

EFFENDI KADARISMAN'S PEKSI JIWA, A JEWEL OF LITERARY TRANSCREATION

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Abstract: Good literary translators satisfy readers' demands for entertainment or moral teachings that originate from foreign texts, but more importantly, also provide the academia with valuable research data. Certain translation techniques and strategies that translators use when translating foreign literary pieces, with the addition historical background or social circumstances surrounding the translations can push outstanding literary translation projects into recognition and transform the translation into new pieces of literary work that equal or outshine the original work. Effendi Kadarisman's *Peksi Jiwa* (1980), a Javanese poem that he freely translated from Emily Dickinson's epic poem *Hope is the thing with feathers* (c.a., 1891) is a perfect example of this case. This article then initiates a broader translation analysis of this literary translation, armed with a knowledge Professor Kadarisman's personal biographical background and character, with the goal of understanding *Peksi Jiwa* as a Javanese transcreation of a Emily Dickinson's classic. The translation analysis reveals that *Peksi Jiwa's* literary translation put into use remarkable elements of cultural and poetic considerations in process of translation, so much that in the end, it enables *Peksi Jiwa* to transcend from a mere Javanese translation into an exceptionally well written poem, worthy of its own merit. Thus, *Peksi Jiwa* becomes a transcreation of Emily Dickinson's original poem.

Keywords: *Literary translation, literary transcreation, translation study*

The poem *Peksi Jiwa* is part of a ninety-poem anthology (in the form of a booklet) entitled *Kembang Kapang, Kembang Bebrayan*. This anthology showcases a collection of Javanese poems written by Professor Achmad Effendi Kadarisman, a well celebrated ethno-linguist at Universitas Negeri Malang. His Javanese poems were published in several issues of *Penyebar Semangat* (a popular Javanese magazine based in Surabaya) in the 1980s. Dr. Sugeng Hariyanto, a mutual academic fellow of Professor Kadarisman and a literary ally in Universitas Negeri Malang, has pored over the yellowing pages of *Penyebar Semangat* back issues to retrieve those poems and lovingly transformed them into *Kembang Kapang, Kembang Bebrayan* which Professor Kadarisman has published independently (Kadarisman, 2007). The poem *Peksi Jiwa*, as Professor Kadarisman said, is his free Javanese rendition of Emily Dickinson's English poem *Hope is a thing with feathers* (c.a., 1891). As an enthusiast of Emily Dickinson's poetry, the researcher was fascinated by the way Professor Kadarisman interpreted the original Dickinson's poem and later on translated it into Javanese. The researcher believes that this is not just an English - Javanese literary translation work: this is a significant *transcreation* of a literary piece. To say this is a beautiful and excellent literary translation will only betray the work of genius behind it. *Peksi Jiwa* poem deserves scholarly discussions. This humble writing is also meant a tribute to Professor Kadarisman's lifelong work in education and literature, and to Dr. Hariyanto's selfless effort to immortalize these Javanese poems.

This article, however, is not intended solely as a strictly traditional translation-based academic analysis of the poem *Peksi Jiwa*. The researcher has had the pleasure to know the author of *Peksi Jiwa*, Professor Kadarisman, and enjoyed years of jovial and deepening friendship with him. The researcher, then, has had the privilege of personal knowledge about the author of *Peksi Jiwa*, because the researcher has, for so many years, witnessed the ups and downs of Professor Kadarisman's life. The researcher intends to use this knowledge to further the analysis of *Peksi Jiwa*.

So, instead of just writing a more traditional analysis of the translation of this poem, the researcher tries his best to show the readers an abundance of wealth that this poem has to offer by sharing the fascination gained by understanding Professor Kadarisman's translation process of the original poem, through the critical perspective supported by first-hand knowledge of Professor Kadarisman's background. By doing so, this article ultimately proposes to give a broader translation analysis supported with an intimate knowledge of Professor Kadarisman's personal biographical background and character, doing a 'reconstructive' translation analysis of *Peksi Jiwa* as a Javanese transcreation of a Emily Dickinson's literary English classic.

