

**THE LIFE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL  
CANTING BY ARSWENDO ATMOWILOTO AND FISSILMI HAMIDA  
(AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY)<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

This research discusses the intertextual study of the novel *Canting* written by Arswendo Atmowiloto and another novel with the same title by Fissilmi Hamida. The basis for the intertext study is the life philosophical background differences and similarities possessed by the characters in the two novels. This research is descriptive qualitative research, and the object of research are all quotations related to the philosophical background of the characters in the novels. Data collection is carried out with content analysis. Data analysis techniques in this study were carried out in the following steps, (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) drawing conclusions. The results of the analysis show that there is a slight relationship between the novel by Arswendo Atmowiloto (as the hypogram) and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida (as the transformation) when viewed from the life philosophical background of the characters. In this case, the philosophical background of the characters is based on the main foundations of the Javanese philosophy of life, namely (1) divinity conscious awareness and (2) conscious awareness of human existence which emphasizes human relationships with others. Thus, intertextually the novel by Fissilmi Hamida is a deviant transformation of its hypogram, the novel by Arswendo Atmowiloto.

**Keywords:** *the philosophical background, novel, intertextuality, intertextual study.*

**INTRODUCTION**

A literary work is the author's idea of a real world (including life in the environment of a

society) expressed as a work of art using distinctive language. This is also affirmed by Pireddu (2018:108) by saying that in addition

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to being part of the author's creativity, literature also reflects the social conditions of the environment of a society. One of the literary works that can be used to display the phenomena of the characters' life is novel. Novels contain not only intrinsic elements (theme, characterization, plot, and setting), but also extrinsic elements such as a view of life (McKeon, 2000:24).

The creation of literary works is inseparable from the existence of other texts that are used as examples (Teeuw, 2015:113). In this case, each author can deviate or transform his literary work that preceded it according to his own creativity or point of view in presenting various problems. The study of literary works using these principles can be carried out using an intertextual approach. According to Nurgiyantoro (2013: 76) the intertextual approach examines several texts that are considered having certain relationships, such as text-building elements, so that a work is used as a hypogram for the subsequent literary works. This approach can link works of fiction and nonfiction (Knoop, 2011:118). In addition, it can also occur between fictional stories like novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto and novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida.

The two novels are both set in Javanese culture which raises batik as a symbol of culture, ethics in Javanese culture and the existence of social stratification (between *wong gedhe* (high class) and *wong cilik* (low class) or their employers and workers. Not only that issue is peeled off by the authors, but one thing that adds aesthetic value to the novel is the admonition or philosophy of life of the (Javanese) characters that can be used as a view of life.

Intertextual studies of Javanese culture, especially regarding the life philosophy of the

characters, are interesting things to discuss. In the previous research, Sumanto (2010) also discussed intertextual studies using the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto. However, it is juxtaposed with the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. His research emphasizes more on structural studies and local colors of Javanese life from both novels. In addition, intertextually the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is said to be a hypogram of *Canting's* novel.

Based on this background, this paper aims to discuss the intertextual studies contained in the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida. The basis for the idea of the intertextuality study here is the differences and similarities between the philosophical background of the characters in the two novels.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kristeva (1980:66) *any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another*. It means that each text is constructed as a mosaic of quotes, absorption, and transformation from other texts. This is in line with the opinion of Culler (1977:139) who posits that each text is a transformation of other texts.

Furthermore, Ratna (2015:173-175) states that intertextuality study can occur in two ways, namely (1) reading two or more texts side by side and (2) reading a text but backgrounded by other texts. An important concept in intertextuality studies is hypogram that is used as a basis for creating new works, either by accepting or rejecting. It can be used by readers as clues to the relationships between contexts. Thus, based on the explanations of several experts above, the

relationship between the hypogram and transformation of the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida can be studied by finding the differences and similarities in the philosophical setting of the characters in the two novels. From these findings, it can also be used to determine whether the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto is a hypogram of the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida.

