

**METAPHOR OF TRANSFORMATION: SYMBOLIC
REPRESENTATION OF TRAGEDY IN *LORO JONGGRANG*
FOLKLORE AND *PYRAMUS-THISBE***

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ABSTRACT

Love tragedies have become a global topic of conversation. As in the Greek story of Pyramus-Thisbe and the Javanese folklore of Loro Jonggrang which symbolize a physical transformation as the concept of love tragedy. By using comparative literature studies, this research aims to 1) Analyze and describe the symbol of physical transformation in the stories Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe representing the concept of tragedy and 2) Analyzing and describing the cultural values underlying the symbols of tragedy that appear in Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe. The method used in this research is qualitative with a text analysis approach and refers to Clifford Geertz's symbolic anthropology theory. The results of the study found that, 1) There are several elements analyzed using several aspects of form comparison consisting of aspects of literary genre, narrative structure, language style, poetic form, theme & motif, and adaptation and intertextuality in the stories Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe. Then, 2) there is a cultural meaning behind the physical transformation of the two stories. In the Greek story Pyramus-Thisbe represent the concept of tragedy symbolized by the fruit of the mulberry tree. Meanwhile, the folk tales of Loro Jonggrang represent the concept of tragedy symbolized by the statue of Prambanan Temple. So, the comparative literature approach is able to see how the same story elements can carry different cultural meanings.

Kata kunci: Loro jonggrang; Pyramus-thisbe; tragedy; transformation

ABSTRAK

Kisah tragedi bergenre cinta sudah menjadi perbincangan global. Seperti pada cerita Yunani bernama Pyramus dan Thisbe dan cerita rakyat Jawa bernama Loro Jonggrang yang melambangkan suatu transformasi fisik sebagai konsep tragedi cinta. Dengan menggunakan kajian sastra bandingan, penelitian ini bertujuan 1) Menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan simbol transformasi fisik dalam cerita Loro Jonggrang dan Pyramus-Thisbe merepresentasikan konsep tragedi dan 2) Menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan nilai-nilai budaya yang mendasari simbol-simbol tragedi yang muncul pada Loro Jonggrang dan Pyramus-Thisbe. Metode

yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis teks dan merujuk pada teori antropologi simbolik Clifford Geertz. Hasil penelitian didapat bahwa, 1) Terdapat beberapa elemen yang dianalisis dengan menggunakan beberapa aspek perbandingan bentuk yang terdiri dari aspek genre sastra, struktur naratif, gaya bahasa, bentuk puisi, tema & motif, dan adaptasi dan intertekstualitas pada cerita Loro Jonggrang dan Pyramus-Thisbe. Kemudian, 2) terdapat makna kultural di balik transformasi fisik kedua cerita, yaitu pada cerita Yunani Pyramus dan Thisbe merepresentasikan konsep tragedi yang dilambangkan dengan buah pohon murbei. Sedangkan pada cerita rakyat Loro Jonggrang merepresentasikan konsep tragedi yang dilambangkan dengan arca Candi Prambanan. Dengan demikian, pendekatan sastra bandingan mampu melihat bagaimana unsur cerita yang sama dapat membawa makna kultural yang berbeda.

Keywords: *Loro jonggrang; Pyramus-thisbe; tragedi; transformasi*

A. INTRODUCTION

Love tragedies have become an integral part of the world's literary heritage, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries. One classic example from Greek mythology is Pyramus-Thisbe, while from the archipelago it is Loro Jonggrang. Both narratives, although originating from different civilizational contexts, such as old Greece which is rich in myths and Java which is thick with local legends, interestingly use the metaphor of physical transformation as the main symbol of the tragedy that surrounds them. From the literature and humanities-based dimension, metaphors became the most important stylistic feature in literary works as they constitute social, cultural, and psychological realities (Hendrokumoro et al., 2024, p. 777). This transformation not only serves as a marker of a sad ending, but is also laden with deep cultural meaning. As already known, the deep cultural meaning arises from the form of change that occurs. The form of change is sometimes changing words, sentences, structures, and the content of the literary work itself. Transformation can be said to be the transfer or exchange of a form to another form that can eliminate, move add, or replace elements (Hartati et al., 2021, p. 328).

