

## Form Of Change in The Film Adaptation of *Laskar Pelangi* by Director Riri Riza

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### ABSTRACT

In the history of Indonesian cinema, the most frequently produced type of film adaptation is the novel adaptation. This is because the public always wants new ways to enjoy existing creative works. An example of this is the adaptation of the novel *Laskar Pelangi* into a feature film of the same title, *Laskar Pelangi*. This article discusses the forms of change that occurred in the process of adapting Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi* into a film by Riri Riza. The focus of the study is on three main types of changes, namely abridgement, addition, and alteration. The method used is qualitative descriptive with a literature study approach, where data is collected from novels and films as comparative material. The results of the analysis show that the film underwent abridgement in several parts of the story, the addition of scenes not in the novel, and narrative changes, including alterations to the plot, characterization, and scenes from the novel to the film. This study is expected to provide insight into how adapting literary works into visual forms affects narrative and message delivery.

**Keywords:** *Abridgement, Addition, Laskar Pelangi, Screen adaptation, Various Changes*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Films and novels are two narrative representation media that have different characteristics, but are often intertwined in adaptation practices. According to Film Law No. 8 of 1992, a film is defined as an audiovisual work of art that is a mass communication medium for sight and sound, produced based on the principles of cinematography and screened through a projection system. Technically, films consist of a series of *still pictures* in *frames* that are projected quickly to create the impression of movement and are useful for teaching, information, or education (Kustandi & Sutjipto, 2011; Suleiman, 1981). Meanwhile, novels are works of fiction in prose form that present a series of events through language as the main medium. Abrams (in Nurgiyantoro, 1995) states that the word novel comes from the Italian word *novella*, which means 'small new thing', while Jassin (in Nurgiyantoro, 1995) views a novel as a story about human life and its environment presented through certain episodes.

The difference in medium between novels and films implies a difference in the strategy of conveying meaning. Novels rely on the power of words to build a story world through intrinsic elements such as theme, message, characters, plot, setting, point of view, and style of language. Film, on the other hand, relies on visuals, audio, and the collective work of various production elements. Therefore, when a novel is adapted into a film, the process is not merely a transfer of the story, but a transformation of medium that involves structural and aesthetic changes.

In literary studies, this change of medium is known as adaptation. Damono (2010) states that literary works can not only be translated into other languages, but also adapted into different art forms. The transformation of a novel into a film is specifically referred to as *ekranisasi*, from the French word *écran*, which means screen. Eneste (1991) defines *ekranisasi* as the process of transferring a novel to the film screen. In this process, three main types of changes commonly occur, namely abridgement, addition, and various changes (Eneste, 1991). These changes are inevitable because novels are language-based individual works, while films are collective products that take into account duration, visual aspects, and dramatic interest.

Studies on *ekranisasi* are generally developed through an intertextual approach. This approach views a text as part of a network of relationships with other texts, whether in the form of ideas, events,

characters, plots, or style (Nurgiyantoro in Abdurrachman & Parmin., 2022; Culler, 1975; Teeuw, 1984). The purpose of intertextual studies is to present a more comprehensive meaning by considering the historical and contextual relevance of the work (Elmustian & Jalil, 2015). In the context of screen adaptation, this approach is relevant for examining how the narrative structure of a novel is transformed in the medium of film and its implications.

One Indonesian literary work that has undergone the process of ekranisasi is the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata, which was adapted into a film by Riri Riza in 2008. This adaptation shows a transformation in the characters, plot, and setting as a consequence of the difference in medium. These changes include the condensation of certain parts of the story, the addition of specific scenes, and variations in the narrative structure to suit the dramatic and visual needs of film.

Several previous studies have examined the film adaptation of *Laskar Pelangi*. Anjani, Anggraini, and Alfiawati (2021) as well as Hastuti & Supriyono (2022) highlight changes in characters and plot that are adapted to the visual needs and duration of the film. Other studies on the adaptation of different works, such as *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Baksin, 2023), *Hello Salma* (Fitria & Latif, 2024), and *Aruna dan Lidahnya* (Aidzin & Malik, 2023), show that film adaptations generally involve reductions, additions, and adjustments to issues to make them more effective cinematically and commercially.

