Destruction of *Bekisar Merah*: Antoine Berman's Deforming Tendencies in *The Red Bekisar*

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ABSTRACT

Bekisar Merah, a novel by prominent Indonesian writer Ahmad Tohari, had been translated into its English version *The Red Bekisar*. Being a literary work that is thick with Javanese culture with all its depth and uniqueness to the global literary world, the original work is compared to the translated work and furthermore analyzed using Antoine Berman's 'negative analysis.' Berman suggested that in translating a foreign text, foreign elements should be kept and not be destroyed by familiarizing them to the receiving culture. Using the 'deforming tendencies' in his concept, three foreign deforming tendencies can be found in *The Red Bekisar:* the destruction of underlying network signification, the destruction of the linguistic patterns, and the destruction of vernacular patterns or their exoticization. Through the samples taken and the analysis, it is found that the three deforming tendencies are making drastic changes and even loss to many elements in the novel, such as their meanings, unity, rhythm, degree, coherence in the line of thoughts, and the richness in the foreign elements.

Keywords: Translation, negative analysis, deforming tendencies, culture, Javanese.

INTRODUCTION

Bekisar Merah is a 2011 novel by Indonesian writer Ahmad Tohari, a writer famous for his 1982 work *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* which now has been translated into four other languages, which are Japanese, German, Dutch, and English. *Bekisar Merah* was also translated into English into *The Red Bekisar* in 2014 by Nurhayat Indriyatno Mohamed. A *bekisar* is a result of a cross-breed between domestic chicken and wild green rooster, which, in this book, becomes a symbol for Lasi, a village girl whose father was a Japanese soldier and mother was a village-born woman. The book tells Lasi's story, her suffering and enduring as a child ridiculed by her friends and the villagers, as a wife of Darsa, a very poor *nira* tapper who cheats on her after she tends to him when he is paralyzed, as a runaway in Jakarta, as a mistress of a rich and powerful man to another rich and powerful man in Jakarta.

The original work is very thick of Javanese values and ambience, and the values are reflected in how the characters think and act, which if brought up internationally, can display the value, depth, and uniqueness of Javanese culture and how it exists side-by-side with the culture in big cities, such as Jakarta. It would be interesting, then, to examine *The Red Bekisar,* the English-translated version of *Bekisar Merah*, and see how the translator tries to do justice in translating this text. As a work from Indonesia translated into English, from a place with a very different culture from the western culture, perhaps *Bekisar Merah* is fitting to be called a foreign country, and seeing the translation strategies from the foreign-domestic side is one of the most favored options. A concept from the foreign-domestic perspective then will be selected to analyze this work. 'Negative analytic' of translation by French philosopher, translator, and theorist of translation Antoine Berman will be used to analyze this work since the concept has specific categorization which elements in the work may identify with easily.

According to Berman, "the properly ethical aim of the translating act is receiving the foreign as foreign" (Rybicki, 2005). This means that in translating a work, a translator should keep the foreign elements as foreign elements and not change them into something that is more familiar to the culture of the receiving audience. In his article *La traduction comme épreuve de l'étranger*, or *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign* as translated by Venuti (2000), Berman criticized the naturalization of translation strategy, which is to bring the Target Text (TT) as close as possible to the target culture. Then, Berman lists

twelve "deforming tendencies" of a translated text which explains translation strategies that may familiarize the foreign elements of the Source Text (ST).

In *Red Bekisar,* three of Berman's deforming tendencies are strongly displayed, which are the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, and the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization. The destruction of underlying networks of signification would mean to alter or ignore words with underlying networks that may appear "insignificant" or "unessential", but as a whole they are important for the unity and the rhythm of the text (Rybicki, 2005). Next, the destruction of linguistic patternings means that the translator tries to make the TT 'systematic' by altering or the system of the original text. Although the ST may be considered 'a systematic', rendering the text this way would make the idea 'incoherent' (Munday, 2001). Furthermore, the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization means to erase the local speech or patterns which are very important in creating the novel's setting. To fully translate this into the TL would impoverish the foreign element in the ST, and the TT would suffer from the lack of the foreign sense and ambience in the setting.