In the context of this study, comparative literature is a relevant and essential discipline. Comparative literature is defined as a field that focuses on comparing one literary work with another, or even between literature and other fields outside of literature (Zahro, 2021). This approach allows researchers to go beyond national and linguistic boundaries, analyzing the reciprocal relationships between literary works and factors outside of literature. Figures such as Damono (2012) and Endraswara (2011) have laid a strong theoretical foundation in comparative literature studies in Indonesia. In addition, Ratna (2015) and Suwardi (2010) have also made significant contributions to the development of theories, methods and applications of comparative literature, strengthening the analytical framework for cross-cultural comparative research. The term "Comparative Literature" first appeared in a book by Moriz Carriere in 1854, while in English it was introduced by Matthew Arnold in 1848 (Yaacoba & Newberryb, 2019). This study appears in belief that all literature has similarities and differences. The existence of these similarities and differences led to compare and look for causes of the similarities

and differences. Comparative literature generally begins with the similarities in literary work that explains the difference in several languages as a determining factor in comparative literature. So, comparative literature compares the literature of a country with the literature of other countries and compares both literature with other fields as a whole expression of life (Luzae et al., 2023).

This research has great significance in uncovering the symbolic differences of the metaphors of transformation. Transformation is also similar to the process of ekranization that occurs in literary works that can not only be translated or transferred from one language to another, but can also be transformed or changed into other arts. Fiction can be turned into movies, dance, or drama. Even poetry can be turned into paintings (Setiawan, 2021). In the story of Pyramus-Thisbe, the transformation occurs in the fruit of the mulberry tree that turns red, drenching Pyramus' blood, which then becomes an eternal symbol of tragic true love that transcends death. In contrast, in the Loro Jonggrang's folklore, the transformation of the princess' body into a temple statue not only marks the failure of a forced marriage attempt, but also represents a symbol of curse with a strong political and power dimension, linked to the origins of the temple complex. This comparison shows how different cultures interpret and represent tragedy through similar physical symbolism but with unique connotations. The presence of such comparisons means that a work of art cannot exist without references, quotations or influences from previous works (Kurniawan, 2020, p. 161). A folklore of Loro Jonggrang cannot stand alone if there is no influence from a similar story from Greece is Pyramus-Thisbe. In addition, a reader's experience of some theories and practices that are not known (or not realized) by the author, can possibly produce a new and fresh meaning (Kurniawan, 2020, p. 161).

Although the study of comparative literature offers a rich perspective, in a study written by Winda Widyaningrum and Endang Sondari (2022) argued that research like the one conducted, especially those that explore cultural representations, is still interesting but rarely done in depth. Previous studies tend to focus more on analyzing the intrinsics of each story separately or comparing general motifs, such as a comparative study of the motifs of Jaka Tarub and Niúláng Zhinü folklore (Wahyuningtyas & Pramudiyanto, 2021), comparing aspects of imagery in poetry (Muriyana, 2022), to comparing traces of colonialism in animated films (Priventa et al., 2023). In addition to some similar studies that have been discussed, there are also other similar studies that compare PTSD and Post-PTSD that occur in character Charlie from novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and character Naoko from novel *Norwegian Wood*. The theory's research is psychoanalysis. From there, research by comparing two or more literary works can use other approaches besides using the comparative literature approach as the main approach (Ahmed et al., 2024). Therefore, there is a gap in research that has not comparatively explored how this symbol of transformation specifically represents the cross-cultural tragedy between Pyramus-Thisbe and Loro Jonggrang, which is the main focus of this research.

