
Surrealism in Budi Darma's *Laki – Laki Pemanggul Goni (The Man Carrying the Sack)*: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Laki – laki Pemanggul Goni is one of Budi Darma's short stories. It was firstly published in Kompas, 26 February 2012, and was then translated by Andy Fuller in 2015. Lontar Foundation published the translated version along with the other translated Budi Darma's short stories in a book entitled *Conversations*. Budi Darma is famous of his surrealist work. It is reflected also in *Laki – laki Pemanggul Goni*. Therefore, this study was intended to find whether its' English version conveyed exactly the same characteristics of surrealism as it was in the original version. Bassnett's translation as comparative studies, Popovics' types of translation equivalence, and Breton's surrealism in literature were implemented as the theoretical framework. This study found that both versions did not convey precisely the identical characteristics of surrealism. The Indonesian version's surrealism is stronger than it is in the English version. It might occur because of the cultural gap between the author's and the translator's.

Keywords: surrealism, translation, comparative studies, cultural gap, translation equivalence

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INTRODUCTION

Budi Darma is one of Indonesia's appreciated authors. His short stories are popular with surrealism. Thus, Fuller (in Darma, 2015) stated that Darma's works are so unique that he called their characteristics as Budi Darmaesque. Because of his popularity as a writer and awards that he received (Satya Lencana cultural award and Southeast Asia Literary Council award – in Darma, 2015, p. 152), Lontar Foundation, then, translated seventeen of his short stories into English to catch more readers internationally. Unfortunately, when his short stories are translated into English, the sense of surrealism might change. This could be found in one of his short stories entitled *Laki – laki Pemanggul Goni*, which was translated into *The Man Carrying the Sack*. Its Indonesian version was firstly

published in Kompas, 26 February 2012. It was then translated into English by Andy Fuller and published by Lontar Foundation in 2015.

This short story is about Karmain, an Indonesian who lived overseas to study. He always had a desire to peer down from his apartment to look at a man carrying a sack. Oddly, the Sack-Carrying-Man always disappeared when Karmain tried to find him. One day, the Sack-Carrying-Man, all of a sudden, appeared in Karmain's room where he then warned Karmain about life. He and Karmain then had an argument in which Karmain told that there were two different Sack-carrying men: one was the real one, while the other was Satan who camouflaged as a Sack-Carrying-Man. There was no

conclusion at the end of the story whether the man was a real Sack-Carrying-Man.

Methodology

Translation as Comparative Studies

At present, more than a few Indonesian literary works were translated into English. It is for the reason that Indonesians are passionate to globalize their culture through literature. This fact is identified by Lontar Foundation as its objectives that are to (1) **encourage** further development of Indonesian literature; (2) make Indonesian literature easily reached by an international audience; and (3) preserve Indonesia's literary record for upcoming generations

(<http://www.lontar.org/en/home/about/welcome>). For that reason, translations are needed to be done and to be studied (Lefevere, 1991). What is more, Bassnett (2002) stated that no two languages are sufficiently alike to be considered as representing the equal social reality. Therefore, this study is to compare how similar (or different) the translated work to the original one is.

In doing so, Popovic's theory (in Bassnett, 2002), which distinguishes four types of translation equivalence, is implemented. They are (1) linguistic equivalence, where there is homogeneity on the linguistic level of both SL and TL texts, i.e. word for word translation; (2) paradigmatic equivalence, where there is equivalence of the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis', i.e. elements of grammar; (3) stylistic (translational) equivalence, where there is 'functional equivalence of elements in both original and translation aiming at an expressive identity'; (4) textual (syntagmatic) equivalence, where there is equivalence of the syntagmatic structuring of a text, i.e. equivalence of form and shape. Those four types of translation

equivalences are implemented to compare how surrealism is depicted in Budi Darma's *Lelaki Pemanggul Karung Goni* and in Fuller's *The Man Carrying the Sack*.

Surrealism in Literature

As stated by Fuller (in Darma, 2015), Darma's works are rich with black humor, mythical references, and irony. Those characteristics, also referred as surrealism, are also found in *Lelaki Pemanggul Karung Goni*. In finding how its English version carries the same degree of surrealism, it is noteworthy to understand the detailed features of surrealism in literature as defined by Breton (as cited in Singh, 2011), as follows.

- 1) Surrealism is dedicated to revising our definition of reality. Referring to this feature, for the surrealists, the conditions of life can and must be changed. Moreover, for the surrealist, art is the means of provoking a fundamental revolution of the consciousness;
- 2) Surrealism tries to express what is hidden in mind by showing objects and events as seen in dreams, etc.
- 3) Surrealism has the use of imaginary anecdotes, unusual events, rejection of sensible processes, concern with essential problems of way of life, use of comedy as a dialectical statement of truth.

