

**THE FORMULA OF HORROR MOVIES:
A CAWELTY'S ANALYSIS MODEL ON "ANNABELLE"**

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Abstract

Horror is so called as unspoken genre in academic since the development of literary critics shows the improvement of other genres such as romance, detective, and thriller. Therefore, the existence of horror should be able to draw the equal attention of critics to enrich literary critics. The boundaries between the line of literature objects are also interestingly melted by the trends of critics on films. This research focuses on the formula of the horror movie entitled Annabelle released on October 2014. This Film was released after the success of The Conjuring which was grossed over \$318 million worldwide, making it one of the highest grossing horror films of all time. The main aim of this research is to analyze the formula of horror movies by using Cawelty's pop literature theory. The result shows that the character of creepy doll in Annabelle is used to jerk the movie goers as historically doll is believed to be the media for the transcendent cult. Yet, the Creepy Doll is very important in this film as it is the icon of the trapped spirit. Further, it also shows that the general formula of horror movie is about revenge in term of supernatural atmosphere or exorcism. The setting is revealed with the similarity of haunted place, gloomy situation, and daunting atmosphere. Finally, the typology of the narrative structure in horror movies is also drawn in the same pattern which was started by the appearance of a couple in a new house, the emergence of creepy doll, the revenge using the medium of creepy doll, the exorcism by priest, and the ending of saving the doll in the museum.

Keywords: *horror movie, formula, pop literature, creepy doll, Annabelle*

Abstrak

Horor adalah genre yang kurang mendapat perhatian dalam penelitian dalam ranah akademik karena dalam perkembangan kritik sastra justru yang berkembang adalah penelitian pada genre lain seperti romance, detektif, dan triller. Karena itu, keberadaan horror seharusnya mendapat fokus yang sama dalam kritik sastra untuk memperkaya kritik sastra. Batasan dalam pemilihan objek sastra juga akhirnya dapat lebur oleh trend pada kritik terhadap film. Penelitian ini memfokuskan pada formula dari film horror yang berjudul Annabelle yang dirilis pada oktober 2014. Film ini dirilis setelah sukses dari film The Conjuring, yang mencapai keuntungan lebih dari 318 Dollar, dan menjadikannya sebagai film horror yang paling laris sepanjang jaman. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis formula film horror dengan

menggunakan teori sastra populer dari Cawelty. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa karakter dari boneka yang menakutkan dalam Annabelle digunakan untuk mengejutkan penonton karena secara historis boneka dipercaya sebagai media untuk pemujaan sekte. Karena itu, keberadaan boneka yang menakutkan ini menjadi sangat penting karena ia adalah ikon untuk roh yang terjebak didalamnya. Selanjutnya, hal ini juga menunjukkan bahwa formula umum dari film horror adalah tentang balas dendam dalam situasi supernatural atau berkaitan dengan hantu. Setting yang ada menunjukkan kesamaan pada tempat yang menakutkan, situasi yang menyedihkan, dan atmosfer yang menakutkan. Yang terakhir adalah tipologi dari struktur naratif dalam film horror dengan pola yang sama yaitu dimulai dengan kemunculan pasangan disebuah rumah baru, kemunculan boneka yang menakutkan, balas dendam menggunakan medium boneka yang menakutkan, ruhiyah oleh pendeta, dan diakhiri dengan menyimpan boneka dimuseum.

Kata kunci: *film horror, formula, sastra populer, boneka menakutkan, Annabelle*

A. INTRODUCTION

Movies have become interesting media of entertainment besides books or novels as popular product of culture. People all over the world, especially teenagers, are looking forward to watching new released movies which help them to escape from the real world. The fact that teenagers prefer watching film to reading books is undeniable, which should have opened different perspective on how to get the benefit from this movies in order to improve young students' academic achievement in an education setting.

In the context of the teaching and learning of literary works at the university level, movies have played an important role in increasing students' curiosity in understanding the aspects of literary works. In other word, movies have transformed themselves from merely a media of entertainment into a media of literary understanding. In this circumstance, movies, which are also considered as literary works, have also become an important object of literary researches. In recent decades, many scholars have turned their interest into movies to be analysed in the context of academic research and literary critics.

Related to the significant roles of movies/films in literary research, this research is aimed to investigate the formula of a horror movie. Horror is chosen because although this genre is unique but most of the researches focus more on the romance, mystery, or adventure genres. Horror has a unique characteristic which is different with other literary genres and it is created to have more and more shocking scene to attract audiences' interest to enjoy the story.

