

## Intertextual Transformation of Intrinsic Elements of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in the Webtoon *Dorm Du*

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**Abstract:** This study examines the intertextual transformation of intrinsic elements in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the Indonesian webtoon *Dorm Du*, using Gérard Genette's concepts of hypogram and hypertext. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth description and interpretation of the intertextual relationships between classical literary texts and modern digital texts. The analysis shows that *Dorm Du* reconstructs rather than replicates characters, plot, and setting to fit modern cultural contexts and the digital medium. Alice's curiosity becomes Agrin's struggle under psychological pressure; the episodic plot shifts into a cause-and-effect horror narrative; and the fantastical world turns into a realistic dormitory that gradually reveals its terror. This transformation reflects a shift in narrative function from whimsical fantasy to psychological tension, aligning the story with contemporary audience sensibilities. Moreover, the findings demonstrate how intertextuality operates as a creative strategy rather than a derivative process in digital storytelling. These findings highlight how classic texts remain relevant through digital re-presentation, offering insights for adapting story structures and atmospheres to contemporary readers.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Hypogram, Hypertext, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, *Dorm Du*, Webtoon, Intrinsic Elements, Characters, Plot, Otherworldly Setting.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Literature has long used alternate worlds as a crucial space for character development, particularly when everyday reality intersects with strange and imaginary elements (Asha et al., 2025; Junaid et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2023). One early example can be seen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, first published in 1865. In the story, Alice is transported to another world after falling down a rabbit hole and experiences events that deviate from her normal life. In this strange world, Alice encounters characters such as the White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, and the Queen of Hearts, who present her with a fantasy experience that indirectly reflects the conditions of Victorian society. This narrative pattern of character transport to another world continues to emerge and evolve over time, including in digital media.

Technological developments then gave birth to webtoons, a form of digital comic with a vertical scrolling system that also explores the theme of alternate worlds (Yoon, 2024; Abbas et al., 2023; Cahyani et al., 2025). One example is *Dorm Du*, an Indonesian webtoon officially launched in 2020 or early 2021. Unfortunately, the webtoon went on hiatus, resulting in no further continuation of the story. This webtoon tells the story of a high school student named Agrin who is trapped in a rather strange dormitory called *Dorm Du*, which looks like a palace but has a brutal system for collecting points, she must uncover the dark secrets of the dormitory and the mysterious figure behind it while trying to return to her world. Therefore, an intertextual study of these two texts is important because it can see the relationship between works originating from different eras and media. Through this study, classic fantasy motifs such as displacement to another world can be rediscovered in modern webtoons, while also showing that literature is able to adapt to technological developments without losing focus on the changes and development of character identities.

Several studies have explored the adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. These include an analysis of metaphorical translations into Indonesian (Aditama, 2025), and an intertextuality study between the 1951 film *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Aini, 2025). Furthermore, other studies have generally addressed the transition from comics to digital webtoons, including their use in education and culture in Indonesia. However, these studies are largely independent and focus on separate topics, such as linguistic metaphors and film intertextuality. There is no direct comparison of the world-shifting theme between the 19th-century classic novel and contemporary Indonesian webtoons like *Dorm Du*. Furthermore, to date, there has been no comparative analysis addressing the accessibility of virtual books or the authenticity of texts within the context of this medium transition.

Therefore, in this study, the author will focus the analysis on intrinsic elements, particularly the characters, plot, and otherworldly setting in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the *Dorm Du* webtoon. The approach used is the theory of intertextuality, drawing on the concepts of hypogram and hypertext proposed by Gérard Genette (1997), which examines the relationship between source texts and new texts through a process of transformation.

According to Roman, as quoted in Basri (2014), "the intertextual method is defined as a technique for processing two objects of study based on the assumption of influence. The basic assumption is that no literary work is truly original without the influence of other works." Therefore, every literary work is inevitably connected to other works. This idea was also developed by Gérard Genette through the concept of transtextuality, namely the totality of relationships connecting one text to another. Genette divides these relationships into five main categories: intertextuality, hypotextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality, and architectuality. Genette (1997) also emphasized that "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts." that Genette calls transtextuality".

Although *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been widely studied from various perspectives, studies that examine its intertextual relationship with modern texts in the form of webtoons are still limited. Therefore, the problem that arises in this study is how the intrinsic elements, especially the characters, plot, and otherworldly setting in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are re-represented in the webtoon *Dorm Du* as a modern text through Gérard Genette's intertextuality approach, especially the concepts of hypogram and hypertext.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Intertextuality of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in Adapted Texts

One of the most developed areas of literary study is analyzing the intertextuality between classic and modern texts. Gerard Genette, using the concepts of hypogram and hypertext, explains that new texts always relate to previous ones through transformation, adaptation, and transformation. Because its fantasy world, characters, and symbols can be transferred to various media, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a frequent subject of research in this context. Alice has been examined across various digital platforms. Onenc (2022), entitled "*Investigating Adaptation Shifts: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland versus Alice: Madness Returns*," analyzes the video game *Alice: Madness Returns* and finds that the plot, characters, and setting undergo significant changes as a result of the adaptation between media.

