



## SEXUALITY AND MONOGAMY: UNEARTHING MELODRAMA FORMULA IN ALICE SEBOLD'S *THE LOVELY BONES*

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### ABSTRACT

Every popular literature has a particular formula for certain intrinsic elements such as favorite plots, stereotyped characters, and accepted ideas. Therefore, the genre is widely accepted by readers. It represents familiar shared images and meanings that assert an ongoing continuity of values. Therefore, this study aims: (1) to elucidate the kind of melodrama formula used that makes a novel popular and widely accepted, and dramatizes moral value shared by its readers, and (2) to make justification on the cultural behavior or universal pattern that may underline its popularity. The object of the study is *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. Descriptive analysis is used to explore the data with the Concept of Formula by Cawelti that serves as the theory. Based on the data analysis, the conclusions draw as follows. First, conventions and inventions of the social melodrama genre are used to dramatize sexuality in which it's identified through the theme. Second, this shared moral value turns from traditional religious into the secular humanist world. However, this change remains to defense a monogamous life and family-oriented relationship.

**Keywords:** *melodrama, monogamy, moral value, popular literature, sexuality*

### INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the word "best-seller" has been easily found on the covers of novels to indicate their popularity and to elevate the sales. Raymond William (Bielby & Harrington, 2001; Storey, 2004) stated that something popular is undoubtedly much in demand and much liked by many people. It is an "entertainment with rules known to everyone," (Cawelti, 1969, p.388) Therefore, the production of popular novels is executed through industrial production techniques and marketed to benefit mass consumers. This, based on the nature of popular arts, exists and survives more because of the media, with its ideology and capitalism (Strinati, 2007).

In the early 2000s, Alice Sebold released her first novel, *The Lovely Bones* (2002); a story of Susie Salmon, a 14 years old girl, the narrator of the story who



has already been dead—raped and murdered by her neighbor, George Harvey, as she walked home from school. She and her family had to learn to cope with loss: Susie had to learn to give up her Earthly life and accept her afterlife in heaven, where she watched the other family members who struggled to overcome the horrors of her death. The novel has been a hit in the US as well as many other countries. Wikipedia recorded the novel has been sold over 10 million copies worldwide and translated into 40 different languages while the novel maintained its position in The New York Times hardback best-seller list for more than a year ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_best-selling\\_books#cite\\_note-128](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books#cite_note-128)).

The novel also became the most successful debut since *Gone with the Wind* (McCrum, 2007). The success of the novel was expected to influence its ecranisation (wide-screening or transferring process of a novel into the movie), made by a distinctive producer and movie director, Peter Jackson in 2010. Nevertheless, Peter Jackson, who has been named as one of the successful directors in Hollywood through a number of box office movies, such as *Lord of The Rings* trilogy (2001-2003), *King Kong* (2005), and *District 9* (2009), along with *The Hobbit* trilogy (2012-2014) has failed pretty horribly. He failed to display the novel's key elements (the brutal scenes of murder and rape, and the main character's viewpoints from heaven) on the film well (Patterson, 2010). The big-name of Peter Jackson as the director of the film could not guarantee the success of the film on the contrary to the novel popularity. Therefore, this study focuses on the novel as the object of the study.

The term formula was coined to assert “a structure narrative or dramatic conventions employed in a great number of individual works” (Cawelti, 1976, p. 5). It involves “principles for the certain plots, characters, and settings, which possess in addition to their basic narrative structure the dimension of collective ritual and dream,” (Cawelti, 1969, p. 390). Formula is a cultural product (Bargainnier, 1975). It has embodied culture because of its preoccupation with representing and relating certain images, symbols, themes, and myths (Cawelti, 1969, 1976). Besides, all cultural products contain conventions and inventions (Cawelti, 1969). “Conventions are elements that are known to both creator and his audience beforehand.... Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator...,” (Cawelti, 1969, p. 385). In popular literature, the term convention here indicates that both the writer and reader share the same values of a literary work. Cate (1972) stated, “The real potentialities and limitations of literature as an expression of socio-political commitment can be achieved if the writer and reader alike understand what writing is” (p. 145). The invention is created for the sake of originality or as an attempt to get out of the saturation of existing conventions. It is “a departure from the conventional and ordinary uses of words, enables the writer to coin a fresh or unique expression or perhaps even startle his reader into considering a subject in a new or unusual light” (Jinks, 1974, p. 118). This point marks that a study on popular literature is important to be carried out as intended in this study.