Peksi Jiwa, as is Emily Dickinson's *Hope is a thing with feathers*, is multi-interpretable and rich in symbolism. From the perspective of literary translation, this poem gives ample opportunity to study not only the techniques and strategies that the translator-author employed in his transcreation, but also the historical and philosophical thoughts, personal values or ideologies that he embraces. It is comparable to having a research where the researchers can see the author in person, conduct in depth interviews to find out what kind of Javanese audience (and which generation) he wished to address in his *Peksi Jiwa* poem. Extensive research into historical records and archives may help explain circumstances of the that influenced the creative process behind the composition of *Peksi Jiwa*, both as a localized poem and as a literary work of its own, because the way translators work can also reflect the way the respond to the contemporary history of their era (Rundle, 2012).

It is interesting to know how the author's childhood and adolescence, his upbringing, his religious background, as well as his political or professional affiliations have influenced his world view and eventually shaped and coloured his literary works.

METHOD

The researcher starts by presenting Emily Dickinson's full poem, taken from Johnson's (1960) compendium, and explain its relevant meaning, stanza by stanza, by focusing on the Bird, to show why this 'American bird of hope' is loved and revered by literary aficionados across generations. This choice is quite obvious as the Bird is central in this poem, and in its *Peksi Jiwa* translation. This will be followed by a comparative discussion on *Peksi Jiwa*, again with a focus on the Bird character, in which the researcher will also present the English back translation of the Javanese poem. After that, the researcher gives further explanation of the significant parts of the translated poem in order to fully analyse the process of literary translation, and ultimately transcreation, of *Peksi Jiwa*.

Brief Explanation of *Hope is a thing with feathers*

"Hope" is the thing with feathers - (314)
(Emily Dickinson, circa 1891)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

For the purpose of this article, the explanation for the stanzas is focused on the Bird mentioned in the poem. Metaphorically, "hope" is akin to a bird that perches in human soul, and sings a song that has no words and never stops singing under any circumstances. While in second stanza, the bird sings its best during mild storms, when human is facing troubles and tribulations. The bird's song urges them to carry on and not to give up. This feathery creature is graceful yet invincible, and only a ferocious storm can silence the little bird that normally keeps us hopeful.

The third stanza can be paraphrased as follows: I have heard it singing when I am almost desperate and losing hope (in the chilliest land) and find myself disoriented (and on the strangest sea). Even in times of distress and calamity, this little bird never begs for food. Instead, it keeps (me) strong and hopeful.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Importance of Dickinson's Bird of Hope

Dickinson's poem revolves around the central idea of a diminutive bird that keeps singing and encourages people to keep on hoping no matter what. This little bird of hope will never stop singing unless something tragic befalls us. The amazing power of a small bird is the most captivating idea of this poem. That is why, since its inception in 1891, this little bird of hope has occupied a very special place in the collective imagination of Emily Dickinson's readers across the world. Castronovo (2016) in his review of this poem, for example, mentioned Dickinson's Bird as having an example of having an inherent aesthetic beauty within itself, with it being powerful enough to initiate change. Castronovo (2016) even goes so far as to say that this particular attribution of aesthetics in Dickinson's poem, can in some ways be considered carrying revolutionary ideas of hope (2016). This powerful poem indeed depicts the quintessential image of hope. It is an epitome of human's indomitable spirit. This little bird of hope is a loyal companion that bears witness to every tumultuous moment in human saga. From the moment of its inception in the 19th century up until in the more current state of postmodernism, as Schweitzer (2014) puts it, Dickinson's poems can continue to provide this. Schwarz (2007) also believes that Dickinson, through her poems, can speak in a timeless manner of hope, which Sweitzer defines more specifically as providing an 'existential answer to the postmodern angst' (2014). Dickinson's bird observes human's valiant attempts to excel and survive in the face of formidable obstacles. Human life is rife with pains and tribulations, but is never devoid of hope, thanks to this little bird.