Overall, this research shows that intrinsic components such as the characters, plot, and otherworldly setting change significantly during the adaptation process. Surur, Ukhrowiyah, and Anzani (2023) compared *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its Arabic adaptation, *Alice fi Biladi Al-Ajaib*, using Julia Kristeva's intertextuality approach. Their study showed that the supporting characters have been reduced and the setting has changed. As a result, the story focuses more on Alice's character than on her otherworldly adventures.

## B. Intertextuality and Webtoons as Digital Literature

On the other hand, intertextuality studies using Genette's framework are still frequently applied to printed literary texts, films, and classical works. Rustamjon Qizi (2025) emphasizes that hypogram and hypertext relationships can emerge through various forms of change, such as the reduction, addition, or removal of story elements. However, these studies have not yet explored digital literary media popular among today's readers, such as webtoons. Meanwhile, Nurfiarni et al. (2024) examined Nusantara Droid War using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach and found intertextual relationships between the Mahabharata epic, Nusantara legends, and Japanese manga. These studies demonstrate that Indonesian webtoons have great potential as an intertextual medium, but their focus remains limited to local narratives.

## III. METHODS

### A. Types of Research

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method because it aims to describe and interpret the intertextual relationship between classical literary texts and modern digital texts in depth. Through this approach, this research can examine how intrinsic elements such as characters, plots, and settings experience changes when classical texts are re-emerged in the webtoon medium. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is an approach used to understand the meaning constructed by individuals or groups on a social or humanitarian problem.

### B. Object of the Research

The objects of this research consist of two texts from different periods and media. The first text is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, which functions as a hypogram or source text. Then, the second text is the Indonesian webtoon *Dorm Du*, which functions as a hypertext. These two texts were chosen because they both carry stories about characters entering another world, although they are implemented in different cultural contexts and media. This research uses an intertextuality approach by referring to the concepts of hypogram and hypertext by Gerard Genette. Then, the analysis focuses on intrinsic elements, namely characters, plot, and setting, to observe the changes and how classic texts are re-represented in modern webtoons.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Representation of Intrinsic Elements of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in the Webtoon *Dorm Du*

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings aimed at answering the first research question, namely how the intrinsic elements of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are re-presented in the *Dorm Du* webtoon. This analysis focuses on three main intrinsic elements: characters, plot, and the otherworldly setting. In this study, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is positioned as a hypogram or source text, while the *Dorm Du* webtoon is positioned as a hypertext that represents these elements but in a different medium and context. The analysis shows that the *Dorm Du* webtoon does not copy its intrinsic elements directly, but rather transforms and adapts them to the narrative flow of the story.

#### 1. Character Representation

Characters are the actors who carry out the events in the story, so that the plot moves. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice is described as a curious child. She is trapped in a strange world after accidentally falling down a rabbit hole, following a rabbit she finds strange. During her time in Wonderland, Alice often questions the strangeness of the world and her own identity as she encounters various characters, some of whom are animals and plants that can talk and behave strangely.

### Data 1

*"Alice started to her feet, for it flashed accross her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge." (Carrol, 1865, p. 2-3)*

In this quote, Alice fell down the rabbit hole and entered wonderland without planning it, only following her instinct to chase the rabbit unconsciously.

### Data 2

*"Who in the world am I? Ah, thats the great puzzle!" (Carrol, 1865, chap. 1, p. 19)*

This dialogue demonstrates Alice's confusion about her identity after interacting with the characters in that world. This quote also emphasizes that Alice is questioning not only the world around her, but also herself.

In contrast, the main character in *Dorm Du*, Agrin, is depicted as someone who must adapt to an increasingly unnatural environment after accidentally traveling through a fog in the forest with her grandmother, leading to their separation and ultimately being transported to another world. Initially, she rebels and tries to escape in various ways, but over time, she begins to realize that no matter how hard she tries, she will be unable to escape, because the dormitory she lives in is not in her real world. She is also directly involved in the conflicts and threats within the dormitory.