To analyze the translation work, firstly the English book is read, and then the original text. After finished reading the two books dihilangkan. A theory or concept is selected among others in accordance to the suitable materials that may be found in the two books. Since Antoine Berman's concept has twelve sub-concepts of deforming tendencies which may be too much regarding the weight and length of this paper, a few sub-concepts are selected, again, based on the most Re-occuring phenomena in the books. After finally choosing only a few deforming tendencies, quick reading of each chapter is done simultaneously in order to make a list of items divided to the sub-concepts or categorization of problems, which are: 1. the destruction of underlying networks of signification, 2. the destruction of linguistic patternings, and 3. the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization. After items are gathered in the list and divided to each category, a review and analysis of the effects of the deforming tendencies and any other things that may be closely related to them. Then, the conclusion is made.

THE DESTRUCTION OF UNDERLYING NETWORKS OF SIGNIFICATION

The first deforming tendency that appears in *Red Bekisar* is the destruction of underlying networks of signification. As explained above, this would mean the ignorance of words that appear unimportant or inessential, which is not true because these words create a network with other words and help build the idea as a whole, as a unity. In Table 1 containing samples, at least a missing word can be seen in each chapter.

It can be seen from the samples that the words in bold are not translated by the translator. Some of the examples are transitional words and conjunction, of which destruction will destroy the cohesion or unity in the whole text. Some examples of transitional words are *tetapi* and *namun* (literally means "but" and "however"), which indicate a turn of event or something that does not meet the main character's expectation. Since transitional words and conjunctions are important to maintain cohesion in the text, taking these words away destroys the connection of thoughts in the text. Another example in which unity is destroyed can be seen in the untranslated *sekejap*

Table 1. List of destructed underlying networks of signification

CHAPTER	PAGE		Source Text (ST)	Translated Text (TT)
	ST	TT		
1	9	3	"***Sekejap** Darsa terbayang akan pohon-pohon kelapanya yang sedang disiram hujan.*" "***Ya.** Ikhtiar harus tetap dijalankan.*"	"Darsa thought of the coconut palms in the rain."
2	45	31	"*Malam **benar-benar** telah hadir.*"	"Keep trying the best you can."
3	79	58	"*...bukan dengan seorang Haruko, **cukuplah***	"Night had fallen"
4	117	88	*dengan yang kini sedang banyak dicari.*" "***Karena malam ini ada hal lain yang lebih***	"Not with a Haruko, but with something in high demand these days."
5	141	107	***menggelisahkan hatinya.***" "***Tetapi** bersembunyi di mana dia?*"	(this sentence is not translated)
6	20	152	"*Bambung. Ah, lelaki momok ini! Dia bilang*	"Where was he hiding?"
7	225	169	*mau pinjam Lasi **barang sebentar**.*" "***Namun** melalui telepon, sekretaris*	"Bambung, that ogre of a man wanted to borrow Lasi."
8	275	207	*Handarbeni bilang, "Bapak tidak ada.'"* "***Entahlah**, cerita-cerita bersambung lewat*	"When she telephoned his office, his secretary said, "He's not in.'""
9	339	255	*telepon yang disampaikan Lasi malah membuat Kanjat merasa makin tertekan.*"	"The stories Lasi told Kanjat over the phone increased his frustration."

(literally means "suddenly" or "all of a sudden"), which disconnects the previous and the next sentence. The whole paragraph was about Darsa, who was looking at how beautiful Lasi is at the moment, and he suddenly remembered the coconut palm trees that resemble the beauty of his wife. The palm tree is some kind of a simile comparing Lasi's lean body with the palm trees, but untranslating the word *sekejap* would make that one sentence seems incoherent, being placed among the thick description of Lasi's beauty.

Besides destroying coherence, the disappearance of words from the original text can change the entire meaning of the sentence and intention of the characters. Then, the untranslated *ya* and *barang sebentar* (literally "yes" and "just for a while") impoverish the sense of the sentence. The word *ya* would give a sense that Grandpa Mus was actually listening and responding to Darsa, who was pouring his heart out at the moment. Untranslating this word would mischaracterize Grandpa Mus by making him sound colder or even patronizing because he was just saying what was in his mind, not actually listening heartfully to Darsa's words. The word *barang sebentar* indicates that Bambung considered her borrowing Lasi as just a simple request, that he was taking this very lightly, with a big threat on Handarbeni's side, of course. With the missing translation, this sense is also missed.