Another point is that aside from developing linguistic aspects, studying literature also learns from philosophy and moral values inherent in literary works. Literature serves as the battlefield of character education, and the cultural preservation must contain ethical moral values (Adi, 2014). "However interesting a literary work [if it] contains misleading experiences of human life; it does not deserve to be called literature." (Sumarjo & Saini, 1988, p. 14). This concept of non-misleading value seems to apply universally to all literary works. Hoggart, (1973) asserts that "I value literature because of the way-the peculiar way-in which it explores, re-creates and seeks for the meanings in human experience; ..." (p. 11).

Popular literature often depicts violence and sexuality (Cawelti, 1975). The question is: Can popular literature be considered literature in which it is often considered a work that misleads human life? Toward this non-misleading value, William (1998) argues that values may differ from each culture because it has different value standards. Besides, there is a universal value that can be accepted by all people. "...The dramatic form passes beyond its context and becomes an element in a major and general dramatic tradition, in quite different societies..." (William, 1998, p. 49). Moral values and life values change along with the way people deal with the ever-changing reality of life. This change certainly impacts people's tastes because tastes run according to the community's needs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the values shared in a literary work are always interesting to be studied. Thus, analyzing a work of popular literature is crucial to understand what values the current society is sharing since popular literature is a typical genre engaged to the existing society (Fatimah & Istiani, 2020).

*The Lovely Bones* has drawn the attention of many critics and has been extensively examined from various perspectives. Some emphasize narration and stylistic devices (Tidy, 2009; Kiaei & Safdari, 2014; Ahmad & Nadarajan, 2018); the story relations which the main character's event of the story related to the life of the author as a rape survivor (Rajagopalan, 2013), and the interrelation of the truth and fantasy of the author while the process of writing between Lucky (1990) and *The Lovely Bones* (2002) (Kilby, 2018). Others share women perspectives on how the characters' maturation was achieved beyond tragedy to the main character (Arrida, 2013), to her mother (Bliss, 2008) and the paradox of female agency across different media as the rape survivor in *The Lovely Bones* and its film adaptation (Czarnowsky, 2013). However, none of them has examined it as popular literature and the product of popular culture. Therefore, studying the novel through its genre as popular literature would generate more understanding on how a particular novel can be widely accepted by readers.

This study would emphasize the novel in the context of the popular literature to elucidate a particular formula for certain things like favorite plot, stereotyped characters, and accepted ideas. These patterns represent familiar shared images and meanings that assert an ongoing continuity of values. As a popular cultural product, consumption or interest in popular literature is massive



(Storey, 2004). On the one hand, popular literature contains misleading values such as the depiction of violence and sexuality (Cawelti, 1975). On the other hand, it becomes a challenge for researchers in literature, philosophy, and culture. So, this study aims to elucidate: (1) formulaic elements of the story which make the novel popular and widely accepted and, the dramatization of moral value shared by its readers, and (2) the cultural behavior or universal pattern that may underline its popularity.

## METHODS

The study is qualitative with descriptive analysis. The descriptive method collects data in words, phrases, and sentences (Ratna, 2004). The collected data were gathered from the primary object and the secondary object. The primary data source was obtained from the material object, the novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. The secondary data sources were found in reference books, journals, magazines, and other research results relating to the study obtained from the corpus. Thus, this study was a library research by reviewing books, records, and reports related to the study as the data collection techniques (Nazir, 2005).

In analyzing the data, several steps were conducted in order as follows: 1) The data were collected by reading the object of the study, *The Lovely Bones* novel extensively. 2) The extensive reading was followed by selecting words, phrases, and sentences that might conform to the formula literature. 3) The selected data were classified based on the formulaic elements. Thus, 4) the classified data were then analyzed with the concept of Formula (Cawelti, 1976) that was considered as the appropriate method for examining popular literature (Bargainnier, 1975). The theory is employed to analyze the formulaic elements that the author adopts in which attracts millions of readers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Formulaic elements of social melodrama in *The Lovely Bones*