Poems about birds are abound in the literary world, but perhaps none of them can match the uplifting power of Emily Dickinson's bird of hope. As a comparison, let us compare this bird of hope to Samuel Coleridge's albatross (the bird of bad luck in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) or Edgar Allan Poe's ominous bird in *The Raven*. These poems are famed for their poignancy, but perhaps only very few will directly relate these poems' birds with a powerful uplifting spiritual rise. The lingering melancholy and desperation brought about by these birds are indelible. Again, let us try comparing this bird of hope with John Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*, and it can also be seen that Emily Dickinson's bird of hope prevails; the nightingale's song is immortal, but it cannot revive dying hope or rebuild the detritus of human optimism. During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson wrote many poems on birds (because she was an avid birder). Various species of birds – 222 to be exact – appear or mentioned in her collected poems (Schumann & Hodgman, 2010), but it appears that none of her ornithological poems can equal her nameless bird of hope in this poem. It is understandable then that this poem has earned a special place among poetry lovers, thanks to its universal uplifting appeal. Readers can easily picture it in their minds: a little bird's ceaseless singing beacons humans to look into themselves and find their inner strengths.

Effendi Kadarisman's Javanese Bird of Hope, the Peksi Jiwa

Peksi Jiwa
(Effendi Kadarisman, 1980)

*panggayuh iku pindhane peksi
kang mangkring sajroning kurungan jiwa
yen manggung; keprungu wirama tanpa swara
nglangut lagune,
nglangut datan ana pungkasane*

*o, mirengna lagu ikut, saiba manis lan endah
ora pedhot nadyan dipupus prahara
sewu ombak, sewu alun, kareben pecah
nanging peksiku, peksi alit, tansah sura ing dira
tekade ati lanang
tansah murub mbrengangang*

*wis dak rungu wartane
peksiku neba ing tlatah salju
ngiteri samodra embuh ing ngendi telenge
gedhene pepalang
ora nuwuhke was sumelang
yagene nadyan wis kothong telihe
ora nate sambat: aku luwe*

English back translation and brief explanation of Peksi Jiwa.

As stated in the beginning of this article, the aim of this study is to analyze the Javanese poem *Peksi Jiwa* as a literary translation of Emily Dickinson's English poem No. 314. As the researcher is a proficient native Javanese speaker, in doing this study the researcher does not use an Englishback translation version of *Peksi Jiwa* poem. However, the researcher provides English back translation below as an attempt to help non-Javanese readers of this article to understand the meaning of *Peksi Jiwa* poem. This is provided in order to provide sufficient context and information for non-Javanese readers to understand the subsequent analysis of *Peksi Jiwa*. It should be noted that the researcher does not pretend to create an equally evocative English back translation. Nevertheless, extra care has been put in this English back translation to provide a very close English interpretation of Professor Kadarisman's *Peksi Jiwa* .

Bird of the Soul
(Effendi Kadarisman, 30 July 1980)

First stanza:

hope is like a bird
that perches in the soul
when it sings: you feel rhythms but don't hear a sound
(and yet) the song is melodious,
and it never stops singing

Second stanza:

o, hark to that song, how pleasing and beautiful
even in the midst of raging storms
thousands of thundering waves rolling at sea
my little bird keeps singing it out loud
the song of manly courage
the fire that stays ablaze

Third stanza:

I've heard the tidings
of my little bird wandering on snowlands
roaming the strangest oceans
trials and tribulation
won't deter my little bird
even when its crop gets empty
it never tells me: I'm hungry

(Free rendition of Emily Dickinson's *Hope is the thing with feathers*)

