
Human-Elf Marriage as Formula in Popular Fantasy

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ABSTRACT

Understanding how stories of human-elf marriages are portrayed is very crucial because such stories can influence the public's opinion regarding people who claim to have such relationships. Therefore, a study on human-elf marriage as a formula in popular fantasy contributes to a better understanding of the function and role of popular fantasy in society. Using Cawelti's theory of formula (Cawelti, 1977) as starting point, this study tries to see how human-elf marriage as a formula may be portrayed differently in English fantasy works and popular Javanese stories. Several English fantasy works are presented as data for this study, along with Javanese stories collected from social media, television, and the box office that have strong influences from urban legends. Stories from the Arabian peninsula are also considered for their strong affinity to the predominantly Islamic society of Java. Miles & Huberman (1992) qualitative methods are applied interactively and continuously to optimize the data collection and analysis. The analysis shows that the portrayal of marriages between humans and *Other* beings, such as elves, fairies, or jinns, hugely depends on the manner of the depiction of *Other* beings involved. The elves of Tolkien are strongly associated with the heavenly light that humans long for, while the jinns in the Islamic and Javanese traditions are generally considered bearers of turmoil in human society. Consequently, the human-elf marriages of Tolkien are celebrated. All kinds of contact between humans and the jinns, however, fairy-like they may be, are avoided and even condemned in Javanese stories. This conclusion confirms that the formula in popular fantasy serves as both an endorsement or a condemnation of certain notions a particular society upholds.

Keywords: *formula, fantasy, elves, jinns, marriage*

INTRODUCTION

Marriage between humans and other beings, such as elves or fairies, is common in modern fantasy works. In many instances, a marriage of humans with these 'fictional' races tends to strike a positive chord in its portrayal. Such intermarriage may even be considered a formula in the fantasy genre. In a previous study by Simbolon (2020), it is found that in the fantasy works of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, marriages between elves and men are displayed as a bringer of gifts for the society within the story. These gifts form in the birth of mixed-blood heroes, the fruitful exchange of knowledge and wisdom between races, and the strengthening of political bonds and alliances

between the parties involved. Such positive notes have put the marriage between humans and elves in an endorsement that demands positive reactions or at least supportive feedback. Of course, it is not always the case and cannot be applied as a rule in the discourse of interracial marriage in modern fantasy. This study will look at the formula of human-elf marriage from different angles.

Following the definition offered by Cawelti (1977: 5–6), a formula in literature means a narrative convention applied in numerous literary works with a specific frame of time and place. In other words, a formula is always cultural and temporal, and studying

the formula always needs to consider narratives from different sources to see whether such convention exists among the multiplicity of popular fantasy stories. If in the ancient world, folk stories were transmitted orally and then written and printed since the founding of the printing press, nowadays popular stories can be found anywhere in the world in any feasible form. Alongside the nursery rhymes told by our elders and books distributed by offline and online stores, stories are uploaded as comics, caricatures, blogs, videos, and podcasts, and many still make it into the film industry. If there is indeed a convention that 'governs' these 'different tellings of the same stories,' then it must have been dispersed, and the study of formula in popular stories must now embrace a broader perspective from a wider audience, even globally. Therefore, the said cultural and temporal framework of the formula must be tested against the global network of stories. In order to do this, this study will choose English fantasy works as an example of popular stories from the Western hemisphere and Javanese popular stories as an emissary of the East. Putting aside the exhausting dichotomy of West and East, since both the English and Javanese stories are circulating worldwide through the internet, it is plausible that many people of both origins have become familiar with them simultaneously. Ergo, comparing the two is possible and may also prove helpful to understand better the conventions that make a formula formula.

The popularity of Tolkienian fantasy in modern literature is well acclaimed. From his first publication of *The Hobbit* in 1937 until he died in 1973, J.R.R. Tolkien had only ever gained more admirers from every corner of the world. Even after his passing, the legacy that he left in the forms of unpublished and unfinished writings has been continuously excavated, rearranged, and published posthumously by his dedicated family. His ever-growing fandom is always waiting and celebrating for more materials to be unearthed from his meticulous world-building. In research conducted by the BBC in 2003, Tolkien's best-selling *Lord of the Rings* was ranked at the top of the *UK's Best-Loved Books* list, surpassing the celebrated classic *Pride and Prejudice* (Adi, 2012: 236). Unsurprisingly, Tolkien is often called the father of modern fantasy, a title worthy of deeds.

