

THE FUNCTION OF DRAMATIC PERSONA IN THE FILM “*THE MENU*” (2022)

***Silvi Munawaroh¹, Nungki Heriyati²**

Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Komputer Indonesia,
Jl. Dipati Ukur 112-116, Bandung, Indonesia
silvimunawaroh.sm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the portrayal of characters in the film *The Menu* 2022. In examining the characters in the film, *The Menu*, researcher conducted a characterization analysis which was classified into seven functions of dramatic characters through the theoretical framework of Vladimir Propp. This study is used because narratology theory can focus on the actions of a character who is limited in terms of meaning. Through this classification, researchers can find out the depiction of characters and the limits of their actions. The data collection method is carried out by qualitative methods and narrative analysis by collecting research results in the form of descriptions accompanied by screenshots. This study produced findings in the form of depictions of seven-character functions contained in the film "The Menu". The resulting conclusions, based on the data and analysis conducted in this research, reveal a deeper understanding of the narrative structure character's function using dramatic persona analysis in the film "The Menu" and identify the roles and functions of the characters in the film. The result of this research, researcher found 7 dramatic persona function in the film. Such as, the villain, the donor, the helper, the dispatcher, princess/prize, the hero, and the false hero.

Keywords: *The Menu* Movie, Vladimir Propp, Dramatic Persona, Narratology

INTRODUCTION

A story cannot be separated from narrative elements. Not only in a novel or historical story, narrative is also around us (Fludernik, 2009). According to Porter Abbott, narrative is the presentation of events, including stories and narrative discourse, where stories are events or series of events (plots) and narrative discourse is events in their presentation form (Eriyanto, 2013). Narrative studies can also be defined as the process or activity of selecting, organizing and providing story material with the aim of achieving the effect of a certain time or series of events on preceptors (Bordwell, 1985). Narratives can be found in various media including television, radio, newspapers, and movies.

Movies are moving images that are dominant and a form of audio-visual mass communication media. Movies are a picture of the reality of society, meaning that movies basically depict events that occur in society (Irawanto, 1999). A movie has various types of genres. Some types of genres include horror, thriller, comedy, romance, action, history, and science fiction. Genre is rhetorically a social reality, both in literary and non-literary studies, including how we recognize and apply that reality, other people and ourselves in a certain time and ideological setting. The function of genre is to be the main thing in which our rhetorical reality is placed and symbolized, a reality that we enter and reproduce when we use it (Bawarshi, 2000).

A movie usually has one genre, but there are often movies that use several genres together, making the movie more interesting to watch. One of the movies that raised three genres at once, such as horror, thriller, and comedy, is the movie "The Menu", which was released in 2022 and directed by Mark Mylod. Starring several casts from famous movies,

there are Anna Taylor-Joy, Ralph Fiennes, and Nicholas Hoult. The nuances of the thriller genre raised are felt from every scene presented in the movie, from the emergence of many puzzles to the ending that is unexpected and surprises the audience. In addition, this movie is seasoned with some comedy and horror scenes from one of the characters who turns out to be a psychopath.

Narrative research on the movie *The Menu* is interesting to discuss because the movie *The Menu* tells the story of a young couple, Margot and Tyler, who intend to enjoy fine dining at a restaurant located on a private island. The guests of the restaurant are upper middle class so they have to make reservations in advance so that their identities are recorded as guests. However, a guest whose name was not recorded, Margot, found many irregularities and puzzles about chef Slowik. Her suspicions were proven by the revelation of chef Slowik's intention to kill all the recorded visitors and staff and make them all dishes. The interesting thing about this movie that distinguishes it from other psychopathic movies is that this movie presents a different psychopathic story. If in other movies, most psychopaths have a grudge against their victims, in this movie the psychopath plans to make his victims a dessert that will die along with the psychopath.

Narrative analysis is used in this research by using Vladimir Propp's dramatic persona narratology theory that classifies narratives into 31 functions and 7 dramatic persona characters in the movie "*The Menu*". This research focuses on the dramatic persona of each character. Character is an important element in a narrative that is created to distinguishing one entity from another through mental, emotional and social attributes (Syauqi and Heriyati, 2022). The analysis is carried out by dissecting each scene in the film so that researchers can classify the distribution of functions with the framework in Vladimir Propp's narratology theory. Illustrations in the form of media images and narrative text are given with the aim that the intent of the researcher can be drawn by the reader. Vladimir Propp's theory fits the movie analysed by the researcher because the theory supports the research conducted by the researcher.