However, most of these studies still focus on identifying general changes. A more systematic description of the forms of reduction, addition, and variation in the characters, plot, and setting in the film *Laskar Pelangi* based on Pamusuk Eneste's (1991) ekranisasi approach is still relatively limited. Thus, there is a gap in research that requires a more specific and structured analysis of these narrative transformations.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe the forms of reduction, addition, and variation in characters, plot, and setting in the film *Laskar Pelangi* by director Riri Riza using Pamusuk Eneste's (1991) ekranisasi approach. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study technique, namely comparing the novel and film as the main sources of data.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of literary-film adaptation in Indonesia, particularly in the development of screen adaptation analysis based on structural transformation. Practically, the results of this study can be a reference for filmmakers, screenwriters, and researchers in understanding the narrative consequences of the adaptation process, especially regarding efforts to maintain the depth of meaning of literary works in visual media.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to understand, interpret, and describe the phenomenon of narrative transformation in the screen adaptation process in depth, rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables quantitatively. According to Moleong (2017:6), qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically through descriptions in words and language in their natural context. The descriptive approach is used to systematically explain the forms of change that occur in the process of adapting novels into films (Sugiyono, 2019:13).

This type of research is *library research*, because the data sources are obtained from written texts and audiovisual documents without involving field observations. The literature study was conducted by examining the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata and the film *Laskar Pelangi* directed by Riri Riza as the main objects of study.

The data sources in this study consist of two types, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata and its film adaptation. Secondary data sources include books, scientific articles, and previous studies relevant to the theory of ekranisasi and intertextual studies, particularly Pamusuk Eneste's (1991) thoughts on abridgement, addition, and various changes in the process of ekranisasi.

Data collection techniques were carried out through reading and note-taking techniques for the novel, as well as observation and documentation techniques for the film. The first step was to read the novel thoroughly ( ) to identify intrinsic elements, particularly characters, plot, and setting. Next, the film was observed to find representations of these elements in the audiovisual medium. The data obtained was in the form of verbal descriptions that showed changes, either in the form of reductions (abridgements), additions of scenes, or variations.

The data analysis technique used a comparative-inductive technique. The comparative technique was used to compare the intrinsic elements in the novel and film to find similarities and differences in

narrative structure. Meanwhile, the inductive technique was used to draw general conclusions based on specific findings in the comparison process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis was carried out in several stages, namely:

1. Data reduction, by sorting out the parts of the novel and film that are relevant to the research focus;
2. Data classification, by grouping data based on change categories according to Eneste's theory (1991), namely reduction, addition, and varied changes;
3. Data presentation, by describing the results of the comparison in the form of analytical descriptions; and
4. Drawing conclusions by interpreting the meaning of narrative transformation in the context of differences between literary and film mediums.

Data validity is maintained through the technique of theoretical triangulation, namely by comparing the research findings with Pamusuk Eneste's (1991) theory of ekranisasi and Damono's (2010) concept of alih wahana. Theoretical triangulation is carried out to ensure that the interpretation of narrative changes has an adequate conceptual basis (Sugiyono, 2019).

With this method, the study is expected to provide a systematic and argumentative description of the forms of narrative transformation in the screen adaptation of *Laskar Pelangi*, while also explaining the implications of these changes on the delivery of meaning in the film medium.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### The Process of Adapting a Novel into a Film

In the process of adapting a novel to film (screen adaptation), changes occur. A novel is an individual creation and the result of an individual's work, while filmmaking is the result of teamwork. The quality of a film largely depends on the harmony of the work of the units involved. Eneste (1991) explains that the changes that occur in screen adaptation are as follows:

##### 1. Condensation

One of the steps taken in the process of transforming literary works into films is condensation or reduction. Eneste (1991) says that not everything expressed in a novel will be found in the film. Some of the story, plot, characters, setting, or atmosphere of the novel will not be found in the film because the filmmakers (screenwriter and director) have already selected the information they consider important. Thus, there will be cuts or omissions in the literary work during the process of transformation into a film.

Some of the main reasons why abridgements are made in the process of transforming literature into film are:

- a. Limited duration: Films have a limited duration, usually between 1 and 2 hours, so not all the details of the novel's story can be included.
- b. Story effectiveness: Scenes or characters that are considered unimportant or distracting from the main story will be removed so that the film's plot remains concise and not boring.
- c. Technical and visual considerations: Not all scenes in a novel can be effectively visualized in a film, whether due to technological limitations, cost, or the capabilities of the actors.