The characterizations of Tolkienian elves managed to gain favor and continue to become a

benchmark in the modern fantasy genre. Elves are humanoid physically, meaning they are akin to humans but not humans. They are the *Others* that are similar to us. Such parallelity is the reason behind the possibility of making sense of our close affinity to them and, in turn, making ways for intimate relationships like a marriage between humans and those *Other* beings. If marriage with them is positive, then their presence must be encouraging. Such is the case of elves in modern fantasy works, as seen in Tolkien.

A different case can be found in stories about marriage between humans and elves circulating in Indonesian society, particularly in Java. A few years back, the Javanese people were bewildered by a man from Ngawi, East Java, who claimed he had taken a fairy wife. The confession of Ibnu Sukodok or Mbah Kodok was exposed by VICE Indonesia (2019) and has caught the attention of almost three million viewers on their Youtube channel. In 2021, it was discussed with more depth by *Kisah Tanah Jawa*, a top-rated channel for its supernatural stories claimed to have been actual events in various parts of Java. Although the story of Mbah Kodok gained immense popularity and many supporters, it got many negative responses from internet users. Generally, the 'naysayers' agreed that Mbah Kodok was out of his mind or having mental problems. In other words, the fairy wife was considered just a product of his fantasy and, therefore, must not be taken seriously other than as a comic reference. Others have also judged this 'inter-dimensional' marriage as misconduct in the eyes of religion. Sholeh (2019) researched this phenomenon through the perspective of Islamic law and deemed the marriage of Mbah Kodok with his fairy wife invalid because it contradicts the *sharia*. Even so, there are differing opinions among Islamic scholars. Some consider it forbidden, while others would not go further than merely discouraging the act. In his writing, Sholeh (2019) classified the fairy wife as one of the jinns, a being recognized in the Islamic tradition.

More studies have also been conducted around the subject of this research. Hildardóttir (2013) examined how the worldwide-known fairy tale of Cinderella has gone through ages of development with numerous versions while about the same basic formula of a classic fairy tale; a poverty-stricken hero who, by some magic, gets wealth and marriage in the end. At least since Perrault's version was published in 1697, the element of magic has been filled by the

presence of a fairy godmother. She believed that this tale had a French origin. Speaking of French tales, in both studies conducted by Hofmann (2014) and Cheira (2014), the character of a fairy godmother in French tales is always associated with marriages and, consequently, the happiness of their heroines. They are mother figures who are matchmakers and are always attributed to magical powers.

In Celtic tradition, these magical creatures often become a fairy mistress. Larrington (1999) addressed this theme in her study on medieval literary fantasy. The fairy mistress, who is married to a man or perhaps a distant ancestor of a man, may come to the human world to be with her lover or take away her human lover to another world. Martins (2015) and then Costabile (2018) have studied how a specific Celtic goddess was transformed into a fairy-like figure with supernatural powers like Morgan le Fay in Arthurian legends. However, Martins noticed how the positive portrayals of Morgan le Fay in one of the earliest versions of the story (from the 12th century) had been substituted by more sinister depictions. It is unsurprising if some fairy mistresses become the heroine of a particular story and the villain in another. A recent study conducted by Moore (2022) revealed that the transformation of Morgan le Fay comes from the 'clash' between the Celtic and French traditions. This 'clash' is then 'reframed' in Tolkien's fantasy works through the figures of Luthien and Aredhel, reintroducing the fairy mistress figure for the modern audience.

The theme of fairy mistresses and the formula of intermarriage between humans and supernatural beings like fairies have also gained the attention of several Javanese scholars. Andayani & Jupriono (2019) tried to see how the figure of Nyi Roro Kidul has evolved from Javanese myths and legends passed down as traditions to its modern depictions in popular culture, as seen in the film industry. One of the most common representations of Nyi Roro Kidul is her existence as a wife of the Javanese kings, especially in the Mataram dynasty. Wiyatmi (2021) then tried to compare several stories of marriages between humans and angelic beings from seven different ethnicities in Indonesia. Using the perspective of feminism, she concluded that the motif of female deities marrying men from earth signifies the appreciation for the mother figure in the spirit of feminism. Comparative studies on stories from different ethnicities that exhibit

similar motifs or formulas can offer us new insights into subjects that might have been overlooked when the story is taken on its own. Esparqam, et.al., (2018) have revealed the fertility narrative when comparing the deep structure of human and fairy marriage stories from Iranian and Indian tales. A comparative study on Javanese culture and a work of English popular fantasy has also been conducted by Prihatini (2018), taking the Javanese naming philosophy and reflecting it on the significance of names in the works of Tolkien.