Defining the melodrama formula in a particular period is tentative (Bargainnier, 1975). The fixed patterns of melodrama formula are difficult to define (Bargainnier, 1975; Cawelti, 1976; Adi, 2011) because they seemingly can adapt themselves to fit the audience's desire of a particular period (Bargainnier, 1975). However, an examination of some definitions of melodrama formula provides some principal points; immediate identifications of emotions within the audience (Bargainnier, 1975; Adi, 2011), and the state of virtue triumphant and evil defeated (Bargainnier, 1975). These aspects of the melodramatic Formula may be illustrated by simply three characters and a basic plot. They are: (1) "The innocent heroine, who is in some form of danger (death, rape, scandal, and financial disaster)", (2) "The villain, male or female, who is responsible for the heroin's - and hero's- condition, and (3) "The hero, who by strength, intelligence, or sheer accident can save the heroine and himself and defeat the villain, so that virtue



triumphs and a state of completeness achieved” (Bargainnier, 1975, p. 730). These principles may serve as an illustration following Cawelti's view that, "Someone must win, and the story must be resolved," (Cawelti, 1969, p. 389). Applying the principles illustrates how melodramatic Formula works so that it can be widely accepted by particular readers.

One of the elements of the melodrama formula is immediate identification of emotions within the audience (Adi, 2011; Bargainnier, 1975). According to Cawelti (1976), it is evoked by involving characters in historical, social events or important events that are in the public spotlights in the form of wars, revolutions, or murders. Cawelti (1976) referred to this Formula as “social melodrama.” This type of melodrama is “defined by the combination of melodramatic structure and character with something that passes for a ‘realistic’ social or historical setting” (p. 261). The typical social melodrama reveals corrupt motives behind the scenes to assure the story's reality but ultimately affirms the basic melodramatic principle; things are just as they should be. Its central organizing principle is the clear establishment of poetic justice in the form of a happy or morally satisfying ending. The essential shape of melodrama is the presentation of the trials and tribulations that the good is subjected to by the wicked together, with the final triumph of the good and the punishment of the wicked. It affirms some conventional moral or philosophical principles as the inherent basis of cosmic order by illustrating this principle at work in the lives of good and wicked characters (Cawelti, 1976, p. 262). It could be concluded that social melodrama synthesizes melodrama by developing careful and complicated social arrangements. It is created by combining the emotional satisfaction of melodramas with interests summarized in detailed, intimate, and realistic analysis of major social or historical phenomena. Ultimately, it strengthens the basic melodramatic principle: the triumph of the good and the punishment of the wicked.

*The Lovely Bones*, as the researchers argue, employed a Formula of social melodrama. The course of the story is synthesized from social and historical settings. The tragedy of the main character, Susie Salmon, “*My name Salmon, like the fish; first name Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973*” (Sebold, 2002, p. 5) who was sexually assaulted and murdered by her neighbor, George Harvey, “*My murder was a man from our neighborhood*” (Sebold, 2002, p. 6) serves as the social and historical setting. The tragedy then led the readers into the crisis of the course of the story. Following Susie's death, the Salmons dissolved in deep sadness and sorrow, her parents' marital life was distorted; her sister forced herself to stay strong, and her little brother struggled with himself to know the reason behind Susie's absence at home. It was even more difficult for the Salmons because Susie's body was missing, and the police could not find and arrest the murderer because no evidence could be found. Thus, The Salmons had experienced in the presentation of the trials and tribulations.



The establishment of trials and tribulations (Cawelti, 1976) was an attempt to express morality in the story other than how writers attract readers (Rosyidi, Gumilar, Kurniawan, & Zurmailis, 2010). Melodrama must affirm a commonly accepted moral universe that is “seeing the sympathetic and virtuous rewarded and the hateful and dastardly punished” (Cawelti, 1976, p. 267). This morality operated in the story of the opposite nature, death, and life. The opposition between the death of the protagonist, Susie Salmon, and the life of the antagonist, Mr. Harvey. “I could not have what I wanted most. Mr. Harvey dead and me living” (Sebold, 2002, p. 20). The realization between Susie's death and Mr. Harvey's life was established in the trials and tribulations of the Salmons. Thus, the idea of the audience is fulfilled if the state of completeness is achieved and the morality affirmed.

The main organizing principles then establish clear poetic justice in “a happy or morally satisfying ending” (Cawelti, 1976, p. 262). The story ended happily for the Salmon family. Mr. Harvey's death, Jack and Abigail, were reunited after being separated earlier; Lindsey married her lover; for Susie, she finally let go of everything on earth and went to heaven. “I wish you all a long and happy life” (Sebold, 2002, p. 328).