Just like the case of Emily Dickinson's original poem, Kadarisman's Javanese rendering vividly depicts the power of hope (in the form of a little bird whose song is strikingly pleasant albeit wordless) to instil courage and tell humans to withstand the gales, and brave the raging waves in their perilous journey of life. This poem, while austere dramatic, eloquently sums up human perseverance and tells the tale of great bravery, thanks to a little bird of hope with unwavering faith and loyalty to its master, even in times of hardship. When problems are too hard to deal with, human's fighting spirit is prone to swaying. In the treacherous journey of life when hope for salvation is dim and prospect for survival is slender, human's morale tends to crumble. But when their vision is obscured by self-doubt, this bird's reassuring crooning keeps them optimistic. When danger is imminent and shadows of failure loom ahead, this bird of the soul tells them to go ahead.

This Javanese rendition of the original poem might pique readers' curiosity: why does the author use the image of '*kurungan jiwa*' on line 2, which literally translates into 'the cage of the soul'? One interpretation is gained from understanding a specific cultural practice of Javanese people. Keeping songbirds in bamboo cages and displaying them on the porch or hanging them atop tall bamboo poles for passersby to enjoy and admire, is a favourite pastime among Javanese men. The tradition still survives even today. It is possible that it is meant here that one can expect to get inspiration and encouragement from a bird, even as it is singing in captivity. It is ironic that the bird owners would imprison these birds, yet at the same time, these owners want their captive birds to regale them with songs of hope. It is interesting that the author was aware of this back then, and inserted this in his translation.

Another interesting instance is when the author uses a possessive pronoun '*peksiku*' ('my bird') in line 4 of the second stanza. Throughout the Javanese poem readers can see the author-translator deliberately created his own style, and this can be perceived as a violation of time-honoured tenet of translation which admonishes against alterations of the source texts' style. Gutt (1991, cited in Hassan, 2011) has made this point clear, and translation scholars across the globe are in agreement of this. The bird in *Peksi Jiwa* does not perch in the soul. The songbird kept in a 'cage of the soul.' Displaying ornate wooden or bamboo cages that showcase expensive songbirds is Javanese men's way of flaunting their social status. Is this what the author wished to show when composing his poem? He may be keenly aware of this, which means that his Javanese rendition is thickly spiced with Javanese culture. In this case, the author-translator is akin to an anthropologist: his vast knowledge and understanding of the original poem's cultural background, and that of his own may have influenced and spiced his work, in this way similar to what Osimo stated in his book (2019). This is a significant choice in translation by Kadarisman.

Perhaps a different instance is when the author chooses to use the word '*tlatah salju*' ('snowland') which would be totally alien to ancient Javanese people, as there is no natural snow in the tropical island of Java. Why doesn't the author, for example, chooses to replace it with something else that connotes the loss of hope or maybe loneliness? This is likely a deliberate choice, to intentionally use a strange concept to accentuate the idea of hopelessness when the heart is cold, and you are a stranger even unto yourself.

As evidenced by the analysis of these instances, Javanese readers who possess some degree of mastery in English, upon reading *Peksi Jiwa*, can see and conclude that this poem not only reproduces the meaning and intention of the original work; it also captures, amplifies and immortalises every nuance of the latter. And yet, the beauty and evocative power of *Peksi Jiwa* belies the difficulties that the author faced when he was scribbling and drafting the translation.

To explain this, *Peksi Jiwa* was written in 1980, when the author, as a young college student, was struggling with his studies and grappling with his inner demons. His perusal of Emily Dickinson's *Bird of Hope* must have sparked the genius inside him and encouraged him to write an equally powerful literary work. An educated guess, given the researcher's knowledge in Kadarisman's background in language studies at that time, is that he would consult his trusted dictionaries and zealously grappled with grammatical issues and problems arising from the original poem's meters and prosody. He would have wanted to breathe a soul into his creation, as he did with his other poems that were published before and after, because he wished to bring whatever wisdom of life that he had learned into his poem. In carefully choosing words for the translation, he would have been tempted to show his own understanding of hope and how it affected his life by then - as can be seen from his deliberate Javanese choice of '*kurungan jiwa*' for example. In this poem the young Kadarisman tries to tell the world what he knows about hope and the absence of it. He knows what it means to be hopeful, and he has borne the brunt of losing hope.