This research aims to deeply analyze the representation of tragedy symbols in folklore through the lens of body transformation metaphor. Based on this background, this research formulates several questions, that are 1) How do the

physical transformation symbols in the stories of Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe represent the concept of tragedy, and 2) How is the cultural meaning behind the transformation symbols in the stories of Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe In answering these questions, this study has the following objectives, that are 1) Describe and analyze the physical transformation symbols in the stories Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe representing the concept of tragedy. The analysis involves a careful examination of the narrative flow and intrinsic characteristics of both stories to identify how each physical transformation (mulberry discoloration and statue transformation) directly contributes to the development of the tragic plot. By conducting such a comparison, the author was able to highlight similarities and differences in the way tragedy is represented through physical changes to characters or environmental elements in different cultural contexts. In addition, 2) Describe and analyze the cultural meaning behind the physical transformation symbols in the stories of Loro Jonggrang and Pyramus-Thisbe. This goal can be achieved through a symbolic anthropology approach, examining the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the communities where the two stories originated. The understanding of the cultural meanings studied can be enriched by the mythological and folklore context of each, revealing how the symbols function as guardians and conveyors of noble values from generation to generation.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory used in this research is symbolic anthropology by Clifford Geertz. Geertz's symbolic anthropology bases upon the distinction between culture and social structure. Even though Geertz writes in *The Religion of Java* "The relationship between cultural patterns beliefs, values and expressive symbols and the set of social structures in which they are embedded is rarely one to one", he does not totally divorce cultural patterns from social structures in his ethnographic half as he does in his theoretical other half. This is also true of the spirit of his other ethnographies, for example such as *The Social History of an Indonesian Town and Peddlers and Princes* where Geertz shows the "reciprocal interplay between the evolving forms of human associations (social structures) and the no less changing vehicles of human thought (cultural symbols)." (Giri, 2020, p. 29).

In the context of text literature such as folklore, the metaphor of text plays an important role. For Geertz, culture is an ensemble of texts and he adopts a textual approach to ethnography and culture. But this does not necessarily lead to a dialogical mode of ethnography (Giri, 2020, p. 28). So, Geertz's symbolic anthropology and his theoretical constructions of religion, ideology and state as cultural systems do not treat symbols in the sociological context of institutions are called institutions of power. But the relationship between symbols and power, culture and social structure is more complex in his ethnographic works. This suggests a tension between his ethnographic self and theoretical self which is not simply confined to Geertz and is at the heart of sociological and anthropological practice (Giri, 2020, p. 29).

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a type of qualitative research that focuses on an in-depth understanding of literary and cultural phenomena. Qualitative methodology as a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written words or speech of the observed object (Nassaji, 2020). The research approach used is text analysis with aspects of form comparison and symbolic anthropology. The text analysis approach with form comparison will allow researchers to examine both stories based on literary genre, narrative structure, language style and rhetoric, poetic form, theme and motif, as well as adaptation and intertextuality. Meanwhile, the symbolic anthropology approach will be used to explore the cultural meaning hidden behind the symbols of transformation. In this study, the researcher acts as an instrument and a data collector. Researchers as data collectors because researchers play a direct role in the data collection process, namely determining data sources, recording data, researching data, and drawing conclusions (Mintarsih & Suryaman, 2022, p. 168).

The data sources in this research are divided into two, that are primary data and secondary data. Primary data includes the story text of *Loro Jonggrang and Bandung Bandawasa* retold by Mardiyanto in *Kumpulan Cerita Rakyat Jawa's* book and published by the Perpustakaan Pusat Bahasa at 2007. The second text is *Pyramus-Thisbe* adapted from old Greek stories at 1514 by Lucas van Leyden and retold by Josephine Preston Peabody (Story link here <https://pressbooks.pub/iagtm/chapter/582/>). Meanwhile, secondary data includes studies on Javanese myths, such as Benedict Anderson's, and analysis of Greek tragedy, for example from Northrop Frye, which will provide a broader theoretical and contextual framework.

The data collection methods used are the take-notes technique and document study. The listening technique will be applied to identify and record the symbols of transformation that appear in the texts of both stories. Furthermore, document study will involve analyzing various adaptations of the stories, such as temple reliefs, illustrations in old manuscripts, or other relevant visual forms.