##### 2. Additions

Additions (expansions) are elements that are not found in the novel but are added to the film. As with reductions, additions can also occur in the story, plot, characterization, setting, and atmosphere. Eneste (1991), a director, had specific reasons for making additions during the transformation process because these additions were important from a filmmaking perspective. The additions are still relevant to the story as a whole. Furthermore, Eneste (1991) states that due to certain considerations, filmmakers are forced to add certain parts to the film, even though those parts are not found in the novel.

##### 3. Varied Changes

The last thing that may occur in the process of transforming literary works into films is varying changes. Eneste (1991) states that screen adaptation allows for certain variations between novels and films. Due to the differences in the tools used, certain variations occur here and there.

Eneste (1991:65) explains that, except for abridgement and additions, adaptation allows for certain variations between the novel and the film. Because the novel undergoes abridgement and additions, it allows for various changes so that, in general, the story does not alter the essence of the story in the

novel. The transfer of a novel's story into a film is varied by novelists and directors to increase its appeal and benefits for readers and viewers.

According to Eneste (1991:65), except for abridgement and addition, adaptation allows for certain variations between the novel and the film.

### **Example of Changes in the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* to the Film *Laskar Pelangi***

The differences that arise as a result of the process of adapting the novel *Laskar Pelangi* into a film, along with their meanings, will be explained in this section. These differences are not only differences in the overall scene, for example, but also differences based on their appearance. For example, there are things that are shown in the film but not told in the novel, and vice versa. These changes can be discussed further as follows:

#### **1. Form of Change in the Adaptation of the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* into the Film *Laskar Pelangi***

This study found that there were omissions of several characters, such as Pak Mahmud, Pak Zulkarnaen, and Pak Bakti, who do not appear in the novel *Laskar Pelangi*. In addition, the novel *Laskar Pelangi* does not mention that Pak Harfan died suddenly. Thus, there are omissions in the film *Laskar Pelangi* because there are differences in the form of characters that have been removed.

#### **2. Reduction in the Emotional Depth of Ikal's Father**

In the novel, Ikal's father is described as very dominant in Ikal's life. He is a hard-working PN Timah mine worker who is loving and has a strong emotional bond with Ikal. There are many touching moments between Ikal and his father that shape Ikal's character, such as when his father waits for Ikal to come home from school or their wise conversations at home. Meanwhile, in the film version, the role of Ikal's father is greatly reduced. He only appears briefly without any meaningful dialogue in building Ikal's emotions. The film focuses more on Ikal's friendship with the members of *Laskar Pelangi*.

The above data shows a reduction in character and emotional depth. As a result, the closeness between Ikal and his family is not very apparent in the film. The aim is to simplify the duration and highlight the theme of friendship rather than family relationships.

#### **3. The Removal of Trapani and His Mother**

In the novel, there is a story about Trapani and his mother undergoing treatment at Zaal Batu. This story is quite profound in the novel, but it is not shown at all in the film. This is an example of condensation, where subplots that are considered less essential to the main plot are omitted in the film version so that the story is more focused and the duration is maintained.

The condensation of the story, such as the removal of the subplot involving Trapani and his mother, was done for several main reasons, namely: time constraints. Movies are usually around 2 hours long, so it is not possible to include all the details and subplots found in a longer and more complex novel. By removing subplots that are less essential, the main story becomes more focused and easier for the audience to follow.

#### **4. Form of Changes in the Addition of the *Laskar Pelangi* Novel to the *Laskar Pelangi* Film**

The additions can be discussed further as follows:

The novel tells that in addition to being a teacher at Muhammadiyah Elementary School, Bu Mus also takes on sewing clothes as a side job at home. The film visualizes this event to strengthen Bu Mus' character and make her more human. This is because the salary for teaching at Muhammadiyah Elementary School is very uncertain, depending on the generosity of the parents of Muhammadiyah Elementary School students. Therefore, to meet her daily needs, Mrs. Mus took on sewing clothes as a side job. Additionally, it turns out that in the true story of Mrs. Mus, this event actually happened and is based on reality. The film's screenwriter was very clever in adapting the true story of Mrs. Mus through prior observation and presenting it in the film. Of course, the story in the film feels closer to real life.