Then, there are words that show degree that is ignored, such as *benar-benar* and *cukuplah* (literally means "really" or and "enough." This would make a bigger difference on the meaning of the sentence. "The night had really fallen" would mean differently from the simpler "the night had fallen." If the *benar-benar* indicates expectation, the sentence can also be translated into "the night had actually fallen." Although the time signal is still clear without *benar-benar,* taking this word away diminishes the degree of depth in the text. Besides *benar-benar,* the missing word *cukuplah* made a different, even oppositional sense in the TT. The original text would mean that Handarbeni, the speaker, is still willing to accept a girl who is not as exotic or as rare as Haruko, as long as she's still a high demanded girl. However, without the translated word *cukuplah,* the translation would mean that someone like Haruko is not good enough, that Handarbeni wanted someone even better than Haruko.

Finally, the destruction of underlying networks of signification also destroys the rhythm. The biggest example is perhaps the whole sentence missing in the middle of the paragraph. The missing sentence would translate as "because tonight there is something else that troubles her heart." This sentence is used as a transition before "She needed to forget him" and "the previous evening Mrs. Lanting had taken her to visit Mr. Handarbeni at his home in the Slipi area." It can be seen, then, that the transition would actually make the flow go smoother and create a less hustling rhythm. Without the sentence, the pace becomes quicker as readers quickly jump from one idea to another one, which may lead to confusion.

It can be seen, as a conclusion, that the destruction of underlying networks in *Red Bekisar* may cause many sense impoverishments, such as the lack of cohesion, the change of meaning and degree, and the destruction of rhythm. There are a lot of other similar examples throughout the book such as more untranslated *tetapi* and *namun,* exclamations, and even one or two lines of dialogues. These, according to Berman, are not keeping the foreign as something foreign. Perhaps it is in the culture of Indonesian to use a lot of words and to be indirect in order to be polite although sometimes ulterior motives exist in backhanded remarks. It is probably much less straightforward than how the Western people communicate.

Whether the translator was aware of this or not, some foreign elements of the text are definitely taken away, creating much impoverishment in the translated text. The purpose of the destruction, then, is to make the text as familiar as possible to the English-speaking readers' minds; however, in attempt of delivering the familiarity, there are thing s that are sacrificed, such as the words which contribute significantly to the cohesion, the meaning, the degree, and the rhythm that exists in the original text.

THE DESTRUCTION OF LINGUISTIC PATTERNINGS

The destruction of linguistic patterning is the second type of deforming tendency that can be found in *Red Bekisar*. In this deforming tendency, there is a change in the word order, structure, or other language-wise pattern. The TT may seem 'systematic' because of this change, but at the same time, it destroys the original system with its own line of thoughts, making it rather incoherent to the reader. Similarly to the previous point, at least one example can be found in one chapter as listed in Table 2.

These examples shows the destruction of linguistic patterns in several ways, such as switching the main clause, changing an interrogative form into a positive form, or combining them with conjunctions. These changes, unfortunately, destroy the foreign way of