Finally, the data analysis method will be conducted through three main stages. First, text analysis will be applied to both stories individually, by elaborating on each of the previously mentioned aspects of form comparison (literary genre, narrative structure, language/ rhetoric style, poetic form, theme & motif, and adaptation & intertextuality). Second, a form comparison will be conducted by creating a parallel table that juxtaposes the transformation symbols and the context in which they appear in both stories. Third, the interpretation stage will connect the symbols with the underlying cultural values, such as the concept of karma in Javanese culture and fatalism in Greek culture, to reveal deeper cultural meanings.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. RESULT

a. ANALYSIS OF THE GREEK STORY OF PYRAMUS-THISBE

Analysis of the story of Pyramus-Thisbe reveals its rich characteristics in various aspects of form comparison, which confirms its position as a classic love tragedy narrative.

1) Literary Genre

The story of Pyramus-Thisbe can be classified as an old roman myth/legend, given its strong roots in the Greco-Roman mythological tradition despite being presented in an adaptation. Specifically, the genre stands out as a Romantic Tragedy, with the main focus on the love between two lovers that leads to death. Furthermore, it also functions as a cautionary tale, implicitly conveying lessons about the dangers of poor communication and the fatal consequences of erroneous assumptions. Characteristics of the genre include a strong element of fate or destiny, where a series of misunderstandings and tragic coincidences inevitably lead the characters to disaster. A prominent symbolism is the mulberry tree, which serves as a marker of tragedy as well as an eternal reminder of the love story. The main conflict is based on the theme of forbidden love, where parental obstruction is the core trigger in the development of the plot. In genre comparison, Pyramus-Thisbe shares striking similarities with other classic love tragedies such as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Tristan and Isolde* from Medieval legend, and *Layla and Majnun* from Persian poetry, all of which depict forbidden love that ends tragically due to misunderstanding or suffering.

2) Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of Pyramus-Thisbe follows the well-defined pattern of the Classical Tragic Plot. The exposition section introduces Pyramus-Thisbe, their love for each other through a crack in the wall, and the obstacles from their parents who oppose the relationship. The main conflict then arises when the two decide to elope and plan a secret meeting near a mulberry tree. The climax of the story is double; the first climax occurs when Thisbe arrives first at the meeting place, encounters the lioness, drops her veil, and runs away in fear. The second climax follows when Pyramus arrives, finds Thisbe's torn and bloodied veil, and assumes that his beloved has been eaten by a wild animal, prompting him to commit suicide. The tragedy deepens at the anti-climax or tragic climax, when Thisbe returns, finds Pyramus dying, and realizes her fatal misunderstanding, prompting her to kill herself with the same sword. The resolution of the story is marked by the discovery of the lovers' bodies by the couple's parents and their joint burial, as well as the change in color of the mulberry fruit to red as an eternal marker of the tragedy. Specific elements that strengthen the narrative include dramatic irony, where the reader learns a truth that the characters are unaware of; miscommunication as the main trigger for a series of fatal events; and the role of objects (veils) that catalyze the development of the tragic plot.

3) Language Style

The language style used in the story of Pyramus-Thisbe is characterized by direct and dramatic narration, with a strong focus on the actions and intense emotions experienced by the characters. The use of internal monologue is evident,

particularly in Pyramus' thoughts upon discovering Thisbe's bloodstained veil, which reveals his despair and tragic assumptions. While this excerpt of the story may not feature explicitly profound metaphors or similes, the original version and its various adaptations often use nature comparisons to illustrate the depth of emotion. The story has minimal descriptive elements, choosing to focus on plot progression and event sequences rather than excessive descriptive details. The writing style tends to be formal yet accessible, maintaining the classical feel of the original source without being stuffy. By comparison, this style of storytelling is similar to other old Greek myths that emphasize a clear cause-and-effect flow and straightforward storytelling, in contrast to some folklores that may rely more on repetition or rhyme, characteristics often found in the oral tradition.