### **Conventions and inventions of social melodrama formula in *The Lovely Bones***

Conventions represent a familiar terrain of stereotypes, clichés, archetypal characters, and plots. Since the beginning of the 19th century, melodramas tended to add spice to portray the triumph of virtue and defeat of evil (Cawelti, 1976). However, the melodrama formula can adapt itself to fit the audience's desire for a particular period (Bargainnier, 1975). More sophisticated audiences were probably more responsive to the kind of story that could balance some of the satisfaction of melodrama against the claims of their sense of reality. In response to this, social melodrama had gradually developed and evolved to confront the drastic social and cultural change (Cawelti, 1976). The prevailing Formula of contemporary social melodrama “turned away from religion to seek other means of affirming transcendent moral thrust in a secular, naturalistic world” (Cawelti, 1976, p. 284).

A formula writer, Irving Wallace (1968), had often been considered successful in writing best-seller works according to “some guaranteed recipe” in social melodrama (Cawelti, 1976, p. 284). He had developed an effective fictional pattern that reformulated a social melodrama that was responsive to the central theme of concern for the contemporary public (Cawelti, 1976). Thus, the pattern can be described as follows: (1) As a consequence of some major public events, protagonists are faced with a crisis that changes their lives as a consequence of historical, social events. (2) A protagonist whose life has been characterized by initial success is turned down by an increasing sense of failure and frustration. (3)



The protagonist has experienced an unsuccessful marriage or series of affairs and thinks he is incapable of the responsibilities and involvements of a serious love relationship. (4) True love comes as a savior of a love relationship. The hero must be able to overcome the obstacles to manage a new life. (5) Several minor characters are brought into contact with the protagonist and the heroine, and they too usually find a temporary solution to their problem. (6) Generally, a series of mysterious puzzles should be investigated by the protagonist and his associates; it often poses a serious physical danger to the protagonist as a climactic moment in his renewed commitment to life. (7) The plot also necessitates one or more villain figures, usually characterized as ruthless men whose ambition for power and domination over others. The two favorite evil characters often featured in the story are great tycoons or politicians whose traits are in contrast with the humanist protagonist. (8) Nevertheless, it is usually the protagonist's successful exposure or destruction of the plot that saves the world from the threat of war or tyranny.

Though incomplete, the pattern seemed to have been adopted by the author of *The Lovely Bones* (Anam, 2017). The social and historical setting, which is the tragedy of Susie's death, emanated horrible consequence to The Salmons family crisis; it ruined family's happiness and her parents' marriage. Abigail, Susie's mother had an affair with the detective who was investigating Susie's case. Jack was obsessed to find Susie's murderer; it endangered his life as well as his family life. This plot led to two mysteries urging to be solved: finding the murderer or saving his family life. Lindsay was portrayed as the only character who offered sympathy toward Jack and was delighted to help him. She broke into Mr. Harvey's house to find evidence. "*I did it, I broke into his house.*" *She was shaking slightly and trying to cry*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 184).

As previously stated, conventions represent a known terrain of stereotypes, clichés, known characters, and plots. On the other hand, inventions are represented through the author's genius in exploring new possibilities and turning narrative structure, thus bringing something new to the field of literature to achieve any kinds of suspense or excitement. The author must at least temporarily entertain the possibility that the good may fail. Thereinafter, the author invents some fresh ideas and applies them in his work.

There were some inventions found in the novel *The Lovely Bones*. First, the story was narrated by the main character, Susie Salmon, who was a ghost from heaven. The heaven, the place where she was narrating the story, was a representation of the desires of the world. It was the reflection of conditions in the world according to Susie's imagination. Kiaei & Safdari (2014) called it a hyper-reality for Susie. As Susie narrated the story, she could get whatever she wanted easily. "*We had been given, in our heavens, our simplest dreams*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 18). Second, the villain's motive was different from what was stated by Wallace (Cawelti, 1976) whose ambition for power and domination over others. The evil motive of Mr. Harvey's being a rapist and a murderer was his pedophile mental disorder. A pedophile acts because of the urge of sexual desire for children. Third,



one of the mysterious puzzles for the protagonist and his associates to investigate was to reveal Susie's death case. Jack and Lindsey failed to reveal and catch Susie's killer despite being assisted by the detectives from the police. The failure of this action is an element of surprise (suspense) presented by the author. "Yet to achieve any kind of suspense or excitement the melodramatist must at least temporarily entertain the possibility that the good may fail" (Cawelti, 1976, p.267). This failure also had an impact on the ending of the story, making it difficult to predict. Finally, the ending of the story for the villain was not caused by the actions of the characters but through the destiny written by God. The antagonist, Mr. Harvey, died from being crushed by chunks of ice from frozen snow on a tree. The incident caused him to fall into a ravine and became buried in an avalanche while hunting down another victim. Although the ending of the antagonist was not determined by the protagonist's actions, the ending of the antagonist in *The Lovely Bones* still fulfills the basic principle of melodrama: prevailing the ideal justice order in society. This setting is demonstrated by the author through the happy ending story or moral satisfaction. Mr. Harvey was punished for his actions. One thing that Susie wanted most, "*Mr. Harvey dead and me living*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 20).