Table 2. List of destructed linguistic patternings

| CHAPTER | PAGE | | ST | TT |
	ST	TT		
1	9	3	"*Sambil menjatuhkan pundak karena merasa hampir kehilangan harapan, Darsa membalikkan badan lalu masuk ke rumah.*"	"His shoulders drooped from near hopelessness as he turned and went inside his house."
2	55	9	"*Gadis berkaki pincang dan amat pemalu itu sedang menuntut Darsa mengawininya?*"	"The painfully shy girl with a deformed leg demanded that Darsa marry her."
3	80	58	"*Dan Darsa bangkit. Termangu.*"	"Darsa stood in a daze."
4	116	87	"*Lho, kok Anda tidak ambil saja dia dari Jepang?*"	"Get her from Japan."
5	172	130	"*Dadanya sesak. Terengah-engah. Air matanya mulai meleleh.*"	"Her chest felt tight. She panted as tears welled in her eyes."
6	196	148	"*Ada rasa nikmat ketika kakinya merambah titian batang pinang. Telinganya mendengar riang-riang atau kokok ayam betina yang sedang menggiring anak-anaknya.*"	"Stepping on the areca palm footbridge made her happier than she had been in a while. Crickets chirped and a mother hen clucked as she led her brood of chicks."
7	226	16	"*Bambung. Sosoknya yang tetap gagah, rambutnya yang tetap lebat mesti sudah beruban, wajahnya yang bulat persegi, dan sorot matanya yang penuh kekuatan, membayang sangat nyata dalam angan-angan Handarbeni.*"	"Handarbeni envisioned the fit-looking man with the head of thick graying hair, oval face, and powerful gaze."
8	275	207	"*Ada laporan dari Pak Entang, sopir cadangan, bahwa Pak Han sudah lama tidak datang.*"	"Entang, the spare driver, told her Handarbeni had been away."
9	339	254	"*Otot-otot rahang Kanjat menegang. Matanya mendadak merah.*"	"Kanjat's jaw muscles tightened and his eyes turned red."

talking, changing the focus, and destroying the flow intended by the author.

To begin with, when the interrogative sentence is translated into a positive one, the meaning of the sentence change, and the original way of talking vanishes. This, to begin with, can be seen from the example from chapter two in Table 2. In the ST, the interrogative sentence is meant to express Lasi's disbelief in how the shy girl asked Darsa to marry her, but the disbelief vanishes because in the TT, this sentence is simply translated into a flat-out statement. Another example where interrogative sentence is translated into a positive one can be seen in chapter four. While the original text should literally mean "why don't you get her from Japan?" the TT is simply a positive imperative sentence: "get her from Japan." Asking is one of the Indonesian ways of telling what one wants or telling someone to do something, but this foreign element is destroyed by turning it into a rather straightforward manner of talking.

Next, the focus on some sentences in the examples is changed as the main clauses or adjectives are switched. The TT from the first chapter seems to be similar to the ST, but the original text has Darsa as the subject while the TT has his shoulders as the subject.

It turns out that the focus on what Darsa does change into what happens to his shoulders as they are mentioned first in the TT. The example from chapter eight is perhaps similar. In the ST, *ada laporan* (literally "there is a report") is the focus of the sentence, followed by what it says, but in the TT, Entang becomes the focus because of the change in the structure. Example from chapter two is perhaps trickier from the previous two in terms of focus. In the original text, it says *gadis berkaki pincang dan amat pemalu itu* (may be translated into "that girl with deformed leg and is very shy"), but the TT switched her characteristics. The original text mentioned the deformed leg first while the translation mentioned her shyness first, and it shows the different focus on the girl's characteristics, which may be interpreted by the readers differently. Is it her leg or her shyness that makes her demand marriage to Darsa very strange to Lasi? By putting the deformed leg first, the author may have wanted to emphasize that the cause of Lasi's disbelief is the leg, that someone in such condition dares to demand Darsa to marry her. However, switching it with the girl's shyness makes it seem as if the deformed leg is not the primary reason. It is possible that Lasi's reason of disbelief sounds vulgar, but the meaning of the ST is not supposed to be altered.

Lastly, the flow intended by the author in the original text is also destroyed by the change of linguistic pattern. Examples from chapter three, five, and nine show how sequences and pauses created by full stops are destroyed by combining them into one sentence. Whether the author intentionally created this kind of flow or not, it is there in the text, and it may cause readers to take the moments to savor the tension, the shock, or whatever emotional ambience there are at the moment. However, because those sequences are combined into one, that kind of flow is destroyed completely and the readers of the TT may not be able to enjoy that element anymore. In the example from chapter three in Table 2, for example, the sentence "Dan Darsa bangkit. Termangu" would literally translate into "And Darsa rose. Dazed." The sentence is originally in a grammatically incorrect form, with the word "and" in the beginning of the sentence and the word "dazed" standing separately as a fragment. The TT corrects this, but the corrected version does not have the same flow as the original text does. The fragment may be intended to catch the readers in the moment, to be able to imagine Darsa's moments of shock between events and stop along with him. The correction, however, destroys this flow; while it is grammatically correct, it does not work the way the author intended. The same goes with examples in chapter five and nine. While compressing the sentences in a more systematic way, the translated text, the flow, and the pauses intended to emphasize the moment are destroyed.