Results and Discussion

The followings are the sequence of events and literary elements in Darma's *Laki – laki Pemanggul Goni (The Man Carrying the Sack)* presenting the characteristics of surrealism.

Karmain's Desire to Look at the Sack-Carrying-Man

"Setiap kali akan sembahyang, sebelum sempat menggelar sajadah untuk

sembahyang, Karmain selalu ditarik oleh kekuatan luar biasa besar untuk mendekati jendela, membuka sedikit kordennya, dan mengintip ke bawah, ke jalan besar, dari apartemennya di lantai sembilan, untuk menyaksikan laki – laki pemanggul goni menembakkan matanya ke arah matanya.” (Darma)

“Before rolling out his prayer mat, Karmain is always overcome by a desire to open the curtain a bit and peer down from his ninth floor apartment to look at the man carrying the sack staring up at him.” (Fuller)

This event obviously displays one of the elements of surrealism as identified by Breton (cited in Singh, 2011), that this is odd and irrational. The situation that Karmain had a desire to open a curtain without any certain trigger was something illogical. Both of the Indonesian and the English version display this. However, the Indonesian version has “*ditarik oleh kekuatan luar biasa besar*” expression which is then translated into “overcome by a desire”. “Desire” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001) means a strong hope or wish. It means that in the English version, what Karman did was to some degree more active, it was done for the reason that he wished it. In Indonesian, “*ditarik oleh kekuatan luar biasa*” means that Karmain did somewhat passive; he was pulled by an immense power. He was the “object” of the external power. As a result, it can be understood that from this occurrence, the translated version does not have precise linguistic and textual equivalence since it does not have a word-by-word translation; consequently, the form and shape are dissimilar. The stylistic equivalence

is likewise altered because the event is stranger in the Indonesian version (Karmain is dragged by the external power).

Furthermore, one expression in the Indonesian excerpt is not translated into English; it is “*setiap kali akan sembahyang*”. In addition, several expressions have an unlikesense. The expression “*menembakkan mata*” is not precisely identical as “staring” but it is stronger than that. Therefore, it can be said that its linguistic and stylistic equivalence are not exactly equal. However, Karmain’s desire to look at the Sack-Carrying-Man is one of surrealist expressions, which becomes one of the stepping-stones of the overall story.

A weird Indication of the Presence of the Sack-Carrying-Man

“... korden jendela seolah – olah terkena angin dan menyingkap dengan sendirinya. Maka Karmain pun bergegas mendekati jendela, dan menyaksikan di bawah sana, di tengah – tengah jalan besar, laki – laki pemanggul goni berdiri membungkuk mungkin karena goninya terlalu berat, sambil menembakkan matanya ke arah dirinya. Kendati lampu jalan tidak begitu terang, tampak dengan jelas wajah laki – laki pemanggul goni menyiratkan rasa amarah, dan menantang Karmain untuk turun ke bawah” (Darma)

“... he saw that the curtain had opened as if by itself and was moving in the breeze. Karmain hurried to the window and saw the man carrying the sack in the middle of the road staring up in his direction. He was hunched over, perhaps because his sack was too heavy,

and his gaze was full of rage, challenging Karmain to come down.” (Fuller)

There is alinguistic dissimilarity found in the previous excerpts because particular expressions are not translated. “*sudah melewati tengah malam*”; “*lalu membersihkan tubuh untuk sembahyang*”; “*Kendati lampu jalan tidak begitu terang*,”; for example, are not translated. Furthermore, the translator does not meet a stylistic equivalence for the reason that the expressive identity is not perfectly alike. By not translating those expressions, the sense of surrealism is less felt in the translated version. As an example, “*ketika sudah melewati tengah malam*” is simply translated into “one night”. The surreal condition is in fact the appearance of the Sack-Carrying-Man after midnight, which can be noted as the characteristic of Budi Darma–esque (Fuller in Darma, 2015).

Unexpected Come and Go of the Sack-Carrying-Man

The next unreal situation is that the Sack-Carrying-Man always disappeared every time Karmain tried to find him.

“*Karmain dengan tergesa-gesa turun, lalu mendekati semak – semak dekat trotoar, tetapi laki – laki pemanggul goni pasti sudah tidak ada lagi. Dan ketika Karmain bertanya kepada beberapa orang apakah mereka tadi melihat ada seorang laki – laki pemanggul goni, mereka menggeleng.*” (Darma)

“... Karmain had rushed down to the sidewalk when he had seen the man carrying the sack staring up at him. By the time he reached the sidewalk, the

man carrying the sack had disappeared. When he asked people on the sidewalk whether they had seen a man carrying a sack, they all shook their heads.” (Fuller)

The above excerpt shows a strange event, which is the disappearance of the Sack-Carrying-Man, and how other people never see him, except Karmain. This absurdity turns out to be the strong point of surreal literary work. However, the Indonesian and the English versions do not have linguistic equivalence because it is not a word-to-word translation. It can be seen from the word “*semak – semak*” that cannot be found in the English version. Conversely, the stylistic and textual equivalence are found there because the purpose of both texts is the same: telling the readers of the Sack-Carrying-Man’s sudden come and go.