The philosophy of life is something related to the philosophical background. The philosophical background of the figure (Javanese) in this study is more towards internalization of a dominant principle and is used as a way of life. This is in line with Stewart's (2010:5) opinion that *philosophy is a not statement of a particular point of view, but an activity aimed at understanding, or rather "a way of life in which this activity is the dominant organizing principle"*.

In addition, philosophy can be interpreted more or less the same as a view of life. The view in question is not religion, but a view of life towards God and His created universe and the role of man in it (Haq, 2010:10). This is emphasized by Musman (2015: 21) by stating that there are three basic foundations of the philosophy of life, including (1) divinity awareness, (2) universe awareness, and (3) human existence awareness. Thus, there are at least three main foundations underlying the philosophy of life. This can be explained as follows. Musman, (2015:21) reveals that in the Javanese philosophy of life, God is understood as the *kang murbeng alam* (creator and ruler of the universe).

In addition, it is also believed to be a *paraning dumadi*, meaning knowing the origin and purpose of life in the world. Furthermore, Endraswara (2006:44) explains that in relation

to God, the Javanese idealize *menep*, calm attitude, so as not to be swayed by disturbing passions, and *narima ing pandum* (accepting all God's decisions). For the Javanese *urip manungsa pinasthi ing Pangeran*. In other words, life is already charted. Universe awareness is a form of acknowledgement of the cosmic (universe)-magical relationship between the universe and man (Musman, 2015:21-22). Therefore, man must be able to place himself to maintain his life safe, welfare, as well as to avoid being greedy which can lead to the destruction of nature. Another expression is *memayu hayuning bawana*. It means beautifying the natural beauty, preserving and caring for the surrounding environment (Suprayitno et al, 2018: 232).

Next, about human existence awareness, Musman (2015:22) states that human existence can be realized by living a harmonious and balanced life, as well as maintaining safety. This is intended to master themselves, maintain an atmosphere of harmony, and recognize their respective positions. In other words, there are teachings of the noble mind to realize the general welfare and peaceful nuances in the common life.

There is also an expression *manungsa saderma nglakoni, kadya wayang umpamane* (Tartono, 2013:381). It means man simply lives what God has outlined, man is likened to a puppet. The world must be accepted as it is. Human beings can only maintain harmony and balance in order to create community welfare. In addition, there is also the expression *kaya suruh lumah kurebe beda, nanging yen ginigit padha rasane* (Suprayitno et al, 2018:232). It means judged from the physical appearance, humans do have distinguishing characteristics, but in essence they are the same.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive qualitative research using an intertextual approach. The objects in this study are all quotes related to the philosophical background of the characters in the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida. The data collection technique is carried out to examine the content of the document (the novels *Canting*). This is also called *content analysis*. The data analysis technique was carried out using the model of Miles and Huberman (2007: 16) with four stages, namely (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) drawing conclusions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show that there is little relationship between the similarities between the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto (hypogram) and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida (transformation) when viewed from the philosophical background of the character's life. In this case, the philosophical background of the character's life is based on the main foundations of the Javanese philosophy of life, namely (1) divinity awareness and (2) being aware of existence which emphasizes human relationships with others. Thus, intertextually the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida is a deviant transformation of its hypogram.

### Similarities

The novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto and the Novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida are both set in Javanese culture which contains various philosophies of life Characters. In this case, Arswendo displays

Solo culture, while Fissilmi displays Yogyakarta culture.

Related to the philosophical background of the character's life displayed in both novels is based on divinity awareness (human belief in the Creator) and human existence awareness. The following is a form of intertextuality of the two novels related to the philosophical background of the character's life.

### a. Divinity Awareness

In Javanese culture, God (Javanese generally call *Gusti*) is understood as the creator and ruler of all Nature. Life is determined. It is believed that the character of Mr. Bei and the elder in the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowilo is like one of the following quotes.

#### Indonesian:

Bu, ini semua anak-menantu-cucu berkumpul di sini. Anak-anakmu, anak-anakku. Semua *bekti* padamu. Kalau mau pergi, pergi yang ikhlas. **Tak ada yang perlu *digondeli*, tak ada yang memberati. Kami semua ikhlas. *Gusti Maha Besar*** (Atmowiloto, 2018:242-243).