Thus, from the examples it can be seen that the destruction of the linguistic patterns changes the meaning of the sentence, the original (Indonesian) way of talking, the focus, and the flow from the original text. These original linguistic patterns builds a system of thoughts and feelings on itself that its destruction, although it may be considered 'systematic' in the TL, ruins the original system that has been built. This can be seen especially in the destroyed flow. Additionally, if the all of the examples are reviewed, the majority of the sentences uses the subject-verb. This is what happens in the

book; sentences with similar patterns are much used, and according to Woods, repeated sentence pattern may cause boredom to the readers (Woods, 2010). While the TT builds a system different from the ST that might be uninteresting to the readers, it is very unfortunate because the ST may not be so. The new translated text may be neat and grammatically correct, but the chain of thoughts and the feel may be totally different from the original text.

THE DESTRUCTION OF VERNACULAR NETWORKS OR THEIR EXOTICIZATION

The last deforming tendency that perhaps most clearly occurs in *Red Bekisar* is the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization. *Bekisar Merah,* the ST, is a work rich of Javanese philosophy, values, and even other terminologies which are often, even in the original text, stated in traditional Javanese and therefore italicized. This is not only local, but also traditional. It is a very precious foreign element, which is, according to Berman (1985), not to be destroyed but to keep. However, a lot of those terms are not kept in its Javanese form, but translated into English that it lost its depth and Javanese ambience; some examples of this loss are listed in Table 3.

Those are the examples of the vernacular language which are translated into English and not kept in their original form. Although destroying the original language altogether still takes away the Javanese element of the original text, there are examples where the English translation in the TT is very close to the original meaning, like in the case of *mangkat slamet, bali slamet.* However, not everything in the translated version is translated accurately; besides losing their traditional Javanese ambience, there are quite a few examples in Table 3 where there are loss or changes of meaning in the translated version. An example of the change of meaning can bee seen in the simple "*ora ilok,*" which is translated into "not good" while actually "*ilok*" has a deeper, more tasteful Javanese sense in it, which is "proper." It means that the action mentioned is not bad in terms of practicality and

Table 3. List of destructed vernacular language

ST PAGE	TT PAGE	ST	TT
31	20	"*nrima ngalah luhur wekasane*"	"those who turn the other cheek are respected in the end"
41	28	"*sangkan paraning dumadi*"	"origins with his final destination"
46	31	"*ora ilok*"	"It's not good"
51	36	"*mangkat slamet, bali slamet*"	"Go safely, return safely"
57	40	"*mung sadermo nglakono*"	"can't explain why things happen"
58	42	"*brayan urip*"	"live and let live"
82	60	"*Gusti Allah jembar pangapurane.*"	"The Almighty's mercy knows no bounds."
82	60	"*wong lanang wenang*"	"he can do as he pleases"
83	61	"*manungsa mung sakdrema nglakoni*"	"humans only do what is preordained"
85	63	"*wohing pakarti*"	"pick the fruit of your toil"

effect, but in terms of politeness, traditions, etiquette, and so on; it is not bad because it is directly harmless but because there are social prejudices that might be cast upon one if one violates this properness.

The next example in which a change of meaning can be seen is (*urip*) *mung sadermo nglakono.* Instead of "can't explain why things happen", it would literally translate into "can only go through (life)." There may be some consideration for translating it this way, such as the context. The phrase is spoken to calm Lasi down after Darsa had fallen from the palm tree. In a sense that one cannot always explain why things happen and can only go through life, the translation does make sense. However, "can't explain why things happen" in the translated text does not include the complete meaning, and thus the essence of the original proverbs is lost. It also turns the focus into the inability of human beings to explain things instead of focusing on how they can only go through life. Not being able to explain and being able to live life are connected, but they are two different things.