It has been stated that there are differences in how human-elf marriages are perceived in Tolkienian fantasy and Javanese society. Seeing that none of the previous studies mentioned above have addressed this problem specifically, this study attempts to explore the whys and wherefores behind the seemingly opposing views on human-elf marriages by examining how the elves, fairies, jinns, or any depiction of the *Other* beings are presented in the narratives and what the relationship dynamics between humans and such beings may reveal. This study takes a comparative approach to see how the formula is applied in the two narratives explained before the Tolkienian fantasy and the fantastic stories in Javanese society. Library research is conducted to provide data from sources that may explain the elves in Tolkienian fantasy and the Javanese cultural knowledge about beings of such kind. Books containing several stories that depict relationships between humans and *Other* beings are used as primary data that will support the arguments presented in this article, supported by other sources as secondary data. Several English works, such as *Harry Potter*, *The Witcher*, and most importantly, the fantasy tales of Tolkien, are presented as data for this study, along with Javanese stories collected from social media, television, and box office that have strong influences from urban legends such as *KKN di Desa Penari* and *Marriage of Mbah Kodok with a Fairy*. Stories from the Arabian peninsula are also considered for their strong affinity to the predominantly Islamic society of Java. The collected data will then be analyzed according to the methods proposed by Miles & Huberman (1992). The processes of data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and verification or concluding will be done interactively and continuously until the data is exhausted and the optimal point of understanding is reached. By the end of this study, a conclusion will be drawn to answer the research questions in optimism that the result of this study may help readers of

popular fantasy and society in general to understand the workings behind the formula and, therefore, may take a more balanced stance when faced with differing views of certain phenomena.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The existence of elves as formulaic characters in popular fantasy is generally acknowledged and perhaps requires no corroboration, especially to modern fantasy readers. Famous fantasy works in the modern era almost always have elven characters interacting with humans. In the serial works of *Harry Potter* written by J.K. Rowling, house elves assist (if not serve) humans, one of which is called Dobby. In A. Sapkowski's *The Witcher*, whose Netflix adaptation successfully gained viewers during the Covid-19 pandemic, elves are shown as people like humans living in a large community inside the forest. In the renowned and repeatedly-adapted story of *Peter Pan*, accredited to J.M. Barrie, the fairies are small-winged creatures that are associated with flowers. One of them is Tinker Bell, Peter Pan's main sidekick. Attebery (1992: 10) insists that elves or fairies are one of many "mythological creatures and nonhuman races" that is prescriptive in the making of any fantasy work.

Tolkien's influence in the literary world, especially in the fantasy genre, echoes through many aspects found prominently in his works, such as the presence of elves or fairies in his narratives. De Rosario Martínez (2010: 10) stated that Tolkien had problems using the terms fairy and elf throughout his writing career since these two names originated from different linguistic roots. This has led to inconsistencies in the descriptions of said beings. Though both terms are commonly taken as synonymous and interchangeable, it is apparent that they refer to somewhat different types of beings, which are the elves and the fairies. While the elves of *The Witcher* and the Tolkienian elves are of the human-like kind, the fairies of *Peter Pan* resonate more with common medieval English fairies. They are primarily diminutive, likely to hide themselves from human sight, or even capable of going invisible. Though both the elves and the fairies are humanoid in their figure, the difference in size tends to influence the significance of their relationships with humans. While the petite fairies of *Peter Pan* and the childlike house elves of *Harry*

Potter tend to be shown as inferior to humans, the average human-sized elves of *The Witcher* and Tolkien are equal, if not superior, to humans. This problem has been the main focus of Bergman (2011), who tries to elucidate the evolution of elves in literary history. As the *Other*, elves are described as 'almost human,' along with various beings such as vampires, werewolves, mermaids, dwarves, giants or trolls, and even aliens. However, the diminutive fairies are the *Others* that do not matter, called the *Insignificant Others*, while the 'almost human' elves are the *Significant Others*.

In connection to human-elf marriage, Bergman's explanation draws more into the elves that belong to the category of *Significant Others*. She follows Evans-Wentz's terminology and classifies them as *Gentry-type* elves. The likeness of this type of elves to humankind does not only lie in body shape and size but also in many parts of their way of life. They have communities, live in pairs through marriage, and procreate just as humans do. This similarity enables them to mingle with humans and have mixed marriages. Bergman explains that the *Gentry-type* elves began to gain popularity when Tolkien published his stories, challenging the diminutive fairy figures ruling the literary world then. This is probably why stories of human-elf marriage are more prominent in modern fantasy works that draw from the Tolkienian vision. It indicates that the parallelity between humans and the Significant Others is the critical foundation of their compatibility.

