

# BOOK REVIEW OF 'PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER'

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## ABSTRACT

Final project ini merupakan ulasan dari novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* yang telah diterjemahkan kedalam berbagai bahasa termasuk bahasa Indonesia. Novel ini ditulis oleh seorang penulis Jerman bernama Patrick Suskind. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* bergenre *thriller story*. Penulis memberikan ringkasan singkat dari novel tersebut, dengan pemeran utama Jean Baptise Grenouille, seseorang yang tidak memiliki aroma tubuh tetapi diberikan anugerah yaitu indra penciuman yang sangat tajam. Cerita yang berisi tentang penyalahgunaan dari keahlian yang dimiliki manusia ini merupakan suatu yang baru bagi penggemar novel fiksi. Final project ini menyajikan pandangan-pandangan penulis mengenai kekuatan dan kelemahan dari novel tersebut sehingga pembaca dapat menentukan apakah novel tersebut layak dibaca atau tidak.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a novel written by Patrick Suskind. The novel was written in 1985. The genre of the novel is fiction story and the scope is thriller story. The novel has been adapted into a movie in the same title that is *Perfume*, and produced in 2006. There are some reasons to review the translation version of the novel which is published by Dastan Indonesia. First, the cover of the novel shows a group of strangers and it claims the novel as an international bestseller. Second, the review of the novel presents frightening sensation. Third, the author gives a subtitle in the book "The Story of a Murderer".

From the cover of *Perfume*, it attracts the frightening sensation because it shows some people with bald head, colorful body and empty gaze. The text which said "INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER" makes the writer aware that the novel can be guaranteed with its quantity and quality. The review that found in the back cover of the novel, tell us about what the novel is about.

The thriller novel is about the main character, Jean Baptise Grenouille, who has a special gift from God, that he can smell everything in the world. Jean Baptise Grenouille is the only one human who has the best sense of smell. But, the amazing gift causes a big

disaster in the Grenouille's life as his only big obsession is to make the best perfume which similar with beautiful virgin's odor.

The writer finds that the novel tells about a murdering of 25 girls who died tragically, with no clothes and no hair in their body. There is relationship between the murdering case and the perfume specialist. Why the girls were killed, why Grenouille interest to make a virgin perfume and how the effect of the perfume. Comments upon of the book from *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, etc support the reader to read the novel and make the writer believe that the novel is really interesting and has best quality story. Another reasons is the author gives a subtitle beside the main title "Perfume", another "The Story of a Murderer". The relationship between title and subtitle do not make sense because there is no connection meaning words between perfume and a murderer. According to Oxford Dictionary, the word *Perfume* means "a sweet smell", it shows a beauty or a good thing. But, the word *Murder* means "the intentional and unlawful killing of one person by another", it shows an anarchism or a bad thing. The contradiction between the meaning of *Perfume* and *Murder* invite readersto read this novel.

## **1.2. The Objective of the Writing**

The aim of reviewing a novel is to give some information to the readers about the content of the novel. In this project, the writer hopes she can help the readers to decide whether they will read the novel or not.

The purpose of the writer for reviewing this novel is to explain the strong and the weak points of the novel that will be useful to the readers.

## **1.3. About the Author and His Works**

The author of the book is Patrick Suskind. He was born in March, 26th 1949, in Stranberger Ambach, Bavaria Lake near Munich in Germany. He studied middle age and modern history in Munich University and Aix-en-Provence in 1968 until 1974. In 80's, he worked as scenario's writer for Kir Royal and Monaco Franze. Actually, he wanted to be a pianist, but he had a problem with his hand. Suskind started his career as a drama writer before he wrote *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* was adapted in a film. His second novel, *The Pigeon*, later adapted as a play, was first staged at the BAC Theatre in London in May 1993. His next play was *The Double-Bass* was first staged in Munich in 1981 and has since become one of the most performed plays in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. In 1992, he published *The Story of Mr Sommer*. He also wrote *The Story of Drei geschichten und Eine* and an essay "*On Love and Death*". Suskind gives more attention in single character and

obsession; there was Grenouille and making a perfect perfume, in his *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. His ability in writing came from his father, Wilhelm Emanuel Suskind, a journalist and a linguist.

## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a fiction novel. As shown in the title, this novel tells the story of someone who has a strong ambition in his life. His ambition is, he wants to make a perfect perfume in the world and get the perfume he should kill 25 virgins. The background of the novel is French in 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the moment, French is a stench country with people who do not care with their body's odor.