In addition, there is also *brayan urip* which would literally translate to "share to be able to live" and emphasize a strong sense of togetherness. However, *brayan urip* is translated into "live and let live", which is something that is essentially different, but both similarly reflect how people live in each of their cultures. *Brayan urip* gives the sense that one should help others, build strong relationships with others, and work together to achieve a result or make life better, while "live and let live" gives a sense of tolerance towards others' opinions and way of life, in which there is an element of freedom where one can keep one's opinion and be tolerated if one is also tolerant to others' opinions. *Brayan urip,* coming from Java, strongly reflects the Javanese value of connectedness, while "live and let live" emphasizes responsible and respectful individuality, a freedom-based philosophy that is more likely to be hold in the Western countries. Here, it can be seen that the foreign Javanese value has been transformed into a domestic value of the TT.

Next is the example of "*wong lanang wenang,*" which literally means "men have the power." This is related to the patriarchal tendencies that are applied in the traditional Javanese life. While for decades gender equality has been an issue in the world, even Indonesia, the time and place setting of the novel applies patriarchy; all the more reasons why this phrase needs to be translated as it is. The translated version "he can do as he pleases" does not emphasize how men have the power in voicing their opinions and making decisions in the time and place setting where Lasi and Darsa live. When this value is lost, the readers would not be able to understand the original, distinguished values of the Javanese culture in the

work; the work will only pass as a story of an unfortunate half-Japanese woman named Lasi somewhere in the world. It would not be able to closely portray how life in Java actually is because it ignores a lot of things related to the culture.

In conclusion, the destruction of the vernacular networks destroys the exotic, foreign elements of the Javanese Indonesian in the work not only by translating the Javanese terms into English, but also by adjusting it to the context and values of the receiving culture. This deforming tendency is perhaps the most obvious one since the Indonesian text itself italicizes their Javanese terms. Surely, though, if every single Javanese term is described in-text in detail in order to capture the closest meaning to the original, not only would the text be significantly longer, but it will also destroy the pace the author originally intended to make. If this destruction of vernacular network is avoided, translators may be trapped instead in expansion, Berman's other deforming tendency which flattens and "unshapes the rhythm" (Munday, 2001). It is a translator's job, then, if he wants to keep the foreign elements as Berman suggested, to wisely decide on his/her strategies on translating these exotic elements. A suggestion, in this case, would be maintaining the original Javanese form while keeping footnotes that help readers understand the meanings of the proverbs in their original form.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the analysis of the translated *Bekisar Merah* have shown the deforming tendencies that re-occur in the translated text, which are the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, and the destruction of vernacular patterns and their exoticization. In the destructions of the foreign element overall, many things may be affected by the impoverishment: the meanings, degrees, unity, sense, rhythm, focus, flow, cohesion, and even the richness of the cultural elements itself. The changes may seem very simple, but they may contribute to a significant loss of the content and the form of a literary work. It is suggested, then, that in the first and second cases of underlying network of signification and linguistic patternings that translators attempt to keep the structure as close as possible to the original text because missing words, missing sentences, and changed structure may cause change in meaning and coherence, which is significant to a translated work because the changes do not only confuse the readers but also convey different messages altogether. In the final case of vernacular language or exoticization, it is recommended that translators keep the original phrase while making footnotes to keep readers up with the

meanings while maintaining the essence, the taste of the original culture. While there is always something that is missing in translation, if works are not portrayed as close as possible to their original, messages in the text will not be conveyed in the best way possible, and the destruction of these rich elements would mean the destruction of the literature work itself.

Translation is something that is practiced first before it is analyzed, it is practical before it is theoretical, but the high practicality of it makes translation studies even more important. Readers who do not know how to read in the ST language may not realize the loss, which makes translation problems even more important to be noticed. Those who do understand both the ST and TT language, then, may wonder why it feels like there are so many things lost in a translation works after reading the original. That is the gap that researches about translation have to fill; they are important to point these things out, especially for future translators to do a great work in translating masterpieces and make wise decisions in their translating.

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