In the Javanese society, conversations about elves or fairies tend to be put into a supernatural context. One of the highlights of Indonesian television in 2004 was the appearance of a fairy figure believed to be the inhabitant of a colonial-era building named *Lawang Sewu*. The supernatural reality show *Dunia Lain* aired the footage after their production in Semarang. The footage can still be watched on Youtube (Rifki Setyadji, 2007). What is shown there is a sinister long-haired figure with no visible face that wears long white clothing. Although not labeled as a threatening presence, the appearance of that *paranormal* figure seems to have frightened a man sitting nearby. From the title of the show which means 'other world,' it can be said that whatever kind of being appears in the footage must be considered as a creature, not of the human sphere. In a society highly influenced by Islamic teachings and traditions for centuries, it is only sensible if the Javanese people associate such

mystical figures with creatures from *Alam Gaib* (the unseen world) instead of *Alam Maya* (the visible world), where humans reside. Hajid (2005) explains that the prominent residents of *Alam Gaib* are the jinns. An elf or a fairy must then be some jinn. This is probably why some people consider the marriage of Mbah Kodok with a fairy wife as a human's union with a jinn. Generally, such a union is deemed evil or at least erroneous. A similar situation can be seen in the story of *KKN di Desa Penari*, that has been filmed by Suryadi (2020) and has won the attention of Indonesian Twitter users for quite a while during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which a male human character named Bima gets on some interdimensional relationship with a serpent-woman spirit that dwells in the forest just next to his homestay village.

Stories about Jinns interacting with humans have existed since Islam flourished in the Arabian peninsula. In the Islamic tradition, jinns are 'something hidden' (Al-Musayyar, 2009: 133). Jinns usually are invisible to the human eyes, as they live in the unseen world. On one side, such invisibility may put the jinns under the same category as the diminutive fairies, which are the *Insignificant Others*. On the other side, however, the relationship dynamics between Jinns and humans, as seen in various accounts, demonstrate that they are compatible enough with humans to be considered *Significant Others*. This is supported by Al-Musayyar's explanation which is also in line with Abbasi's statement (Abbasi, 2004: 4-5) that jinns can think, reproduce, and bear responsibility. Like humans, they have the morality to tell right from wrong. Jinns are believed to be created before humans, similar to the creation of elves as God's firstborn in the third chapter of *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 1977). What makes the creation of jinns different from their human counterparts is that they are created from fire instead of dust.

Here must be pointed out that, although commonly perceived as inherently and unanimously evil, jinns can also be excellent or pious. Like humans, it seems their ability to think means they have the free will to choose for themselves. Jinns who choose to follow the Islamic teachings are called *mukmin*, just like humans who do so, and those who rebel from God's commandments are what is known as *kafir*. In the Javanese society, supernatural beings like jinns are seen as helpers and troublemakers (Safitri, 2013). This explanation is in line with the depictions of fairies in

Iranian folktales. Fairies are believed to be mysterious beings who dwell around us in places like castles, fountains, or underground gardens. They can be benevolent and malicious when dealing with humans (Tavousi, 2021). Certain cultures seem to have their criteria to tell whether any dealing or relationship with supernatural beings is still acceptable or has become a threat to the humans involved in it. In the words of Bottigheimer (2014), stories that include magical beings may show us the range of acceptability of magical manifestations and thus alert us whenever any supernatural phenomenon or being has become a threat to humans.

These two sides of the coin are not apparent in Tolkienian depictions of elves. They are said to be bound to the fate of the world and therefore have little to no free will. If jinns in the Islamic tradition can easily exercise the freedom to do bad things on their accounts, the elves of Tolkien can only go so far as to what is written (or, in Tolkien's case, sung) by the Creator from the beginning of the world. If the elves do bad things, for example, the rebellion of Feanor and his children that leads to a series of kin slayings in the ninth chapter of *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 1977), it should be seen as a part of a more excellent plan made by the Master of the world. Since it is perceived as part of the 'divine providence,' meaning the will of God does it, it can not possibly be evil. Meanwhile, from the Islamic perspective, the misconducts performed by jinns are bound to similar consequences humans face in their wrongdoings. Perhaps this vulnerability to stray into the dark path has brought the jinns to their connotation with evil. Therefore, for an already frail human to have any relationship with the jinns means to come closer to fallibility.