The previous research entitled "*Character Analysis and Character Function of Sukarno in the Film 'Soekarno' and 'When Bung Di Ende' with Vladimir Propp's Theory*" was researched by Ageng Indra Sumarah, Endang Mulyaningsing, and Lilik Kustanto in 2021. The study used the object of research in the form of a narrative study of Vladimir Propp's dramatic persona and the subject of two films, namely "*Soekarno*" and "*When Bung Di Ende*". The difference between that research and this research lies in the subject and object of research. The study discusses a specific object, namely one character in two different subjects, while this study discusses the object of research in general, namely the definition of the dramatic persona function on the subject of several characters based on functions that aim to make this general description can cover the character elements in the film *The Menu* more thoroughly.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is research that aims to explore, identify and understand the meaning of different groups or individuals caused by social or humanitarian problems. The qualitative research process requires considerable effort, including asking questions, collecting specific data from the object under study, inductive data analysis of specific topics, common themes and interpretation of the meaning of information. The final report of a qualitative study has a flexible structure or framework (Creswell, 2003).

The type of research used in this study is narrative analysis. According to Webster and Metrova, narrative is a research method in the social sciences. The conclusion of this method is its ability to understand the identity and worldview of a person based on the

stories (narratives) that are heard or told in their daily activities (Creswell, 2007). Narrative analysis helps to understand how information, meanings and values are produced and disseminated in society. Narrative analysis enables the investigation of what is hidden and concealed in media texts. Events are presented in the form of stories, and the stories actually have values and ideologies that filmmakers want to emphasize (Rifwan and Purnama, 2015).

Character portrayal is done by analysing the distribution of dramatic persona functions. Dramatic persona was first introduced by Vladimir Propp. Each function can be put into its own circle or environment which is then called the actor's action environment. that the thirty-one functions can be distributed into certain circles or environments of action (spheres of action). This distribution of functions is intended so that the functions that have been determined are in their respective action environments. There are seven action environments that can be entered by logically incorporated functions (Propp, 1975). The theory of dramatic personae occurs from seven distribution functions, namely: (1) the villain, a role that plays a role with the hero, (2) the donor, provides a magic agent for the hero, (3) the helper, helps the hero solve/resolve the problem, (4) the princess/ prize, as something sought after or something obtained by the hero after fulfilling the task, (5) the dispatcher, a character who sends the hero to his mission, (6) the hero, a character who is looking for something and who fights with the villain, (7) the false hero, a character who pretends to be a hero, then his guise is exposed (Aryanto, 2009).

RESULTS

Through data taken from the movie *The Menu* released in 2022, the author identifies 7 out of 31 characters' functions in the narrative in the movie. Using qualitative research methods, as well as using narratology studies that focus on dramatic persona, the author formulates seven characters' functions according to Vladimir Propp, as follows:

Table 1 Character Mapping

Function	Character
The villain	Ralph Fiennes as Chef Slowik Hong Chau as Elsa
The donor	Margot's Willingness
The helper	Ralph Fiennes as Chef Slowik
The princess/ prize	Freedom and cheese burger
The Dispatcher	Nicholas Hoult as Tyler
The Hero	Anna Taylor-Joy as Margot
The false hero	Nicholas Hoult as Tyler

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of character functions included in the dramatic persona in the table above, the role functions are explained as follows:

1. The Villain

The villain who is the villain or antagonist in the movie, this role can be an inanimate object, as well as animate objects, and humans.

- 1) Chef Slowik (Ralph Fiennes)



Figure 1 The Villain
01:00:08

The villain versus the hero, in this case the character who was suspicious from the start is chef Slowik. From the series of scenes shown in the movie, several scenes show chef Slowik's cruelty. The scene above occurs after several sequences, then an employee tells a story about himself who has a grudge because he was harassed by chef Slowik, the employee stabs chef Slowik in the thigh. After that, chef Slowik told the male guests to run. Being chased and then caught by the resort employees, they returned and then Tyler was killed. chef Slowik killed all the visitors who had made reservations and he had recorded every name and motive of each guest. Not only that, chef Slowik also kills employees, including himself to fulfil his revenge on the upper middle-class people because they are often arrogant and do not appreciate the dishes he makes.

From all the events in the movie, it can be concluded that the villain in "The Menu" is chef Slowik. The reason besides chef Slowik being a murderer, chef Slowik also fights the hero, Margot since Margot's first appearance at his restaurant, he has suspected Margot and fought her.

2) Elsa (Hong Chau)



Figure 2 The Donor
00:04:46

Besides chef Slowik, the other villain in this movie is Elsa. The character Elsa becomes one of the obstacles that the hero or Margot must overcome in completing her mission. In several scenes in the movie, Elsa is also involved in battles with Margot. Not only that, she has a strong ambition to remain chef Slowik's confidant, so in her battle with Margot, Elsa is defending her position because she assumes Margot will replace her position as chef Slowik's confidant.