The addition above is a type of enrichment that is not fully displayed in the novel. In the novel, Mrs. Mus's side job may be mentioned briefly as supporting information, but it is not described in the form of a strong narrative scene.

However, in this film, this scene is shown visually to reveal the harsh reality of Mrs. Mus as a teacher in a poor school who relies solely on the integrity of the students' parents. Showing her sewing

activities at home invites the audience to understand more about Mrs. Mus' integrity, simplicity, and determination in her struggle for education. Furthermore, this addition also helps to strengthen the emotional and human aspects of the character and brings her closer to the audience. This is a cinematic strategy that is often used in screen adaptations and only hints at the novel, making it more realistic and moving in visual form.

## 5. Form of Varied Changes from the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* to the Film *Laskar Pelangi*

### a. Form of Changes in Plot from the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* to the Film *Laskar Pelangi*

In the adaptation process, parts of the plot that are considered less important or non-essential are usually omitted to make the story more concise and fit the duration of the film. These changes can be discussed further in the following excerpt:

"That morning, when I was still a child, I sat on a long bench in front of a classroom. An old, shady fillicium tree provided shade for me. My father sat next to me, hugging my shoulders with both arms and smiling and nodding at every parent and child sitting in rows on other long benches in front of us. That day was a rather important day: the first day of elementary school." (Hirata, 2008:1)

In the film, in the opening scene after the credits, the screenwriter develops what happened that morning at Ikal's house. It is told that Ikal lives with his father, mother, and siblings. However, in the novel, this is not described in detail. It is only mentioned that Ikal goes to school accompanied by his father. This is based on the needs of the story. The film visualizes the roles of Ikal's mother and siblings, so that their appearance does not affect the main story. Several similar scenes (in the sense that if changed, they would not greatly affect the main conflict).

### b. Character Changes from the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* to the Film *Laskar Pelangi*

"I also felt anxious. I was anxious because I saw Mrs. Mus looking restless and because my father's burden of feelings spread throughout my body. Even though he was so friendly this morning, his rough arms around my neck made my heart beat faster. I knew he was nervous, and I understood that it was not easy for a forty-seven-year-old man, a miner with many children and a small salary, to send his son to school." (Hirata, 2008: 2)

Broadly speaking, the portrayal of the character Ikal in the novel and in the film has not changed much. However, if we look closely, there are small points that remain different. In general, Ikal is portrayed as the son of a low-ranking employee at the State Tin Company ( ) who is smart at school. Somewhat different from the novel, Ikal in the film is portrayed as a character who still has a human side to his life.

### c. Changes in Scenes from the Novel *Laskar Pelangi* to the Film *Laskar Pelangi*

Changes are evident in the quiz competition scene; the character Sahara in the novel is replaced by Mahar in the film to represent SD Muhammadiyah alongside Ikal and Lintang. The same applies to the quiz questions that are being discussed. In the novel, the question is about Newton's ring, but in the film, it is changed to a question about calculating the time Adi arrives at school. This is not without purpose; besides adapting the subject matter and the abilities of elementary school children, it also makes it easier for the audience to understand.

In the data above, there are changes in the scenes. In the novel, the character Sahara participates in the quiz competition, but in the film, she is replaced by Mahar, who participates in the competition with Ikal and Lintang. Then, in the novel, the question is about Newton's ring, but in the film, it is changed to a question about calculating the time Adi arrives at school.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the process of adapting Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi* into a film directed by Riri Riza is a form of narrative transformation that involves condensation, addition, and various changes to intrinsic elements, particularly the characters, plot, and setting. Condensation is done by removing or condensing certain parts of the story due to the limitations

of the film's duration and dramatic demands, while the addition of scenes serves to strengthen characterization and visual effectiveness, such as the depiction of the domestic side of the character Bu Mus, which is not explicitly described in the novel. In addition, various changes are apparent in the structure of the storytelling and presentation of events, which are adapted to the characteristics of the audiovisual medium. Thus, adaptation is not merely a transfer of literary text to the screen, but a creative and interpretive process that reshapes the meaning of the story in accordance with the aesthetic and technical conventions of film, thereby influencing how the values and messages of the novel are constructed and received by the audience.

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