Several stories taken from the richness of Islamic traditions (Abbasi, 2004) may serve to elucidate the view presented above. In a story entitled *Izin Menikah dengan Manusia*, which means Permission to be Married to Human, a female jinn fell in love with a male human named Abbas. Being an already married man, he rejected her proposal. The jinn insisted he should ask for permission from his mother and wife to take another wife, but when he did so, they believed he was not in his right mind. The jinn kept coming to him until he lost his patience and slapped her. She then slapped him back until he fell unconscious. Waking up, Abbas realized he could not speak. Doctors tried to cure him, but to no avail, so he

went on a pilgrimage to an imam's tomb and prayed there until he finally could speak again. Another story entitled *Karamah Syaikh Jafar Arab* begins similarly, where a female Jinn comes to a man and asks him to marry her. In this story, however, the jinn demanded several conditions from the man and threatened to kill him should he fail to fulfill them. He was only saved from the jinn's menace after asking for help from a sheikh, namely a Muslim leader. The following story, entitled *Pernikahan Jin dengan Manusia*, meaning Marriage of Jinn and Human, is told as an account of a real story that happened in Egypt in 1980, in which a female figure draped in white emerged from a wall in the room of a paralyzed man named Abu Kaff. She introduced herself as a jinn named Hajat and offered to cure his paralysis if he agreed to marry her daughter. He said yes and arranged a wedding with a beautiful shining bride who later gave him two children. However, he was the only one who could see his jinn wife and offspring. His family, deeming him a lunatic, then sent him to an asylum. Psychiatrists and religious leaders have offered their opinions regarding Abu Kaff, with some calling him a liar and others a madman. Few saw his likelihood of being in an actual relationship with 'unseen forces.' Nonetheless, the story of Abu Kaff created a controversy in Egyptian society. Many people who heard his story became provoked and shouted at the *Takbir* as if they were facing an enemy of God.

The stories above, with many others coming from different corners of the Islamic sphere, appear to have a similar formula to stories of human-jinn marriages circulating in the Javanese society. In the cases of Mbah Kodok from Ngawi and Bima from *KKN di Desa Penari* that have been mentioned before, both human characters had their encounters with jinns when they traveled to a particular place related to nature, such as a river or a forest. In both cases, the female jinn asked for courtship with the male human with certain conditions or agreements that the man must fulfill. Mbah Kodok had to provide housing for his jinn wife by planting a tree, while Bima had to deliver a specific token to one of his friends that was wanted by the female jinn known as Badarawuhi. Threats were also declared as part of the conditions, and severe punishments, even up to death, were the price for failure. Here, the jinns are displayed as malicious entities prone to hurt humans. In problems related to any relationship between humans and jinns, the latter

party always seems guilty until proven otherwise. When premises show humans as the initiator of the crime, for example, Abbas slapping the jinn first, they are often overlooked if not ignored. In the story of Mbah Kodok, his fairy wife hurt him by injuring his penis, but it is only after she finds him cheating with another woman. Without endorsing or justifying the harm done by the jinns' retaliation, the fact that the humans threw the first punch means that they are at least equally (if not more) guilty of the crime. This detail has probably escaped society's attention because it is easier to follow the predisposition of blaming the 'innately wicked' beings. *KKN di Desa Penari* goes even further to display how humans are so helpless and almost incapable of defending themselves from the menace of the jinns. Only a few considered wiser or more learned in religion are shown to have a real chance of saving themselves and others, if possible, from the bloodthirsty presences. This impression echoes Victor Hugo's poem *Les Djinns* (Hugo, 1829), which describes the jinns as 'impure demons' that have come to wreak havoc in human society, where only a prophet may save them from ruin.