Another discussion concerning this element can also be found in the following quotations:

“*Ketika Karmain tiba kembali di apartemennya, ternyata laki – laki pemanggul goni sudah ada di dalam, duduk di atas sajadah, melantunkan ayat – ayat suci, sementara goninya terletak di sampingnya.*” (Darma)

“When Karmain got back to his apartment, he saw the man sitting on his prayer mat reciting verses from the Qur’an. His sack was placed beside him.” (Fuller)

This sequence shows a bizarre condition because the Sack-Carrying-Man was suddenly in Karmain’s apartment. A difference can be seen from the translation of “*ayat – ayat suci*” into “Qur’an”. Those expressions are unequal because “*ayat – ayat suci*” does not

always mean Qur'an verses. The translator might translate "ayat – ayat suci" into Qur'an because he assumed that Karmain was a Moslem because of the word "sajadah" or "prayer mat", that is usually used by Moslem during their prayer. However, the functions of both expressions are equal: showing the sudden appearance of the Sack-Carrying-Man. Thus, it can be seen that both versions has stylistic equivalence.

The Sack-Carrying-Man's Familiarity on Karmain's Life

Setelah selesai berdoa, tanpa memandang Karmain, laki – laki pemanggul goni berkata lembut: "Karmain, kamu sekarang sudah menjadi orang penting. Kamu sudah menjelajah dunia, dan akhirnya kamu di sini, di negara yang terkenal makmur. Bahwa kamu tidak mau kembali ke tanah airmu, bukan masalah penting. Tapi mengapa kamu tidak pernah lagi berpikir tentang makam ayahmu? Tidak pernah berpikir lagi tentang makam ibumu. Makam orangtuamu sudah lama rusak, tidak terawat, tanahnya tenggelam tergerus oleh banjir setiap kali hujan datang, dan kamu tidak pernah peduli." (Darma)

After finishing his prayer, without looking at Karmain, he spoke softly. "Karmain, you have become an important person. You've travelled the world, and now you are here, in a rich country. That you don't want to come back to your homeland is no problem. But why don't you care for your father's grave? You have never thought about your mother's grave. Their graves are neglected, damaged. Their graves

sink further into the ground each time it rains and you have never cared about this." (Fuller)

This passage displays one of the strange situations in Budi Darma's *Laki – laki Pemanggul Goni*. It can be seen by the fact that the Sack-Carrying-Man recognizes the whole thing about Karmain's life. The evidence is that the man knew that Karmain never cared about his parents' grave. According to Breton (in Singh, 2011), surreal literary work believes that life condition must be changed. By advising Karmain to take care of his parents' graves, the Sack-Carrying-Man desired to change Karmain's life. This event is unusual, nevertheless, for the reason that Karmain did not know the man. Accordingly, the surreal condition is clearly seen from this sequence of event.

The translation implements word-to-word translation, as a result, we can say that the translation and the original texts have linguistic equivalence. The sentence structures of both texts are likewise identical. As a result, it can be said that both texts have paradigmatic equivalence. The stylistic and the textual equivalence are also found the same in both texts.

The Sack-Carrying-Man' Ability to Take Someone's Soul

"Tahukah kamu ke mana sahabat – sahabatmu itu pergi?"

"Tidak."

"Mereka saya ambil. Saya tahu, kalau mereka tidak saya ambil, pada suatu saat kelak dunia akan gaduh. Gaduh karena, kalau tetaphidup, mereka akan mengacau, membunuh, dan menyebarkan nafsu besar untuk berbuat dosa ..." (Darma)

“Do you know where your friends have gone?”

“No.”

“I’ve taken them all. I knew that if I didn’t take them, there would be trouble. If they kept on living, they would create chaos, kill, and spread a great desire to sin....” (Fuller)

This sequence of event shows surrealism. It is seen that the Sack-Carrying-Man was able to predict the future. He knew that in the future, Karmain’s best friends would commit sin. This event, therefore, depicts one of the characteristics of surrealism because it is believed that life condition must be changed. A linguistic un-equivalence is found in the translation of “...*dunia akan gaduh*” which was translated into “trouble”. “*Gaduh*” is something more than just a trouble. According to <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/gaduh>, “*gaduh*” means “*rusuh dan gempar karena perkelahian (percekcokan dan sebagainya); ribut; huru-hara.*” From <https://id.oxforddictionaries.com/terjemahkan/indonesia-inggris/gaduh>, the most appropriate translation for “*gaduh*” is “commotion, noisy, or uproar.” Therefore, it can be concluded that from this excerpt, there is a bit problem in the stylistic equivalence because of lack linguistic equivalence.