4) Poetic Form

In the adaptation presented, the story of Pyramus-Thisbe is presented in the form of narrative prose, rather than poetry. However, it is important to note that the origin of this story is epic poetry, first recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This suggests that there is great potential to find versions of this story in poetic form that are rich in rhyme, rhythm, and poetic structure. Although presented in prose, the narrative often contains poetic rhythms, especially in scenes of intense emotion, where word choice and sentence flow create poetry-like rhythms. Besides the original version and prose adaptations, the story is also famous as a dramatic segment in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, presented as an amateur play with a touch of dark comedy. In addition, many modern adaptations of Pyramus-Thisbe can be found in various art forms, including poetry, stage plays, and songs.

5) Theme and Motifs

The story of Pyramus-Thisbe is rich in universal main themes and motifs that can be found across cultures. The central theme is Forbidden Love and Sacrifice, where love opposed by the surrounding environment leads to voluntary suicide as a form of loyalty and despair. Misunderstandings and Tragedy are also key themes, highlighting the dangers of unverified assumptions and lack of communication having fatal consequences. In addition, the story explores the role of Fate and Coincidence, where unexpected events (such as the presence of a lioness) significantly shape the lovers' destinies. Finally, the theme of Transformation (Metamorphosis) is present through the change in color of the mulberry fruit to red, which serves as an eternal marker of the tragedy that occurred. In the context of international motifs, this story contains: Motif T91.6 (Lovers' suicide) which depicts a lover committing suicide; Motif N342.1 (Accidental death of lover) which refers to the death of a lover due to a misunderstanding; and Motif A2666 (Origin of red berries) which explains the origin of the red mulberry fruit. In theme comparison, Pyramus-Thisbe is similar to many other universal stories involving forbidden love and tragedy. However, the story stands out for its primary focus on misunderstanding as the trigger for tragedy, in contrast to some tragic stories that may be caused by deep family feuds or outright betrayal.

6) Adaptation and Intertextuality

The story of Pyramus-Thisbe has a significant footprint in popular culture and shows a high degree of intertextuality throughout history. In the performing arts,

the story has been repeatedly adapted in various forms, from stage plays to operas to ballets. One of the most famous adaptations is the “play within a play” presented in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which shows how the story can be reinterpreted with dark comedic overtones. In addition to the performing arts, the story is also often found in literary form, both as a direct reference and allusion in other literary works, from poetry to modern novels. Its influence also extends to film and television, where the story is often the inspiration for tragic romantic movies or dramas. Even in the visual arts, there are many paintings and sculptures that depict important scenes from the story, capturing its dramatic moments. In its connections with other traditions, Pyramus-Thisbe is an integral part of Greco-Roman Mythology, particularly as collected in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which deals extensively with various myths of transformation. Furthermore, the motif of misunderstanding and tragic death present in this story is found in various folklores of the world, demonstrating the universality of these themes across cultures.

b. ANALYSIS OF LORO JONGGRANG'S FOLKLORES

The analysis folklore of Loro Jonggrang shows its profound narrative richness through various aspects of form comparison, confirming its role in Indonesian oral tradition and culture.

1) Literary Genre

The story of Loro Jonggrang is primarily classified as an etiological legend, as it explains the origin of Sewu Temple and the statue of Loro Jonggrang, which is an important part of the cultural heritage of Central Java. In addition, the narrative is also a tale rich in magical elements, characterized by the presence of spirits (*bala tentara jin*), the magical powers of Bandung Bandawasa, and transformation phenomena such as the curse of being turned into stone. In addition, the story also functions as entertainment literature containing implicit moral messages. A prominent characteristic of this genre is its strong locality, specifically referring to the Kingdom of Prambanan as the main setting. The supernatural element is very dominant, shown through the help of an army of spirits, the magic power of Bandung Bandawasa, and the curse that turns Loro Jonggrang into stone. The main conflict in this story is a relationship conflict characterized by deceit and anger between the two central characters. In genre comparison, this story has similarities with other Nusantara legends such as the Legend of Roro Mendut from Central Java, which also tells a story of tragic love and resistance to power. Similarities can also be found with the fairy tale Cinderella (in certain versions), which features a protagonist who is treated unfairly, and the Legend of Tangkuban Perahu from West Java, which also explains geographical origins through anger and supernatural powers.

2) Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of Loro Jonggrang features a mixed plot that combines romantic and tragic elements. The exposition of the story introduces the background of the kingdom, the main characters, and the initial conflict in the form of a war between kingdoms. Later, a romantic conflict develops when Bandung Bandawasa is attracted to Loro Jonggrang, who then responds with a veiled rejection. The

complications of the story culminate in Loro Jonggrang's submission of an impossible condition to build a thousand temples in one night, and Bandung Bandawasa's attempt to fulfill the condition with the help of supernatural powers. The climax occurs when Bandung Bandawasa almost succeeds in completing the task, but is thwarted by Loro Jonggrang's trickery of lighting a fire and pounding a mortar, so that the jinns think dawn has arrived. The tragic resolution of the story is Bandung Bandawasa's curse that turns Loro Jonggrang into the 1000th statue. The specific elements that make up the plot include a fraudulent contract, i.e. an impossible condition given with the intention to thwart; supernatural intervention in the form of the help of spirits, the power of the curse, and situational irony where Bandung Bandawasa, who has great power almost succeeds, but is eventually deceived by a simple thing arranged by Loro Jonggrang.

3) Language Style

The language style used in Loro Jonggrang's folklore is characterized by simple and straightforward narration, a characteristic of oral storytelling that facilitates understanding. Functional dialogues play an important role in moving the plot along and revealing the characters' characters and motives. The story also makes extensive use of explicit time markers such as "In old times", "Once upon a time", "That morning" and "Midnight", which help to organize the chronological order of events. Short and concise descriptions are used to describe characters and situations without beating around the bush, focusing on the essentials necessary for the story to progress. When compared to other storytelling styles, this story has similarities with the Malin Kundang saga, which is also known for its straightforward narration and focus on the sequence of events. However, this style differs from *Seribu Satu Malam* which tends to be richer in the use of detailed descriptions and complex figurative language.

4) Poetic Form

In its delivery, the story of Loro Jonggrang is presented predominantly in narrative prose, without the regular stanza or rhyme structure of poetry. However, in the oral tradition, there is the potential for lyrical elements in the performance, where certain parts may be conveyed through singing or sung dialog, reflecting the richness of traditional performing arts expression. These prose narratives are also often supplemented with descriptions that evoke strong imagery, such as the image of "the sky has taken on a reddish color" which provides a dramatic and visual feel even if it is not presented in a formal poetic form. In addition to the common prose version, there may be summaries of the story in traditional poetic forms, such as Javanese *tembang*, which may be used in different oral delivery contexts or as part of performing arts.

5) Theme and Motifs

The story of Loro Jonggrang is full of major themes and relevant international motifs. Central themes include Love and Rejection, which depicts the dynamics of an unequal relationship and Loro Jonggrang's sly rejection. Power and Pride is also an important theme, particularly evident in the powerful yet humbled figure of Bandung Bandawasa. The aspects of Deceit and Betrayal are prominent through Loro Jonggrang's strategy to avoid marriage, which then triggers Bandung Bandawasa's Anger and Revenge. Most significantly, the story has an Aetiological

theme that mythologically explains the creation of Sewu Temple and the Loro Jonggrang statue. In the context of international motifs, this story contains: Motif K551 (Escape by false plea), which is an attempt to escape with a false excuse; Motif M410 (Curse), the use of magical powers to curse; and Motif Q551.3.6 (Transformation into stone as punishment), punishment in the form of turning into stone. When compared to other stories, this story has similarities with the story of Medea from Greek mythology in terms of betrayal and violent revenge. However, unlike Romeo and Juliet which focuses purely on tragic love, Loro Jonggrang's folklore features significant elements of deceit and resistance.