The impression that the presence of *Other* beings comes with misfortune is not found in stories of human-elf relationships in the fantasy world of Tolkien. The elves of Tolkien are strongly associated with the element of light. In the tales of *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 1977) that range from stories of the world's creation up to the early great wars preceding the story of *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1954), the elven race is depicted as a very diverse civilization with numerous communities living in all corners of the earth. It is interesting to note that the classification of these different groups of elves is based on the degree of light attributed to them. They are measured by their proximity and exposure to the light of the Two Trees that grow in *Valinor, The Undying Lands*, where the Tolkienian gods live. The gradation goes like this: those who live alongside the gods around the two trees are placed on top of the hierarchy and are called the Vanyar, while those who have seen or been around the two trees but not staying in its proximity are next in line, followed by those who have only glimpsed the light, and so on. This classification is presented as a chart in the appendices of *The Silmarillion*. Hence, it is safe to say that the Tolkienian elves are beings that have the likeness of humans but are always more than just humans because they have seen the light

upon which humans can never set eyes. The elves' light has made them significant and superior to humans. Bergman (2011: 100) decides that it is more appropriate to define the elves of Tolkien as 'magical humans' rather than 'nature spirits' that merely dwell in remote places like forests and mountains. She even goes as far as to say that some elves, such as the Vanyar, may even be called 'semi-angelic.'

There is a conjunction of such description of the elves to the Islamic view on what is called the angels. They are beings that were created from 'light and air.' They are "holy and free from guilt" because everything they do comes solely from the will of God, and they have no free will (Al-Musayyar, 2009: 49–52). If the elves of Tolkien can converse and live with the gods in the Undying Lands, the angels in the Islamic tradition are believed to be 'speaking directly to Allah.' What is different between the two is that the angels are not attributed to any sexuality, nor are they capable of hunger. The concept of metabolism and procreation have kept the elves compatible with humans. Though they have a touch of divinity within them, they remain humane.

It can be understood now why relationships between humans and elves in Tolkienian fantasy are portrayed as positive. For humans, to be related to the elves means to touch the divine light that is otherwise almost (if not entirely) unreachable. There is divinity within those immortal yet humanlike figures that the mortal men desire. Whereas having relationships with the semi-angelic elves of Tolkien enables humans to taste immortality, the opposite thing happens to the union of humans and jinns from the Islamic and Javanese standpoint. Any relationship, let alone marriage, with beings that bring us closer to death and damnation should be avoided. If they must choose, people would undeniably prefer to be cured by Aragorn than by Abu Kaff, though their healing powers were granted through their kinship with the *Other* beings. While Aragorn was crowned high king with his elf queen beside him, Abu Kaff scornfully faced the court of law.

There are still many aspects worthy of further discussion about the subject presented here, for example, how stories of marriages between humans and *Other* beings, such as elves in fantasy works predating Tolkien, may have contributed to building such a durable formula for modern popular fantasy. In the context of the Javanese culture, it is also essential

to explore how the understanding of *Other* beings from the era of Hinduism and Buddhism may have left its mark on the current Islamic society of Java. However, the current researcher has not collected sufficient sources to expand this study into said areas. Several writings may offer some insights, for instance, *Sejarah Gaib Pulau Jawa* (Leadbeater, 1979), that have tried to put some light on the Javanese beliefs of the supernatural realm through the theosophical lenses. However, it is still questionable in its methodologies to be taken as a reliable source. Besides, the amount of exposition required to bring those aspects into this discussion will divert too much from the main focus of this study and compromise its coherence. For now, it is safe to say that the explanations already offered above will suffice to answer the problems presented at the beginning of this paper and shed some light on the matter of the relationship between humans and *Other* beings as told in fantastic tales of the modern era, be it a best-selling product of English fantasy literature or a Javanese urban legend going viral from coast to coast.

CONCLUSION

This paper has thoroughly explained how human-elf marriage is a formula in popular fantasy. By comparing elves in works of Tolkien that represent the modern image of English fantasy and stories coming from the Javanese society about beings often called jinns, it is found that both domains have portrayed certain types of beings that can be categorized as *Significant Others* to humans, meaning they are very similar but never the same as humans. However, how any marriage between a human and an *Other* being may be perceived through fantastic stories typically depends on how that *Other* being is characterized. The Javanese fairies, considered jinns in the eyes of Islamic traditions, are generally taken as reckless entities that tend to disturb humans according to their liking. Conversely, the Tolkienian elves are portrayed as beings bound to the world's fate with innate goodness symbolized through heavenly light. This is why fairies of the jinn kind in Javanese stories are considered troublemakers whenever they are in contact with humans. In contrast, relationships with the semi-angelic elves of Tolkien are considered divine blessings. In conclusion, the mere similarity, parallelity, or compatibility of certain *Other* beings with humans, be it fairies, elves, jinns, or even aliens, does not guarantee a formulaic way

those relationships are morally perceived. As stated at the start of the discussion above, a formula remains flexible to follow the settings of its locale. It can serve as a demonstration of the values endorsed by the respective society.

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that this article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, editorial process, and publication process in general.

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