Along the history, horror movies showed a very positive development trend. In terms of the formula, horror movies seem to have a specific and unique formula compared to the other genres. In most of horror movies, creepy dolls are usually used to haunt the characters as well as to jerk the viewers. The existence of horror doll movie was started with *Dead of Night* (1945) and then it boomed since 1980's with the appearance of *Poltergeist* (1982), *Dolls* (1987), *Dolly Dearest* (1991), *Demonic Toys* (1992), *Pinocchio's Revenge* (1996), *Child's Play* (1998), *Dead Silence* (2007), *The Conjuring* (2013), and *Annabelle* (2014).

In fact, former researches on the movies focused more on other genres. Amid its specific features, horror movies have not got attention from many scholars, as the consequence there is only a few research on horror movies. In order to fill this gap, this research is aimed to investigate the formula of horror movie as depicted in 'Annabelle'. In line with the aim of this research, Cawelty's pop literature theory will be used in order to reveal the formula of a horror movie as depicted in *Annabelle*.

Research Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative research, which applies textual approach by applying the theory of popular culture. The data of the research are collected by comparing the formula of many doll's horror movies with *Annabelle*. In order to reveal the formula of horror movies and "Annabelle", the next step is watching the films to qualify the data. After that, sorting the data is needed which was done by identifying the important elements of Cawelty's Formula. Finally, the analysis was done by focusing on the main character, the setting and the narrative structure of "Annabelle". The

main character is *Annabelle*, which is an icon of trapped spirit in the creepy doll. Further, the setting is analysed by relating the story with the plot or particularly with the narrative structure of the film.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section discusses the literature review of this research that consists of the elements of analysis and the formula of pop literature.

1. Elements of Analysis of Pop Literatures

The great expansion of research on pop literature brings more exciting academic atmosphere in literary research. Formerly, pop literature didn't get many attentions in literary research as many people believed that it wasn't proper enough to be taken as the object of literary research. However, the changing paradigm in this world brings great impact on the trend of literary research. Therefore, many scholars concerned on the pop literature. Basically, there are many concepts widely used in the analysis of pop literature. Cawelty (2001: 203) argued that the elements of the analysis of a pop literature consist of cultural themes, the concept of medium, the idea of

myth and the concept of formula. This general concept can be applied for the whole analysis in pop literature or taken partially.

a. The analysis of Cultural Themes

This analysis brings the theme mainly appear or most prominently in the works under analysis. Even, sometimes it is grouping into the presence or absence of the theme he is interested in. The cultural themes seemed to be essential in developing the research on pop literature as it is believed as the main issue in pop culture. Indeed, the cultural theme is closely related to pop literature which is lightly depicted in the story. Therefore, it highlighted the importance of doing the research in pop literature.

b. The concept of medium

This concept seems notorious on particular application to studies because many of the works concerned are transmitted through new electric media. This kind of concept strictly concerned on the changing medium of the literary works such as from novel to film or vice versa. Yet, the development of this concept of medium is famous with film adaptation terminology. The adaptation got many attention from many scholars

as it is an interesting tool for producing new literary critics in literary research.

c. The idea of myth

In general, myth is broadly defined as the common believe that distinguishing the concept of convention and invention which has different cultural functions. They have different roles. Conventions help maintain a culture's stability while inventions help it respond to changing circumstances and provide new information about the world.

d. The concept of formula

In general, formula can be described as the narrative structure or dramatic convention of a literary works. Further, Cawelty (1976: 205) defines literary formula as a structure of narrative or dramatic convention employed in a great number of individual works. In particular, formula is described as conventional system for structuring cultural products. It is also noted about formula and form which has a distinction between formula and form such a range between two poles. One pole is absolutely conventional structure of conventions, while the other pole initiates a completely original structure which orders inventions.

In this context, formula is dealing more with the relationship between a work and its culture, and not with its artistic quality. In short, Formula might be best defined as principles of selection of certain plots, characters, settings, which were designed, embedded to the basic narrative structure. Therefore, the steps to investigate formula will need more attention on particular narrative structures.

C. DISCUSSION

Horror movie is designed to give shocking effect or a terror for audience which is appeared in many kinds of different formula. However, this research will focus on doll's horror movie that specially designed related to creepy doll, victims, murder, and sacrifice. It is noticed that such movies are typically based on true story as well. Thus, this research discusses the formula of horror movies as depicted in the latest horror film, entitled *Annabelle* which is closely related to the previous horror film entitled *The Conjuring*. Both films have similarities in the opening by showing *Annabelle*, a creepy doll that terrorizes many

characters in the film to show the relationship between them.