Melodrama social conforms to commonly accepted moral universe to give its audience the pleasure of seeing the sympathetic and virtuous rewarded and the hateful and dastardly punished (Cawelti, 1976). The involvement of characters with large events of social-historical importance intensifies readers' excitement and feeling about the significance of individual episodes and how they critically affect the fate of characters. It is also an intensification technique to maintain readers' excitement and interest. Yet, by placing admirable (or hateful) characters in situations where they are threatened with the wrong fate, the intense sympathy of the readers can be evoked.

This strategy allows social melodrama to offer readers a moral fantasy in the form of fulfilling hopes or desires so that the readers feel that "an ideal world of dreams fulfilled" (Booth, 1965, p. 14). Readers are carried away and interested in following the storyline (Stanton, 1965). Readers can escape from the realities of life for a moment; they are carried to certain experiences such as when reading the adventures of Harry Potter. It enabled the readers to feel the same adventurous experiences as the characters in the story (Rosyidi et al., 2010). The imagery, settings, and clarity of emotions through dictions in *The Lovely Bones* push it to stay on top of the list of best-sellers (Ahmad & Nadarajan, 2018).

### **Sexuality themes in *The Lovely Bones***

The narrative scheme or plot structure of the melodrama social is constructed by "certain basic continuities of theme" (Cawelti, 1976, p. 284). The formulaic themes of social melodrama in Cawelti's views are the emphasis on romantic love as ultimate love, the defense of monogamous, the family-oriented relationship between men and women.





The Salmons realized the fact that they had to move on. They had come to acceptance, passed through the stages of suffering, and recovered from the grief. Their love and their sense of responsibility as a family reunited them. Jack was finally able to accept Susie's death, while Abigail finally returned after being away for eight years. "*These were the lovely bones that had grown around my absence [...]. And I began to see things in a way that let me hold the world without me in it*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 320). This could be identified as the theme of family-oriented relationships. Yet, those excerpts might be identified as a defense for the monogamous theme. The Salmons' union happened after the potential unsuccessful marriage because of Jack's ignorances and a series of Abigail's affairs. As a family, each family member was finally aware that they had to support and strengthen each other to pass through difficult times. Losing one family member was not the end of everything, there were other family members left to be taken care of and protected.

The themes prevailed in the story underline sexuality because popular culture becomes a process of articulation/disarticulation that may denote conflicts of gender, race, class, generation, sexuality, and more (Hamdan, 2012). Susie narrated that sexuality was healthy and it was a natural human activity as long as it was consensual. Before being raped by Mr. Harvey, Susie's first sexual experience was kissing Ray. "*I had been kissed once by someone I had liked*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 13). Ever since she was fourteen and was in the throes of puberty, she had been curious about sex. Her first sexual experience was rape and without consensus. She realized herself as the object of desire. She confirmed this after she had met Mr. Harvey before the rape, "*I'd had older men look at me that way since I'd lost my baby fat, but they usually didn't lose their marbles over me when I was wearing my royal blue parka and yellow elephant bell-bottoms*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 8).

The sexual consensual narrative also appears in the affair relationship between Abigail and Len Fenerman, the detective. Susie sympathetically felt that Abigail's actions were a part of healing process and self-discovery. Susie said she regretted that she had never had a healthy sexual experience until she died. Susie then had a sexual consensus experience with her loved one, Ray, after she became a spirit. Susie possessed Ruth's body to be able to do it. In this way, Susie got the opportunity to have sexual experiences based on love.

Therefore, the sexuality in *The Lovely Bones* emphasizes on romantic love as the ultimate love. Susie underlined and narrated this consensual sex through the love relationship between Lindsey and Samuel. Susie compared what she experienced was different from Lindsey's. "*At fourteen my sister sailed away from me into a place I'd never been. In the walls of my sex, there was horror and blood, in the walls of hers, there were windows*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 125). A sexual relationship based on love is something beautiful. Love should be the foundation of a relationship. Sexuality based on love will end happily. On the other hand, sexuality without love would fail. Lindsey's sexuality worked well, different from



Susie's sexuality who became the rape victim. The failed sexuality was also portrayed in Abigail's affairs. Lindsey ended happily; the others remained to fail. "... *born ten years after my fourteen years on Earth: Abigail Suzanne, little Susie to me*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 327).