6) Adaptation and Intertextuality

Loro Jonggrang's folklore shows a high degree of adaptation and intertextuality in popular culture, especially in Indonesia. In the performing arts, the story is often the basis for performances of the Ramayana Ballet at the Prambanan Temple complex, which integrates the local story with the larger epic, as well as other traditional theater performances. In literary form, the story has been adapted into children's storybooks, teen novels, and even reinterpreted from a modern perspective. In the visual arts, the story has inspired paintings, illustrations in storybooks, and of course the iconic Loro Jonggrang statue at Prambanan Temple. More than just a narrative, the legend has become a major tourist attraction, drawing visitors to the Prambanan Temple complex that is believed to be the work of Bandung Bandawasa. Its connection to other traditions is evident in the motif of building a temple overnight, which is a common motif in folklore in various regions. In addition, stories about curses are also found in many folklores that involve transformation as an important element. The story also highlights the role of the clever female character, where Loro Jonggrang, despite her intention to avoid marriage, shows her intelligence, a characteristic similar to several clever female characters in folklores from various cultures.

c. CULTURAL MEANINGS IN THE TRANSFORMATION SYMBOLS OF LORO JONGGRANG'S FOLKLORE AND PYRAMUS-THISBE

Based on the results of in-depth analysis of the two stories, the cultural meaning behind the transformation symbols in the stories of Pyramus-Thisbe and Loro Jonggrang can be described as follows.

In the Greek story of Pyramus-Thisbe, the symbol of the transformation of Pyramus' blood that changes the color of the mulberry fruit to red represents the concept of tragedy which is closely related to the view of fatalism and fate (*fatum/moira*) in old Greek culture. In this context, the blood that stains the mulberry becomes an eternal marker of sincere love and tragic self-sacrifice. The deep cultural meaning is that miscommunication and impulsive decisions made by human beings, albeit driven by deep love, can inevitably plunge both into their predetermined destinies. The perennial red mulberry fruit serves as a visual epitaph reminding us that even the purest love cannot escape the interference of fate and human frailty. This reflects Greek culture's understanding of the power of fate that transcends individual will, where tragedies often stem from a combination of fate and human *hamartia* (fatal mistakes).

Meanwhile, in the Javanese's folklore of Loro Jonggrang, the symbol of Loro Jonggrang's bodily transformation into a temple statue represents the concept of tragedy that is deeply rooted in the notions of retributive justice, karma, and the consequences of deceit in Javanese culture. The transformation into stone is a direct and appropriate form of condemnation for Loro Jonggrang's lies and cunning attempts to evade the promise of marriage. This reflects the belief in retribution for actions, both positive and negative, which is very strong in Javanese philosophy. Culturally, the Loro Jonggrang statue serves not only as an etiological explanation for the temple's existence, but also as a symbolic warning about the dangers of broken promises and dishonest refusals. The magical power of Bandung Bandawasa to effect this transformation also suggests a hierarchy of power and an assertion of authority through supernatural means, confirming that justice will be served, even though the most drastic means, as punishment for moral betrayal.

2. DISCUSSION

a. SYMBOL OF BODY TRANSFORMATION AS A REPRESENTATION OF TRAGEDY IN THE STORY OF LORO JONGGRANG AND PYRAMUS-THISBE

The symbol of bodily transformation in both stories fundamentally represents the concept of tragedy, but with different nuances, reflecting their respective cultural views on fate and consequences. In Pyramus-Thisbe, the transformation of Pyramus' blood that turns the mulberry red is an enduring symbol of tragic love and inevitable fate. The tragedy here is rooted in misunderstandings and impulsive decisions that, though driven by deep love, fatally fulfill the path fate has outlined. The discolored mulberry becomes a strong visual signifier that fate can befall anyone, where human mistakes (e.g. the misunderstanding between Pyramus-Thisbe) can be the catalyst for disaster. This phenomenon is in line with the characteristics of comparative literature, which compares literary works across countries to establish the concept of universal beauty (Adelia & Dewi, 2024).

In contrast, in the story of Loro Jonggrang, the transformation of Loro Jonggrang's body into a temple statue represents tragedy as a direct result of deceit and breach of promise. This transformation serves as a form of punishment and affirmation of retributive justice enforced by supernatural forces. Loro Jonggrang's tragedy is a direct consequence of her dishonest actions, reflecting the belief in "karma" or retribution that is strong in Javanese cultural views. Loro Jonggrang, which became the 999th temple statue, symbolizes inanimate objects that originated from characters in folklore. This is similar to the research conducted by Nur Alifia Putri Saptiadi, Mia Fitria Agustina, and Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati (2023) who discussed inanimate objects as characters in the movie *The Blue Umbrella*.