#### English translation:

(My wife, all children, son- and daughters-in-law gathered here. Your children, my children. All respect you. If you want to go, go happily. **There's nothing to regret about, there's nothing to be concerned about. We are all ok. *Gusti* is the Greatest.**)

#### Indonesian:

**Hidup ini hanya *mampir ngombe*, singgah minum. Terlalu singkat dibandingkan dengan hidup sebelum**

dan sesudah mati," seseorang yang lebih tua menasehati Pak Bei. **Semua di tangan Gusti Allah.**" (Atmowiloto, 2017:248)

*English translation:*

**Life is just stopping by to take a sip, stopping by to drink. Too short compared to the life before and after death,**" an older person advised Mr. Bei. **All in the hands of Gusti Allah.**" (Atmowiloto, 2017:248)

Quote (1) above shows that Mr. Bei still has an awareness of divinity because he still believes that God is Almighty. It was God who created man and to Him also all His creatures will return. This can be seen when Mr. Bei can restrain himself by trying to let his wife go (die). Meanwhile, in quote (2) the elderly also believes that everything is destined. Including the life and death of human beings. Life in the world is only temporary. Nothing is eternal. This belief is also believed by the characters (Hadi, Sundari, and Sekar) in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida by believing that God is almighty. This appears in the following excerpt.

*Indonesian:*

... Begitu juga dengan usaha kita dalam membina rumah tangga kita. Nah, untuk mengaduk, kita perlu **sendok, artinya sendhekna marang sing kuasa, serahkan pada Yang Maha Kuasa. Kencangkan doa kita dan perbanyak permohonan** (Hamida, 2018:142).

*English translation:*

... So is our effort in building our family. Now, to stir, we need a spoon leaf, **that is to say, to say, leave it to the Almighty. Tighten our prayers and multiply petitions** (the translation of "sendok" is

adapted to leaf to fit the context.)

*Indonesian:*

Penantiannya rupanya hanya sebuah kesia-siaan belaka. Tidak baik untuk berandai-andai seperti itu, Jeng. Apa pun yang terjadi, **kuwi kabeh saka kersaning Gusti.** Yang perlu kita lakukan hanya satu, *nglakoni*, menjalani (Hamida, 2018:54-55).

*English translation:*

His waiting was apparently just a futility. It's not good to be like that. Whatever happens, **all of them** are from the will of Gusti. All we need to do is only one, live it.

Quote (1) above shows that the character of Hadi has a divine consciousness by believing in the existence of the Ruler (God). Everything in the world is destined (including a soul mate in building a family). Man's duty after he does all efforts is to surrender to God and pray. Meanwhile, in quote (2) Hadi also believes that everything is god-destined. Man just lives it.

#### **b. Human Existence Awareness**

Related to the awareness of man existence, it can be realized by living life in harmony with others. It means avoiding the presence of conflicts (maintaining an atmosphere of getting along well) with other people. This attitude is shared by the character (Pak Bei) in the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto. This appears in one of the following quotations.

*Indonesian:*

Pak Bei ditarik ke pinggir. Sudah jangan diladeni. Ingat pepatah leluhur: Yang waras mengalah. **Wani ngalah luhur wekasane, barang siapa berani mengalah, dialah yang lebih luhur.**

Luhur berarti agung, berarti mulia, berarti menang, berarti segalanya (Atmowiloto, 2017:24).

*English translation:*

(Mr. Bei was pulled to the side. No, don't respond it. Remember our the ancestors saying: The sane should refrain from conflict. **Those who refrains from conflict will finally win, whoever dares to give in, he is the nobler one.** Being noble means great, means respected, means winning, means everything).

Through the philosophy of life wani *ngalah luhur wekasane* in the quote above shows that the figure of Mr. Bei still holds the principle of harmony between people. He avoids conflicts that can lead to quarrels with Bei Tondo by giving in, and re-understands the meaning of the ancestral saying. The principle of harmony and the proverbial of the ancestors are also reflected in the admonition of Simbok contained in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida. This can be seen from the following excerpt.