Thus, the aforementioned theme was another formulaic social melodrama theme that emphasized romantic love as ultimate love. It could be identified in the sexualities depicted in the story. The prevailing theme of the nineteenth and twentieth social melodrama was well-established among middle class to whom these particular values were most important. Social melodrama has been one of the means for the American and English middle classes to successfully adjust themselves to the drastic social and cultural changes of the last century and a half (Cawelti, 1976, p. 284). The essential social-psychological dynamic of social melodrama is one of continually integrating new social circumstances and ideas to the developing middle-class sense of social value.

#### **The views towards sexuality shared in *The Lovely Bones***

Formula is cultural, for it indicates "The way in which a culture has embodied both mythical archetypes and its own preoccupations," (Cawelti, 1969, p. 387). The embodiment of the Formula is connected to the cultural background production. Formula shares and accepts values understood both by creators and readers. Cawelti (1969) added the function of Formula, "...represent(s) familiar shared images and meaning and they assert an ongoing continuity of values" (p. 385). The value from popular literature that was conveyed could be identified towards its theme as the central meaning of the story (Stanton, 1965). The theme of romantic love in *The Lovely Bones* denoted sexuality which was shared and accepted by readers.

The views of sexuality shared in the story change from the religious and traditional view of sex into a secular humanist. However, these change remains to defense monogamous life and family-oriented relationship. Monogamy and marriage are the main ideas that form the basis of the whole narrative about sexuality in the story. A sexual relationship without love will end unhappily. For example, Susie's sexuality in the form of sexual assault ended horribly. Yet, Abigail and Len Fenerman's affair also ended in sorrow. Abigail finally returned to Jack and left Len, heartbroken. Abigail's choice to return to Jack showed that the defense of monogamous life tradition in the story had been preserved.

Hence, sexual relations with love will end happily. This is shown in the love relationship between Lindsey and Samuel. They married and became husband and wife. They're a happy couple with the baby girl at the end. "*Samuel walked out to Lindsey then, and there she was in his arms [...] born ten years after my fourteen years on Earth: Abigail Suzanne, little Susie to me*" (Sebold, 2002, p. 327). Lindsey and Samuel's marriage added the argument of the emphasis on romantic love as an ultimate as well defense of monogamous, the family-oriented relationship of sexuality between men and women shared in the story.



This view of the monogamous defense in sexuality is similar to the theme of 20th-century social melodrama. The values presented in the story constitute a revitalization of Christian values. This revitalization is expected to provide drastic social changes to religious values and moral traditions (Cawelti, 1976). Even so, the sexuality described by the author in the novel shows a lack of religious aspects. This also indicates that the novel is also a secular humanist text (Tidy, 2009). People with a humanist secular view maintain the principle that humans are capable of organizing themselves. Individuals and society are viewed based on rationality, seek to banish and obscure sacred views (desacralization), separate religion from social life, deny spiritual values, and reject all things supernatural and transcendent (Bullock, 2004). It can be said that the view toward sexuality shared in *The Lovely Bones* is of a humanist secular moral view.

These moral standards are not absolute. In a literary work, each creator of the work will create a world with moral values in it. When human life develops, the standard of value also develops depending on the needs of a particular time and place. So, this moral value is the result of an assumption that they are following the values believed by society.

Popular literature is intended to fulfill individual desires and expectations of modern society, referring to the ability of a literary work to represent the beliefs and values that exist and develop in society. These values and beliefs can also be defined as the culture of the society itself, so based on the analysis of the views toward sexuality in the novel as a secular humanist view, it can be concluded that the depiction of sexuality in the novel is a cultural influence.

## CONCLUSION

This study discussed the structural analysis of *The Lovely Bones* in the context of popular literature. Therefore, the structural analysis of popular literature uses a slightly different method which is Formula. Based on the applying the concept of Formula in *The Lovely Bones*, it can be concluded that the story employs social melodrama formula with its conventions and inventions, in which its conventions and inventions attract and push a million, stay and follow the story as temporary escapism and relaxation from their serious restrictions and limitations of human life. Second, the view of sexuality was identified through the transformation of the theme that turn from traditional religious into a secular humanist world. However, these change remains to defense monogamous life and family-oriented relationship.

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