Myth about Satan Who Disguised as a Sack-Carrying-Man

“*Wahai laki – laki pemanggul goni,*” kata Karmain setelah terdiam agak lama. “*Ibu dulu saya pernah berkata, ada laki – laki pemanggul goni yang sebenarnya, ada pula pemanggul goni yang sebetulnya setan, dan menyamar*

sebagai laki – laki pemanggul goni.” Darma)

“Oh, Sack-Carrying-Man,” said Karmain after a moment. “My mother once told me that there is the real sack-carrying-man and there is also the sack carrying-man who is actually Satan disguised as the Sack-Carrying-Man,” (Fuller)

In the above excerpt, Karmain said the possibility of false Sack-Carrying-Man. This is a surrealist characteristic for the reason that it expresses what is hidden in mind (Breton in Singh, 2011). “Satan” is to some degree abstract. It is not a physical object. In addition, in Darma’s *Lelaki Pemanggul Karung Goni*, it is expressed that there is a probability for the Satan to pretend to be a Sack-Carrying-Man. In an actual world, it is impossible. Hence, this event is considered surreal.

In terms of equivalence, in those two versions, there is no word-to-word translation, or we might say that those versions do not have linguistic equivalence. As a proof, the word “*goni*” is translated into “sack”. *Goni* is a special material, i.e. a plant fiber (*Corchorus capsularis*, that is very common in Asia and Africa (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corchorus_capsularis). The translator might find problems in finding the word-by-word translation. However, the function of the two versions is identical. It is to inform the readers on the possibility of a fake Sack-Carrying-Man. Therefore, we can say that those versions have functional equivalence.

The Sack-Carrying-Man’s Presence in Karmain’s Past Life

Dan Karmain ingat benar, dulu menjelang kebakaran hebat melanda

kampung burikan, kata beberapa orang saksi, laki – laki pemanggul goni datang. Lalu kata beberapa saksi pula, laki – laki pemanggul goni masuk ke rumah Karmain, kemudian bergegas – gegas ke luar, dan melemparkan bola – bola api ke rumah Karmain. Dan setelah api berkobar – kobar ganas menjilati sebagian rumah dikampung Burika, beberapa orang dari kampung Burikan dan kampung Barongan sempat melihat, laki –laki pemanggul goni melarikan diri di anatara lidah – lidah api yang makin membesar.(Darma)

And Karmain remembered, before the fire in Burikan, several witnesses said that the man carrying the sack came. Then, several witnesses said, the man carrying the sack visited Karmain's house and then quickly hurried out, throwing fireballs toward Karmain's house. And after the flames had burned down the kampong of Burikan, several people from Burikan and Barongan saw the man carrying the sack running away from the growing flames. (Fuller)

This event is odd because at the end of the story, Karmain remembered that the person he met abroad was the similar person from his past life. It is also strange because it is revealed in the plot that the Sack-Carrying-Man was in fact an evil person. He had burned Karmain' house. This condition is in contrast with what is expressed in the previous event that the man was religious, and he directed Karmain to change his life.

This translation is not a word-to-word translation. It can be seen from the word “*ingat benar*” that was translated into “remember” which had less sense than the

original version. Another example was the words “*kebakaran hebat*” which was translated into “fire” which again had less sense than the original vesion. Therefore, it can be concluded that the linguistic equivalence is not found in those excerpts. However, the stylistic equivalence is found there because the event's purpose is the same in both the original and the translation version.

Conclusion

Darma's *Laki-laki Pemanggul Goni* and its' English version: *The Man Carrying the Sack* expresses surrealist characteristics. They both tell that life condition, i.e. Karmain's, must be changed. This can be seen from the Sack-Carrying-Man who warned Karmain on the fault he had done previously. It as well expresses what is hidden in mind (represented by the possibility of Satan who disguised as a Sack-Carrying-Man). Moreover, the sequence of event is also irrational shown by the Sack-Carrying-Man's sudden come and go.

Both versions do not have a perfect linguistic equivalence, however, since it was not an exact word-to-word translation. Some of the expressions are untranslatable, such as *goni*, and some others are dismissed or are translated in different senses in the English versions. Conversely, they have the stylistic equivalence since the functions of both versions are the same. It can be seen by the same plot and idea of both versions. In brief, the surrealism might be a bit stronger in the Indonesian version than in the English one. The untranslatable specific Indonesian terms are the reason of it. This untranslatability might occur because of the cultural gap between the author and the translator. Overall, the English version is still able to bring the Budi Darma-esque.

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