This story begins with the birth of a baby in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in France. He was born without an odor like a human body in general. Since he was born, he had brought misfortune to people nearby. His mother, who actually wanted his death, was hanged to death because she had killed her 4 babies before the birth of the baby and tried to kill him. The baby is named Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, after he was baptized. Because of his luck, he was fostered by Father Terrier. Because his mother died, Grenouille was given milk by other women, but none of them survived because the child is so greedy and has no body odor.

Starting from the Father Terrier, Grenouille's childhood was in the foster of Madame Gaillard. She was a disciplined person in managing foster children. Grenouille was considered as a little strange child by his friends, because his face was not handsome and he was slightly stooped. But they did not hate him; it was just that they were feelings of discomfort because they could not smell his body's odor. Grenouille was often more silent, he preferred the smell of new things around him. His sense of smell was very sharp, he could smell the smells that could not be smelled by humans in general. So, he regretted that there were no words which could describe all the scent as he was recognized.

As a teenager, he worked with Monsieur Grimal because Madame Gaillard has been sold him. Madame Gaillard's death ended tragically with throat cancer and had experienced a bankruptcy. Monsieur Grimal was an expert tanner. Grenouille worked diligently and did not talk too much. He always obeys with his master's order. When he was 13 years, Grenouille left the house on Sunday afternoon. He used this chance to continue his penchant recognize that there were any odors. He wanted to keep all the scent that he had inhaled at the time. One time on the anniversary of the coronation of the king of France, Grenouille smelled a scent that really caught his attention and he really liked the smell of it. Apparently, the smell was

coming from a girl who was 14 years old. Starting from there, the killings were begun, because he wanted to kiss the scent of the girl's body, he accidentally killed her. After the death, he kissed every part of her body. None have passed because every part of her body has own flavor.

When delivering the skin on Giuseppe Baldini, a famous perfume maker, he was very interested to learn how to catch a scent. Baldini finally allowed him to become his disciple. Unexpectedly, Grenouille's perfumes made very well liked, so helped the career of Baldini that originally was going bankrupt. Grenouille had become an expert distillation. But, he decided to leave Baldini and went to South to learn how to make perfume. Then, he lived in seclusion in a mountain, which no one dared to place it. He was just eating and roughing it. Grenouille met the Marquis who changed his life and brought him to town, he created perfumes that make people attracted to the previous approach because the people had never thought of his presence.

Grenouille moves to the city of Grasse, the place where the center of production and sales of perfumes which is comfortable area. Here, he learns the various techniques of making perfumes. At Madame Arnulfi, he is free to make a lot of varieties of perfumes and perform distillation. His first interest to scent the bodies of a virgin girl get in excited to catch the human scent. 25 tubes of perfume he provides, the hunt is begun. When a girl alone, he hit her head with the wood. Then he shaves her head, strip off her clothes and her body smeared with fat and then wraps it in cloth. The smell of the girl, he finally gets it. He does so until the girl number 24.

This case uproar in the town that there is a sadistic killer which then force the parents to keep their daughters. For the 25<sup>th</sup> bottle, his destiny is a girl named Laure Richis, Richis's father realizes that his daughter become the target of the killer therefore he leaves the city of Grasse and tries to distract the killer. But in vain, the killer with a keen sense of smell might eventually take the girl's scent. However, criminals are finally caught, Grenouille gets hanged. When the citizens of the whole city come to witness his death, he spread a perfume from the scent of the 25<sup>th</sup> virgins. Unexpectedly on the ground, all people having sex, there is a mass of sex. The scent is so drugged people. Grenouille releases and escapes.

The end story of Grenouille is tragic, he comes close a bunch of people, where he spreads the perfume on all of his own body, and then one by one, people are approaching Grenouille and begin to eat parts of his body with greedily.

## REVIEW

This novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a phenomenal novel because it is included in the International bestseller, which has been translated in various languages. The book that tells about a crime serial killer who killed 25 virgins has strengths and also weaknesses.

### 3.1. The Strengths

The strength of the novel comes from the intrinsic elements. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* has straight forward plot line so that the reading story after another is not difficult for readers to follow the story. Sequential depiction of the story and vivid detail of every movement of setting the place and time makes this novel quite easy to understand.

