm that intertextuality in short stories not only functions as an aesthetic strategy, but also as a means of social criticism that questions moral constructions, power relations, and labeling practices in contemporary society.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a cultural space that allows for dialogue between texts, traditions, and social realities. In its development, contemporary literary works not only represent human experiences but also reconstruct various cultural narratives that have lived in society's collective memory. One form of this dialogue is evident through intertextuality, namely the relationship between a text and its predecessors. Through this mechanism, literary texts do not exist as autonomous entities, but rather as the result of transformations, reinterpretations, and negotiations of meaning with respect to previous texts. Therefore, the study of intertextuality is crucial for uncovering how a literary work constructs new meanings through the utilization of cultural elements already established in society.

One of the intertextual sources widely used in Indonesian literature is myth and folklore. As cultural products, folklore serves not only as a means of entertainment but also contains values, outlooks on life, and moral constructs that are passed down from generation to generation. The Timun Mas folktale is one such popular myth that holds a significant place in Indonesian cultural heritage. Various studies show that the story continues to undergo reproduction and transformation in various media and different social contexts.(Devi, 2021; Nurcahyo, 2022).

In fact, Timun Mas has become the object of cross-disciplinary studies that discuss aspects of culture, gender, education, and comparative literature.(Firmansyah & Zulyeno, 2024; Ramadhani et al., 2021; Zainy et al., 2024)In the traditional narrative structure, the Timun Mas story presents a clear binary opposition between protagonist and antagonist. Timun Mas is positioned as a representation of goodness, while Buto Ijo is positioned as a symbol of evil that must be defeated. This construction forms a relatively stable moral understanding in society. However, the development of contemporary literature shows a tendency to reinterpret this established moral structure. Figures previously considered antagonists can experience shifts in meaning, while protagonists are no longer understood in black and white. This kind of transformation shows that myth is not a static system of meaning, but rather a space that is open to renegotiation according to specific social and ideological contexts (Khurosan & Kristyaningsih, 2024).

This phenomenon is evident in the short story "Why Did God Create Black Cats?" by Sasti Gotama. This short story presents the Timun Mas myth not merely as a folklore reference, but as a narrative device to reinterpret the social issues faced by its characters. The dialogue between Buto Ijo and Timun Mas that appears in the story becomes a crucial point connecting the mythological world with social reality. Through this reinterpretation, the character of Buto Ijo is no longer understood solely as an antagonist, but rather as a symbol of a group experiencing social labeling and becoming victims of moral constructions constructed by society. Thus, the Timun Mas myth undergoes a transformation in function, from a traditional moral story to an instrument for reflection on contemporary social issues.

Studies on Timun Mas have generally focused on cultural values, representation of women, character education, and adaptation of folk tales into various media.(Sari & Syamsi, 2022; Kapeanis & Asrini, 2025; Retnowati et al, 2018).Other studies also examine the intertextual relationship between the Timun Mas story and different texts or media (Devi, 2021). However, studies that specifically examine the transformation of the Timun Mas myth in contemporary short stories as a form of intertextuality are still relatively limited. Moreover, there are not many studies that highlight how this transformation is used to produce criticism of social reality represented in literary texts.

Based on a review of previous research, there is a research gap that needs to be filled. Previous studies tended to focus on the presence of mythological elements or formal relationships between texts, while aspects of the transformation of meaning and the ideological function of myths in contemporary literary texts have not received adequate attention. However, changes in character positions, moral structures, and values contained within myths can demonstrate how authors construct new perspectives on the social realities presented in literary works.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the intertextuality of the Timun Mas myth in the short story "Why Did God Create Black Cats?" by Sasti Gotama. Specifically, this study examines the forms of intertextuality that appear in the short story, the transformation of mythical elements that occur, and the new meanings produced through this transformation process. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of intertextuality studies in Indonesian literature, while also showing how traditional myths can be re-presented as a means of interpreting social reality in contemporary literary works.

RESEARCH METHODS

Uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretative method. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on interpreting the meaning contained in literary texts, especially the intertextual relationship between the short story Why Did God Create Black Cats? by Sasti Gotama and the Timun Mas myth. This approach allows researchers to reveal the process of meaning transformation, intertextual relationships, and ideological functions built through the use of mythological elements in literary texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); Ratna, 2015).

The primary data source for this research is the short story Why Did God Create Black Cats? by Sasti Gotama, which consists of five pages of text. The short story was chosen because it explicitly presents the character and narrative of Timun Mas through dialogue between characters, especially in the part that discusses the position of Buto Ijo, Mbok Rondo, and Timun Mas as moral representations in society. The research data consists of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, and events that show an intertextual relationship with the Timun Mas myth. One of the main data appears in Eren's dialogue that questions Buto Ijo's position in the folktale: "Isn't it Mbok Rondo's fault? She broke her promise! Why is Buto Ijo the evil character?". This dialogue becomes the starting point for the emergence of a reinterpretation of the moral structure of the Timun Mas myth in the short story.