One interesting finding that deserves further discussion is the difference in agency (driving force) behind the transformation. In Pyramus-Thisbe, although there is an element of fate, the main catalyst for tragedy is human misinterpretation and rash decisions. The transformation of the mulberry is a passive symbol of the tragedy that has already happened, which then becomes a kind of eternal 'setting' for the love story. This is in line with the idea that the setting in literary works not only shapes the atmosphere, but also reflects the social and cultural conditions

behind the story, as revealed in the research written by Alissa Fariztina, Fadlil Yani Ainusyamsi, and Rohanda Rohanda (2025) in a comparative study of the setting. Meanwhile, in Loro Jonggrang's folklore, the transformation into a statue is an active act of curse and divine/magical punishment that comes as a direct response to the lie. This difference underscores how the concept of tragedy depends not only on the final event, but also on cultural philosophies about moral responsibility and the intervention of a higher power. This comparison is relevant to the goal of comparative literature to discover cultural diversity in literary works, where universal motifs such as transformation and tragedy can be manifested differently according to cultural background (Adelia & Dewi, 2024).

b. CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS BEHIND THE SYMBOL OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE STORIES OF LORO JONGGRANG AND PYRAMUS-THISBE

The symbols of transformation in both stories have profound cultural implications, reflecting the values and beliefs of the society in which they were born. In Pyramus-Thisbe, the transformation of the red mulberry affirms the Greek cultural view of the unavoidable power of fate (*fatum*), as well as the ability of eternal love to transcend physical death. The cultural meaning is that even in the face of tragic death, love and emotional bonds can leave lasting traces, becoming visible monuments in nature. It also emphasizes that human frailties, such as lack of communication or rushed decisions, are often integral to the fabric of fate.

On the other hand, Loro Jonggrang's transformation into a statue has very strong cultural implications in Javanese society, particularly in relation to the concepts of justice, promise and origin. The curse that turns Loro Jonggrang into stone emphasizes the importance of honesty and the moral consequences of deceit. Culturally, it serves as an etiological narrative that explains the origins of Sewu Temple and its statues, making the moral message directly integrated with the physical landscape and cultural heritage. It also shows spiritual intervention or divine power that enforces justice in the human world. In comparative literary studies, the intertextual approach allows researchers to find meaning relationships between texts, including between novels and myths, and see the similarities and contradictions in them. (Adelia & Dewi, 2024).

Taken together, these two transformations function as powerful narratives that transmit cultural values: from the acceptance of the inevitability of fate in the Greek context to the affirmation of moral justice and the consequences of actions in the Javanese context. Comparative literature looks at how the same story elements (transformations) can carry different but equally rich cultural meanings, opening a dialogue between West and East, and expanding people's, especially writers', understanding of how literature functions as a reflection and shaper of culture. As such, the analysis not only compares motifs, but also explores how these narratives perpetuate and teach each society's worldview (Nugraha, 2021).

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous section, it can be concluded that in analyzing the story of Pyramus-Thisbe and the folklore of Loro

Jonggrang, it is necessary to analyze several aspects of form comparison including literary genre, narrative structure, language style/rhetoric, poetic form, theme & motif, and adaptation & intertextuality. In addition, there is also a cultural meaning behind the transformation of the Greek story of Pyramus-Thisbe with the folklores of Loro Jonggrang. The Greek stories of Pyramus-Thisbe represent the concept of tragedy which is closely related to the view of fatalism and fate (*fatum/moira*) in old Greek culture symbolized by the red fruit of the mulberry tree. Meanwhile, the folklore of Loro Jonggrang represent the concept of tragedy that is deeply rooted in the ideas of retributive justice, karma, and the consequences of deceit in Javanese culture symbolized by the statue of Prambanan Temple. So, the comparative literature approach is able to see how the same story elements (transformation) can carry different cultural meanings so as to open a dialog between the West and the East.

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