Watching *Annabelle* gave the idea of comparing with other doll's horror movies. The analysis of the data showed that the formula of '*Annabelle*' is identical in pattern with the other doll's horror movies in general. In line with Cawelty's concept, some elements to be discussed are characters, settings, and narrative structures in order to depict the formula of a work.

1. The Character

The main character of doll's horror movie is described by using creepy doll, in which it is chosen by the demon as the medium for transcending the spirit. Therefore, this kind of doll usually has the relationship with the sects who worshipped demon. The demon chooses a doll randomly to murder the target and get the spirit. In the *Annabelle* movie, *Annabelle* was chosen by the spirit as the medium to murder the target to get holy spirits as the blood of the demon worshiper trickle onto *Annabelle*'s eye. This doll didn't have the intention to murder the victims just in case there is no spirit in it. Thus, the doll is usually characterized as a creepy thing that is

sadistic in the way of killing the victims. Many horror movies depicted it with the spread of blood, even some described the way the doll kill the victims. But this doesn't happen in *Annabelle* since the victim commit suicide by falling from the building.

2. The Setting

On the other hand, the settings used in horrors always created the spooky atmosphere with many settings of dark side of the day. The setting of the place is usually set up in a house, which is portrayed as an old house with spooky environment or neighbourhood. The atmosphere created a haunted sense with the dark side of day. The time shows different year, that relates the ancient era with the modern era. Sometimes, the relationship describes the existence of the sect that started the history of evil spirit and the reason why the curse or worshipped began. In *Annabelle*, it also shows the new house for a new couple who has just moved to there. The place is portrayed with mysterious neighbour in their neighbourhood. It was in 1969 when the story began. The atmosphere is fully terrifying with evil and mystifying sense.

3. The Narrative structure

The last important part in the analysis of formula is about the narrative structures of the horror film. The narrative structures designed the structure or the flows of the story in the film that defined whether the story is interesting or not. Indeed, it is merely an important aspect to draw the audiences' attention in response to the film. In details, the narrative structure of *Annabelle*, can be described as follows:

First, it is started by the appearance of a couple to a new house. Even though the new one has no relationship with a doll, but they will become the target. This is also happened in *Annabelle*, when a couple (John and Mia) moved to a new house. The couple is going to have a baby.

Second, the emergence of creepy doll. The creepy doll is chosen to be the character in horror movie as it is thought as the easiest medium for spirit to fill in. The doll is universally believed to be the place for the spirit to live in. In *Annabelle*, the doll is a gift for his wife who is dolls collectors. Formerly, it was common doll. But it turns into creepy mysterious doll that

terror the owner in order to get the pure spirit from her child.

Third, revenge or murder the target using creepy doll as the medium. The terror is continuously done by the creepy doll to murder the target. However, the victim can be anybody even though sometimes it is done for revenge. In the film, the doll is moving by itself to terror the victims. Therefore, the appearance of the doll is mysteriously unpredicted to jolt the viewers.

Fourth, exorcism which is done by priest. So many times the film depicted the effort of many people to save the victim from the doll. However, it is very difficult to escape from the spirit. The doll always has their own way to terror the victim. Therefore, the only person who can save them is the priest or supernatural power. The priest did the ceremony of exorcism to protect the victims and released the spirit which is trapped in the doll.

The doll is saved in a museum. The last way to keep the balance condition or others safety is by putting the doll in a save box. The box is not allowed to be opened and it is put in the museum. Nobody is allowed to open the box as it

is belief to be the way to release the spirit. This movie is also has the same ending by putting *Annabelle* in a safe box which is put in a museum.

Annabelle is one of chilling movie, which is used doll as the main character to get the holy victim to be sacrifice. Indeed, the target is the children as they have the holy spirits. However, the general pattern of horror formula is that children are saved by the condition. Even though so many times the doll tried to kill them, the supernatural power is always there to protect them. Thus, the existence of priest and exorcism is notably important to protect other target or particularly to defeat the evil spirit.

D. CONCLUSION

Doll's horror movie mostly derived from true story. The horror movies come with the unique and distinctive pattern of formulas. The first feature is the use of a doll as the medium for the spirit. The use of creepy doll is to show the relationship with worship, sacrifice, and satanic cult of a sect. The creepy doll is used as the main character to terror the main target of victims. However, there was never

depicted victim of the children who died. Priest will appear to protect the victim. Finally, the evil spirit is defeated by the priest and the doll is saved in a box, which is then put in a special museum in USA.

Further, it is possible to develop the next research on the horror movie by applying the semiotics concept. Also, it widely challenges the research on the sociology of literature to investigate the social aspects of the film not only from the production but it is possible for the consumption.

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