Translating a foreign literary work into Javanese is a strenuous mental exercise and intellectual task, especially for a young college student. *Peksi Jiwa* is a proof of the young translator-author's feat and passion to share with the world what he has learned from the original poem. The resulting poem shows his exceptional creativity. This is an ingenious example of literary *transcreation*, a telling demonstration of the dutiful vigilance required of a literary translator.

From the technical point of view, this Javanese poem offers an insight into the passion and determination that entail every attempt to translate great works of literature. It is evident that the translator (here, *trans-creator*) did his job very well. The combination of technical prowess, creativity and perhaps even audacity to shake loose from the original poem's structure and prosody can be seen to result in a great poem of its own right: the *Peksi Jiwa* Javanese poem that was written in 1980 continues to muse and inspire countless readers and admirers and never ceases to arouse strong loyalties and keen following. An example of this is Dr. Harianto (in Kadarisman, 2007), who meticulously collected and edited his poems, is among many readers who were smitten with *Peksi Jiwa*'s eloquence and then resolved to introduce Professor Kadarisman's other poems to the wider literary community. The current advancement of Internet, cellular technology and the flourishing of literary clubs across Indonesia (and elsewhere), will help spread and germinate people's passion for this Javanese bird of hope. Emily Dickinson's poem was written in 1890, within the span of almost a century, and through *Peksi Jiwa*, the young Kadarisman managed to transcreate the poem in a very well composed Javanese form in 1980, and with the eventual publication of *Kembang Kapang*, *Kembang Bebrayan*, *Peksi Jiwa* is saved from potential oblivion.

CONCLUSION

Apart from the promising venues of researching the poem academically, *Peksi Jiwa* is a masterful recreation of an English classic, and time will show that this poem is another classic, a revered piece of literature that people will read over and over like throngs of pilgrims swarming a holy shrine on a faraway land to quench their thirst for truth and wisdom, to reconcile themselves to the realities of their lives and rejuvenate their faith in hope. This poem highlights the simple solidity of human's willpower, an emblem of eternal hope, a symbol of human's ability to challenge hopelessness.

Possibilities for further research on *Peksi Jiwa* is endless, although several possible approaches emerge. Researchers with a penchant for psychological approach might be keen to know if the author's past has affected the way he grapples with his problems and put up with occasional heartbreaks or personal loss. Creative Writing scholars can conduct an in-depth interview with the author, which will shed some light into his creative process. From gender spectacle it is worth investigating why he used male attributes like '*ati lanang*' (manly courage) in this poem.

Personally, through the biographical point of analysis, the researcher is intrigued to be able to uncover what changes Professor Kadarisman, the author of *Peksi Jiwa* would have made to the poem now, if, after all these years, Professor Kadarisman is given the chance to redo his transcreation. Four tumultuous decades have transpired since this poem was written and published in *Panjebar Semangat*, a popular Javanese magazine, and the author has seen and experienced so many things in life. At the time of the writing of *Peksi Jiwa*, Professor Kadarisman was only a college student, but now, he is a well-renowned college Professor, achieving the highest academic position in Universitas Negeri Malang. Truly then, the way the author of the poem perceives and discern the ebb and flow of his life now must have transcended whatever wisdom he shared in the old *Peksi Jiwa*.

The list of questions can grow longer as perceptive readers dig deeper into the metaphorical permafrost and raging seas of the poem to find other hidden gems of wisdom. Of course, it is entirely possible to shrug off the deeper questions, sit back and focus on enjoying the poem the way it is. You may deprive yourself of enlightenment, but you keep the enjoyment.

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