Elsa's character becomes Margot's obstacle when Margot searches chef Slowik's villa, but it also causes Margot to know chef Slowik's secret and find a radio connection to call the ship. Elsa herself is on chef Slowik's side, since Margot's arrival, Elsa was the first to realize Margot was not part of the guests written on the guest list.

2. The Donor

The donor is someone who provides help in the form of information, advice, or objects to the hero. In this movie, there are several series of events and several characters who provide information to Margot, so that Margot is willing and eager to escape and can complete her mission well. Margot's willingness is the donor in this film, because if Margot just resigned herself to her fate like other characters, she would not finish her struggle until the end. Here are some characters that led to Margot's willingness to escape.

- 1) Jeremy Louden (Adam Aalderks)



Figure 3 The Dispatcher 1
00:40:04

Jeremy becomes one of the donors in the movie because he is the first person depicted to die at his own hand and in front of everyone, and his death is so well prepared, the dishes he makes are served immediately after his death. In addition, he convinces Margot that her assumptions are correct, that there is indeed something wrong with the island and the restaurant.

- 2) Richard (Reed Birney)

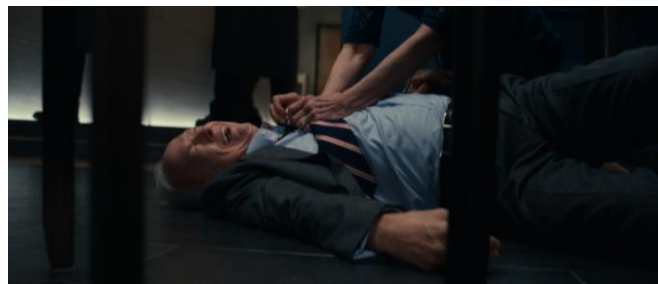


Figure 4 The Dispatcher 2
00:04:11

The next donor is Richard. chef Slowik's employee cut off Richard's fingers in front of everyone just because Richard and his wife wanted to go home. In the scene, all the guests panicked, but the employees remained calm as if nothing had happened. The scene added to Margot's belief that chef Slowik and all his employees were working together to plan something.

3) The investor and Island's owner (Doug Verrick)



Figure 5 The Dispatcher 3
00:53:11

The next donor does not have many scenes in the movie. The owner of the island and a shareholder in chef Slowik's restaurant was made to fly and then drowned at sea, and it was witnessed by all the guests and employees in the place. The scene also added to Margot's belief that chef Slowik and all his employees were working together to plan something by doing cruel things one by one.

4) Katherine (Christina Brucato)

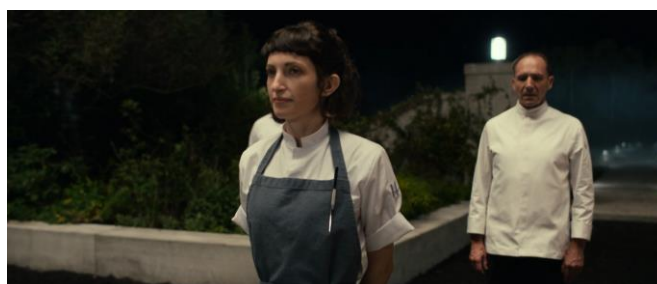


Figure 6 The Dispatcher 4
01:00:58

The donor further had motives and a grudge against chef Slowik, but it was only that night that he was able to take out his revenge on chef Slowik by stabbing him with a pair of scissors. Katherine explained many things to the female guest, which gave Margot the confidence to fight back so that she could be free from the island.

3. The Helper

The helper helps the hero in her journey and mission. In this movie, the helper has a slightly different role because he also acts as a villain.

1) Chef Slowik (Ralph Fiennes)



Figure 7 The Helper
01:30:16

The helper helps Margot to escape in her mission. In this movie, there is a transition in the character function of chef Slowik where he has a clear motive as a villain, but then after going through many series of events chef Slowik finally helps Margot escape from her island just because of a cheese burger that reminds her of the past. At the time he pioneered his career as a chef where everyone loved and appreciated the dishes he made.

Although chef Slowik is the villain in the movie, he also plays an important role in helping Margot to be free. One of the reasons besides the cheese burger, Chef Slowik helped Margot because if Margot died that night, Margot would only spoil the dishes he had prepared.

4. Princess/ Prize

In movies, roles are not only filled by human characters, but objects can also have important roles in movies. In this movie, the princess/prize that becomes the prize for the hero is also not a human, but an inanimate object.

- 1) Freedom and cheese burger



Figure 8 Princess/ Prize
01:39:44

The prize is the result of what the hero is looking for or fighting for. In character function, it doesn't have to be a person, but it can be an object. The mission sought by Margot was freedom, and she got that freedom. The cheeseburger is described as the reward of her freedom. Margot's reward after she worked hard to free herself was freedom and a cheeseburger specially made by chef Slowik for her because Margot appreciated cheeseburgers made by chef Slowik.