In addition, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* uniqueness lies in the writing of the chapters and sub chapters. On the chapter just written "Bagian I" to the chapter and the "satu", "dua", "tiga" and so for the section. There are no titles that explain the story of the sections. Unlike the other novels such as *Moga Bunda diSayang Allah* written by Tere-Liye that always include the title to name each chapter in the novel for example "*Jeruk Panas Spesial*" is the title of first chapter that explain the story in the section and "*Merah Kuning Hijau*" to second chapter, but *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* only include numbers only. Therefore, readers are increasingly interested and curious to read more.

Depiction of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille main character is so clear since the beginning of the story adds to the strength of this book. Grenouille's character that have a strong ambition in his life, which change his ability into a cold-blooded killer. Grenouille which was born as a man who has expertise in abnormal sense of smell is sharp and the lack of which he has no body odor, bringing him into a life journey that ended tragically. The goal of killing that was done by Grenouille was clearly written, because he wanted to get a perfect perfume, he must kill 25 virgins. The depiction of the cruel murder makes the reader feels fear but at the same time, it also raises the curiosity to continue the rest of the story.

Grenouille's ability to smell the aroma of all that exists and making the perfume give a new knowledge for the reader who previously did not know how the origins of perfume making. The most apparent knowledge of the authors in terms of making perfume can give the idea of scents that make the reader know about a lot of scents in the earth. In addition, the effects of perfume scent that affects a person's emotions. For example, Grenouille has not been punished because he spread a perfume so people become worship him. The reason why

Grenouille has not been punished because the effect of the perfume gave comfortable, happiness and freedom feeling to the people, so they did not care with Grenouille's false.

A new and interesting story about a deviation that happened in a person who has an amazing intelligent and ability, this point is explained very clear in every section of the book. One of the strengths of this book lies in the portrayal of France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with all the rottenness that is fragrance, the situation in the state of population, jobs that did exist at that time and the system of government that is written with such detail makes the reader become direct actor in the story of Grenouille.

Translation of this book are presented with proper selection of the Indonesian language, the structure of stringing words in each story is a separate point because it determines the reader's interested to understand the story easily. The depiction of the background space, time and character which is symbolized by the words appears very clearly in this book.

### **3.2. The Weaknesses**

The book is also not less than weaknesses owned, may be not comparable with the power. Grenouille story was listed in the fiction thriller novel. The writer compares the book with *Mad House: The Story of a Genius Murderer* written by Patrick McGrath. The plot of *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* looks very flat and seems less stressful, but *Mad House* gives a lot of surprised story in each section and the strained story of the madness psychopath killer was explained from the beginning until the end of the story. Although the writer feels that the novel is already stressful, the climax point is not very visible because the strained story of *Perfume* just found in a few sections only.

A new knowledge about the manufacture of making perfume cannot be fully understood by the reader as many words associated with the scent of perfume or the way that was not described in detail. Various kinds of aroma that may be understood only by European people, it becomes confusing when the smells are read by the people of Indonesia.

The reader feels unsatisfied because the author just tells the character Grenouille as a psychopathic course. Grenouille is as a human being, has protagonist personality in spite of his antagonist personality. The author did not explain about the protagonist of Grenouille. Unfortunately, if the protagonist's character described, it will add variety of character of the real killer Grenouille who still looking for his identity, he just wants to be recognized only by the people around him.

Moral messages or story that can be taken from this book is to never see anyone from their lack. Behind the lack of Grenouille who do not have body odor since his birth, he is a genius who knows all the scents in the world.

In conclusion, there are 3 points that are found in the book. First, that is about the reason why the girls were killed. The case happened because Grenouille needs their body's odor to make a perfect perfume. Second, why Grenouille interests to make a virgin perfume, the answer is because he really loves their smell. Their body's odor is so special and makes he feels comfortable with his life. Finally, that is about how the author writes the murdering case.

## CONCLUSION

*Perfume: the Story of a Murderer*, work of a legendary writer Patrick Suskind was sold over 15 million copies. The novel which telling about a sadistic killer named Grenouille is presented coherently by the author. The only motive to get the best perfume was by killed 25 virgins. Behind an ordinary man there was extraordinary talent to get the main ambition in life. A highly detailed depiction of the story makes the reader swept under on a starring part in the story. An actual idea is something very simple about the irregularities of human talents, so the writer described it as a new story and invite reader's interest. One of the thriller fiction novel, stressful enough with the existing character of the psychopath and the presentation of the story in the selection of the words that make this *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer* worth reading by thriller lovers.

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