Timun Mas folktale, books on intertextuality theory, scientific articles, and previous research relevant to the study of myth and intertextuality. Secondary data is used to strengthen the interpretation of the relationship between the short story text and the hypogram that serves as the source of its transformation.

Data collection was conducted through reading and note-taking. The researcher read the short story intensively to identify sections that showed a connection to the Timun Mas myth. The data found was then recorded, classified, and grouped based on the forms of intertextuality that emerged, such as allusion, character transformation, plot transformation, and moral structure transformation.

Data analysis was conducted using Julia Kristeva's intertextuality theory which views each text as a mosaic of quotations and transformations from previous texts. (Kristeva, 1982) In addition, this study utilizes the concept of hypogram and text

transformation to explain the relationship between the source text (Timun Mas) and the transformed text (Why Did God Create a Black Cat?). The stages of analysis include: (1) identification of the elements of the Timun Mas myth present in the short story; (2) analysis of the forms of transformation of these elements; (3) interpretation of new meanings resulting from the transformation process; and (4) explanation of the function of intertextuality in building social criticism of the reality represented in the short story. The results of the analysis are then presented descriptively and interpretatively to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the intertextual relationships that build the meaning of the work.

Data validity was maintained through theoretical triangulation by comparing interpretation results using various relevant theoretical perspectives, particularly intertextuality theory, myth studies, and contemporary literary research. This step was taken to increase the validity of the interpretation and reduce the researcher's subjectivity in understanding the relationship between the short story text and the myth that forms its hypogram (Moleong, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the Timun Mas myth is explicitly present in the short story "Why Did God Create Black Cats?" through the dialogue between Han and Eren. The presence of this myth does not merely function as a reference to folklore, but also becomes a hypogram that builds the overall meaning of the text. According to (Kristeva & Jardine, 1982) each text, it is a mosaic of quotations that absorbs and transforms previous texts. In this short story, intertextual relationships are apparent when Eren retells the Timun Mas narrative from a different perspective.

"He gave Mbok Rondo a cucumber seed. Before planting the seed, they had already made a pact. If the child born from the cucumber grew up, it would be eaten by Buto Ijo. But when Timun Mas grew up, Mbok Rondo broke her promise and told Timun Mas to run away."

This quote indicates that the author is re-presenting the Timun Mas story as a source text. However, rather than rehashing the folktale in its entirety, this short story focuses on an aspect that has rarely been questioned: the agreement between Mbok Rondo and Buto Ijo. Thus, the Timun Mas myth serves as a narrative foundation for re-examining moral constructs that have been accepted for generations.

These findings demonstrate that intertextuality in short stories takes the form of transformation rather than reproduction. The presence of folklore provides a medium for authors to establish a dialogue between traditional texts and contemporary social realities. From this perspective, Genette et al., (1997) this relationship demonstrates hypertextuality, the process of transforming an old text into a new one with the aim of producing a different meaning.

Tabel 1 : Transformation of the Elements of the Timun Mas Myth in the Short Story Why Did God Create Black Cats?

Coefficients ^a				
	Elements of the Timun Mas Myth	Data in Short Stories	Transformation Form	New Meaning
1	Buto Ijo as an evil character	"Isn't Mbok Rondo the one who's wrong? She broke her promise! Why is Buto Ijo the villain?"	Deconstruction of antagonist characters	Buto Ijo is represented as a victim of social labeling
	Buto Ijo–Mbok Rondo Agreement	"Before the seed was planted, they had already entered into an agreement..."	Reinterpretation of conflict	Conflict is seen as a matter of broken promises, not just a crime.
	Timun Mas as a hero	"Even though all this time, I thought, I was Timun Mas."	Shifting character symbols	Timun Mas has become a symbol of vulnerable groups who experience violence
	Victory over Buto Ijo	"Are we Buto Ijo, Han?"	Reversal of moral perspective	The distinction between good and evil becomes relative
	The battle between Timun Mas and Buto Ijo	"If your group is considered wrong, then you are guilty too."	Transformation of conflict structures	The conflict shifted to a question of social identity and stigmatization.
	The end of the folk tale	Eren's death was a result of collective violence	Transformation on ending	Myths are used to critique collective violence in society.

The following findings indicate a significant transformation in the character of Buto Ijo. In folklore, Buto Ijo is constructed as an antagonist who threatens Timun Mas's life. However, in Sasti Gotama's short story, this role undergoes a reversal.

This is evident in Eren's following statement.

"Isn't Mbok Rondo the one who's wrong? She broke her promise! Why is Buto Ijo the villain?"

This statement serves as the starting point for a deconstruction of the traditional narrative. Eren questions the legitimacy of labeling Buto Ijo as an evil figure. This perspective is further reinforced by Han, who states:

"No. Eh, maybe he's just a victim. A victim of circumstances."

In this context, Buto Ijo is no longer represented as a symbol of evil, but rather as a victim of social construction. This transformation demonstrates a shift from absolute morality to a contextual one. The author encourages readers to see that the label "evil" often arises from the dominance of a particular perspective, rather than from entirely objective facts.