*Indonesian:*

- (1) Seandainya kamu mau melawan bapak, kamu tetap tidak bisa, Nduk. Kamu tahu bapak bagaimana. Untuk saat ini, kamu memang hanya bisa menerima dan menjalaninya saja. **Eling, Nduk. Wani ngalah luhur wekasane** (Hamida, 2018:16).

*English translation:*

If you want to fight Dad, you still can't, Dear. You know what Dad is like. For now, you can only accept and live it. **Remember, Dear. Wani ngalah luhur wekasane.**

The quote above shows that through the

philosophy that Simbok often said to Sekar, namely *wani ngalah luhur wekasane*, disputes between Sekar and his father can be avoided (keeping the relationship between family members to remain harmonious). Indirectly, Simbok also reminds Sekar of his position as a child.

## 2) Differences

### a. Divinity conscious awareness

Basically, the philosophical background or life view of the characters in both *Canting* novels, both by Arswendo Atmowiloto and Fissilmi Hamida include understanding that God (*Gusti*) is the creator of the universe and everything is destined (life, death, spouse).

However, the problems that drive the characters to disclose their life philosophy are different. In the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto, the character's life philosophy regarding God conscious awareness appears when they ponder about the meaning of life. Meanwhile, in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida, it is disclosed in relation to living a domestic life (with all the problems in it). This appears in the following excerpt.

*Indonesian:*

...Hidup ini hanya mampir ngombe, singgah minum. Terlalu singkat dibandingkan dengan hidup sebelum dan sesudah mati (Atmowiloto, 2017:248).

*English translation:*

... (Life is just stopping by to take a sip, stopping by to drink. Too short compared to the life before and after death,"

*Indonesian:*

... Udhek tegese usahane aja nganti

mandhek, ikhtiar kita tidak boleh berhenti. Begitu juga juga dengan usaha kita dalam membina rumah tangga kita. Nah, untuk mengaduk kita perlu sendok, artinya sendhekna marang sing kuasa, serahkan pada Yang Maha Kuasa (Hamida, 2018:142).

*English translation:*

Stirring means never stop working. We should not stop our efforts. So is our effort in building our family. Now, to stir, we need a spoon leaf, **that is to say, to say, leave it to the Almighty. Tighten our prayers and multiply petitions** (the translation of "sendok" is adapted to leaf to fit the context.)

In quote (1) above, the character's philosophy of life regarding divine conscious awareness (*life is just stopping by to drink*) is revealed at the time of Mrs. Bei's death. Through this incident, the elder character understands that life in the world is only temporary. All mankind will return to His creator. Meanwhile, in quote (2) the character's life philosophy regarding the awareness of the existence of God is stated at the beginning of his living a domestic life. He believes that everything is destined by God, including a spouse. People can only try and pray.

**b. Aware of Human Existence**

The philosophical background of the characters in *Canting* novels related to human existence is essentially equally realized through the principle of living life in harmony. In addition, there is also a sense of social stratification (families of lay men and the nobles).

However, the revelation of the character's philosophy of life that gives rise to

a sense of human existence in the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto is more about how to behave as a noble family members and a lay man people of no noble blood. This appears in the following excerpt.

*The attitude of the high class*

The attitude that the high class should be based on the principle of harmony expressed through the character's philosophy of life. This can be seen in the expression *tak bisa tinggal glanggang nyolong playu* (cannot just leave the battlefield), which means *cannot just run away from one's responsibility*. If he becomes a superior (employer), then he must be able to manage his business and make it run well and win. This attitude is shown by Ni (the successor of the *canting*-labelled batik business) as in the following quote.

*Indonesian:*

"Saya gagal. Di pasar, saya tidak bisa apa-apa.

"Lalu?"

Saya belum tahu, Him. Rasanya saya tak bisa tinggal *glanggang nyolong playu* begitu saja (Atmowiloto, 2017:293).

*English translation:*

"I failed. In the market, I can't do anything.

"And then?"

I don't know yet, Him. It feels like *I can't just run away from the battlefield* (Atmowiloto, 2017:293).