5. The Dispatcher

The dispatcher or the one who mediates the hero, who dispatches the hero to his challenges and missions.

- 1) Tyler (Nicholas Hoult)



Figure 9 The Dispatcher 5
01:13:17

Another Dispatcher is Tyler. Tyler is the dispatcher who most convinces Margot to be free because Tyler was the one who took Margot to the island, Tyler also lied to Margot and after Tyler's death, Margot launched her mission with more confidence. The dispatcher is the character who sends, messages, and motivates the hero to carry out the action. In this movie, Tyler who died in front of Margot at that night became the reason that made Margot carry out her mission that night in order to be free.

6. The Hero

The hero who is the main character, as well as the character who takes action against a challenge and carries out the mission.

- 1) Margot (Anna Taylor-Joy)



Figure 3 The Hero
01:19:14

The hero in this movie is a protagonist who embarks on an adventure to get a goal. Margot as the hero in the movie manages to overcome all obstacles in her mission to escape from Hawthorn Island. Another reason is because from the beginning of the movie, the attention focuses on Margot's character, then over time there are many obstacles that Margot's character must solve in her mission to be free.

7. The False Hero

The false hero who was thought to be a hero, but in the middle / end of the movie his guise is revealed.

- 1) Tyler (Nicholas Hoult)



Figure 4 False Hero
01:06:21

False hero is a character who is initially assumed to be a hero, but in the middle, it is shown that his character's function is actually not in favour of the hero. Tyler's role at first looks innocent and knows a lot about the island and chef Slowik, he looks innocent, but it is revealed that Tyler has been given access by chef Slowik and Tyler is supposed to come with his partner, but he breaks up with his partner and instead brings Margot to the island. After his true identity was revealed, Tyler died by hanging himself because he had been a smartass. Before that day, Tyler had been informed about the mass murder,

but Tyler took Margot, from the series of scenes, it can be concluded that Tyler is a false hero in this movie.

Based on the data above, the author concludes that the seven characters' functions proposed by Vladimir Propp are found in the movie *The Menu* 2022.

CONCLUSION

The movie "The Menu" released in 2022 is the focus of narrative research on the function of dramatic persona characters in this study. The movie combines three genres at once, namely horror, thriller, and comedy. The story in the movie is identified based on the characters and narrative functions classified based on Vladimir Propp's dramatic persona theory. The research methods used are qualitative methods and narrative analysis. Qualitative method is used to identify and understand the meaning of the movie, while narrative analysis is used to understand how information, meaning, and value are disseminated in the movie.

The results showed that there are seven characters' functions in the narrative of the movie "The Menu" based on Vladimir Propp's theory. The characters include the villain (chef Slowik and Elsa), the donor (Margot's Willingness), the helper (chef Slowik), the princess/ prize (freedom and cheeseburgers), the dispatcher (Tyler), the hero (Margot), and the false hero (Tyler). Thus, this study provides a deeper understanding of the narrative structure in the movie "The Menu" and identifies the roles and functions of the characters in the story.

REFERENCES

- Aryanto, I. K. (2009). *Jesus di Hollywood*. Kanisius.
- Bawarshi, A. (2000). The Genre Function. *National Council of Teachers of English*, 62, 335–360.
- Bustam, M. R. (2023). *Powerful Words, Shifting Narratives: Analyzing Social Actors through Critical Discourse Analysis with Theo van Leeuwen's Framework*. MEGA PRESS NUSANTARA.
- Bordwell, D. (1985). *Narration in Fictional Film*. Methuen & Co.Ltd.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches: Vol. second*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Eriyanto. (2013). *Analisis Naratif: Dasar-dasar dan Penerapannya dalam Analisis Teks Berita Media*. (Edisi pertama). Kencana Prenada Media Group.
- Fludernik, M. (2009). *An Introduction to Narratology*. Routledge.
- Irawanto, B. (1999). *Film, Ideologi, dan Militer: Hegemoni Militer dalam Sinema*. Penerbit Media Pressindo.
- Propp, V. (1975). *Morphology of the Folktale*. Translated by Laurence Scott. University of Texas Press.
- Rifwan, A. I., & Purnama, H. (2015). Analisis Naratif Film Captain America: The First Avenger (Analisis Naratif Dengan Teori Vladimir Propp). *Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Telkom University*.
- Syauqi, M., & Heriyati, N. (2022). Analisis Karakter Jack Dalam Film Wonder (2017). *Mahadaya: Jurnal Bahasan, Sastra, Dan Budaya*, 2(1), 31–26.