This transformation also relates to Han's experience of being the victim of a mob attack despite being in the right during a traffic accident. Thus, the character of Buto Ijo becomes a metaphor for individuals or groups experiencing social stigmatization due to the identities attached to them.

Besides Buto Ijo, the character of Timun Mas also undergoes a transformation in meaning. In folklore, Timun Mas is a symbol of courage and victory over evil. However, in this short story, Timun Mas is represented as a symbol of a vulnerable group who are victims of violence and discrimination.

This transformation is seen in Eren's statement before his death.

"All this time, I thought I was Timun Mas. I was born from a cucumber. I eat and drink from the essence of this earth."

The quote indicates that Eren identifies himself as Timun Mas. However, unlike the folktale, which ends with the protagonist's victory, Eren instead becomes the victim of brutal violence perpetrated by the mob because of the identity he ascribes to himself. As a result, Timun Mas in the short story is no longer a symbol of victory, but rather a symbol of a marginalized group deprived of the right to live safely in social spaces.

Through this transformation, the author shows that the positions of victim and perpetrator cannot always be understood in black and white as is found in the structure of traditional folk tales.

Analysis shows that the transformation occurs not only in the characters, but also in the story's moral structure. In the folktale Timun Mas, there is a clear binary opposition between good and evil. However, this short story dismantles this structure and replaces it with questions of social identity.

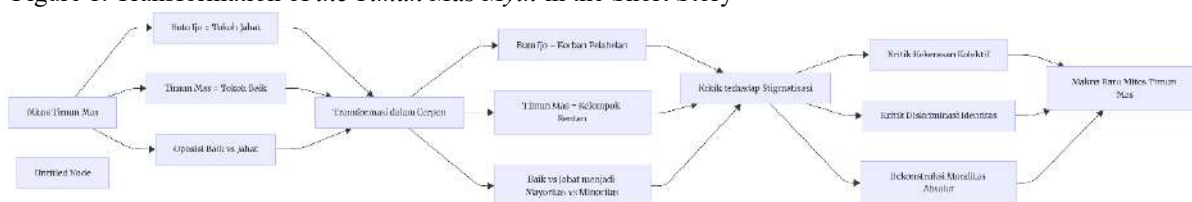
This is seen in the following dialogue.

"Sometimes, who's at fault doesn't depend on who actually did the deed. If your group is deemed at fault, then you're at fault too."

This quote demonstrates that the standards of right and wrong in society are often determined by group identity, not individual actions. Therefore, the conflict in the short story shifts from a moral struggle between heroes and monsters to a struggle between dominant and marginalized groups.

This transformation demonstrates that the author uses myth as a means to critique the mechanisms of social labeling that operate in society. In other words, the previously simple moral structure is transformed into a reflection of the complexity of contemporary social relations.

Figure 1. Transformation of *the Timun Mas Myth* in the Short Story



The main findings of this study indicate that the intertextuality of the Timun Mas myth serves as a tool for social critique of collective violence. This critique is represented through the experiences of Han and Eren, who are victims of prejudice and mob action.

Han experienced violence despite not being at fault in the traffic accident. Conversely, Eren experienced even more tragic violence because he was the target of hatred by a particular group.

In this context, the reinterpretation of Buto Ijo and Timun Mas serves to demonstrate how society often constructs categories of “us” and “them.” Individuals who are considered part of a particular group will face social consequences even if they have not directly committed any wrongdoing.

These findings reinforce the view that intertextuality in short stories functions not only as an aesthetic strategy but also as an ideological strategy to critique practices of labeling, discrimination, and collective violence. Through the transformation of the Timun Mas myth, Sasti Gotama presents a new reading of the concepts of good, evil, victims, and perpetrators in contemporary society.

Thus, the short story “Why Did God Create Black Cats?” demonstrates that traditional myths can be transformed into an effective medium for social critique. Intertextuality no longer merely presents connections between texts but also serves as a means to reflect on humanitarian issues that remain relevant in modern society.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the short story “Why Did God Create Black Cats?” by Sasti Gotama has a strong intertextual connection to the Timun Mas myth. This connection is evident through the presence of the characters Buto Ijo, Timun Mas, and the narrative of the agreement that forms the basis for the formation of meaning in the short story.

The analysis reveals a transformation in the meaning of the myth's characters. Buto Ijo, traditionally positioned as an antagonist, is reinterpreted as a victim of social labeling, while Timun Mas is represented as a symbol of a vulnerable group experiencing violence and marginalization. This transformation simultaneously shifts the myth's moral structure from a binary opposition between good and evil to issues of identity, stigma, and power relations within society.

Thus, intertextuality in short stories functions not only as an aesthetic strategy but also as a means of social criticism. Through a reinterpretation of the Timun Mas myth, Sasti Gotama presents a critical reflection on the practice of social labeling and collective violence that still occurs in contemporary society.

The main finding of this research is that the Timun Mas myth is transformed from a traditional moral narrative into a medium for criticizing social constructions that determine who is considered right, wrong, victim, or perpetrator.

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