*(2) The attitude of the lower class*

The attitude that the lower-class man should show towards the employer is based on the principle of harmony, namely by understanding his position. This attitude is reflected through the expression of De

Wahono to Ni (employer) by leaving it all about whether the annual allowance will be given to the workers or not, seeing the financial condition of the company is terrible. This can be seen in the following excerpt.

*Indonesian:*

"Kalau saya tak punya duit? Kalau perusahaan rugi dan tak ada tunjangan 17 Agustus bagaimana?"

"Ya berat, den Rara. Tapi ya sumangga..." (Atmowiloto, 2018:332)

*English translation:*

"If I don't have money? If the company loses and there is no annual allowance, what do you think?"

"It's difficult, Madam. But it is all up to you"

Meanwhile, in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida, the writer shows how to behave as the employer (noble man) and the worker (man of humble origin). In addition, she also shows an attitude as a family member (*child*) and how to maintain domestic life harmony. This can be read in the following description and citation data.

*Attitude as a family member (child)*

The attitude that should be shown by the lower-class man is based on the principle of harmony as expressed through the character's philosophy of life, i.e. *Tumungkala yen pun dukani* (look down when scolded). That is, as a child (position) must listen to the advice of parents. This is reflected in Simbok's remarks in the following quote.

*Indonesian:*

...Tumungkala yen pun dukani, tundukkanlah wajahmu jika engkau dimarahi. Bapang den simpangi (Hamida,

2018:14).

*English translation:*

**Look down when scolded.** Avoid problems.

*The attitude of high class (Hadi) towards low class (Sekar) in maintaining household harmony*

The attitude that a high-class man should show towards low class man is based on the principle of harmony. It is revealed through the character's philosophy of life, i.e., *gegaraning wong akrami, dudu bandha dudu rupa, amung ati pawitane*. This attitude is reflected through Hadi's attitude. Although Hadi used to be Sekar's employer, he did not see his social status when he chooses her his wife. This can be seen in the following excerpt.

*Indonesian:*

"Gegaraning wong akrami, bekal orang membangun rumah tangga. Dudu bandha dudu rupa, bukanlah harta atau rupa. Amung ati pawitane, hati-lah bekal sesungguhnya," Urai Hadi (Hamida, 2018:29).

*English translation:*

"Gegaraning wong akrami, the basis for people in building a family; Dudu bandha dudu rupa, is not riches nor beauty. Amung ati pawitane, only heart is the start," said Hadi

*(3) The attitude of low class*

The low class should show an attitude based on the principle of harmony. One of which is revealed through the life philosophy of Simbok, as in the following quote.

*Indonesian:*

"Nduk, nadayan asor wijilipun, yen kelakuane becik, utawa sugih carita kang



dadi misil, iku pantes raketana, darapon mundhak kang budi (Hamida, 2018:152).

*English translation:*

"Dear, eventhough from humble origin, if they have good behavior, or have a lot of wise stories, it is good for you to mingle with them. Hope you can improve your behavior, too.

The character's philosophy of life (Simbok) in the quote above shows that even though she is a socially low-class woman, she still holds the principle of harmony by being aware of her position. Even if somebody is a descendant of an ordinary people, but if his behavior is good, it is worth being friends with.

### CONCLUSION

Intertextually, Fissilmi Hamida's novel *Canting* is a deviant transformation of its hypogram. This can be seen from the slight congruence between the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto (hipogram) and the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida (transformation) when viewed from the philosophical background of the character's life (Javanese) regarding the divinity conscious awareness (there are two data) and being aware of the existence of humanity (there is one data).

In this case, the life problems underlying the expressions of the character's philosophical life about God are different. In the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto, the character's life philosophy regarding divinity conscious awareness expressed when pondering the meaning of life. Meanwhile, in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida, it is mentioned when the characters are confronted with domestic life (with all the problems in it).

Meanwhile, the expression of the character's life philosophy regarding the awareness of human existence in the novel *Canting* Arswendo Atmowiloto is more towards how to behave as a high-class member (noble family environment) and a lower class member. Meanwhile, in the novel *Canting* by Fissilmi Hamida, it does not only show how to behave as a high-class member and lower class member (employer and worker) only. It covers the attitude as a family member (child) and how to maintain household harmony.

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