### Data 3

*"Ya ampun, kabut apa ini?"*

*"Agrin ayo! Sepertinya nenek salah jalan!"*

*"Nenek, kabutnya semakin tebal!"*

*"...Nenek?"*

*"Hei, kau yang di sana! Ikut aku!" (Kafaza14, 2020, ep. 2)*

The dialogue shows how Agrin got lost and went through thick fog until it took him to another world and he was forced to enter a dormitory called Dorm Du.

### Data 4

*"Sebenarnya tempat apa ini? Kenapa mereka mengurungku seperti ini?"*

*"Jendelanya tidak terkunci!"*

*"Jarak kamar dan tanah yang jauh di bawah, membuat Agrin berfikir mustahil untuk bisa keluar melalui jendela."*

*"Seketika Agrin bergidik ngeri menyadari bahwa kini dia sudah tidak berada di dunia asalnya."*

*"Sebenarnya apa motif mereka mengumpulkan para murid-murid seperti Agrin di tempat ini?" (Kafaza14, 2020, ep. 7)*

In this excerpt, Agrin attempts to escape the dormitory, but realizes that it's not the real world, but rather a strange and frightening world. She also begins to wonder why students like Agrin have been gathered there.

This demonstrates the character's shift in role, from one initially curious about the strangeness

of the other world to one aware of the dangers and psychological pressures of the world she faces. This awareness marks a critical moment of narrative transformation, where survival replaces exploration as the character's primary motivation. Furthermore, the scene underscores how the webtoon recontextualizes Wonderland's sense of wonder into a mechanism of suspense and fear suited to the horror genre.

## 2. Plot Representation

A plot is a series of events in a story arranged sequentially and with a cause-and-effect relationship. Simply put, a plot is a story line that explains why and how an event occurs.

The plot of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is structured in discrete, episodic sections. Each event Alice experiences stands alone, without a clear cause-and-effect relationship. The conflict does not develop gradually, but rather emerges as a series of strange and constantly changing experiences.

### Data 5

*"She found a little bottle on it, ("which certainly was not here before," said Alice) and tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label with the words "DRINK ME" beautifully printed on it in large letters."* (Carroll, 1865, chap. 1, p. 9).

Here, Alice finds a piece of paper with the words "drink me" written on it, and after drinking it, her body gradually shrinks. This incident stands alone, unrelated to previous events, and merely appears as another strange experience.

In contrast, *Dorm Du* uses a more directed and developed plot. Where each incident is interconnected and supports the main conflict that uncovers the dorm's strange mystery. This shift from episodic fantasy to causal narrative structure reflects a transformation in storytelling logic. Moreover, it illustrates how digital horror narratives prioritize narrative coherence and escalating tension to sustain reader engagement.

### Data 6

*"Guru kejam: kau tidak ingin terbang juga?"*

*"Agrin: tidak"*

*"Kenapa para senior mengajak murid angkatanmu terbang bersama mereka?"*

*"Agrin: memangnya kenapa?"*

*"Guru kejam: para senior itu akan menjatuhkan mereka untuk mendapatkan poin"* (Kafaza14, 2020, ep. 5).

This scene illustrates the systemic cruelty embedded within the dormitory's social structure, where violence is normalized as a means of accumulating points. The dialogue reveals that harm toward others is not incidental but institutionalized, as senior students are encouraged to endanger their juniors for personal gain. Unlike the playful threats found in Carroll's Wonderland, this form of cruelty carries real physical and psychological consequences. This transformation emphasizes the shift from absurd fantasy to a dystopian environment governed by competition and fear, reinforcing the webtoon's darker reinterpretation of the source text.

### Data 7

*"Agrin: apa kau lupa? Kemarin murid tak sadarkan diri setelah memakan kue yang diberikan guru baru itu. Dan karena hanya aku yang sadar, guru baru itu memukul kepalaku dengan nampan hingga tak sadarkan diri"* (Kafaza14, 2020, ep. Ep 7).

This excerpt further exposes the pervasive violence exercised by authority figures within the dormitory. The teacher's act of physical assault demonstrates that cruelty is not limited to peer



interactions but is also perpetuated by those in power. This contrasts sharply with adult figures in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, whose authority is often portrayed as illogical yet harmless. In Dorm Du, authority becomes a direct source of trauma, underscoring the psychological horror that defines the narrative and deepens its critique of oppressive institutional systems.

### Data 8

*"Guru kejam: bagi Dorm Du, sistem poin adalah cara yang tepat untuk memberikan penghargaan pada murid yang berhasil menyelesaikan tugas. Karena jika mereka telah mendapat poin sebanyak yang ditentukan, mereka dapat menukarkannya dengan hadiah atau hak istimewa"*

*"Tampaknya kini Agrin mengerti bagaimana dia bisa keluar dari asrama itu. Mengumpulkan banyak pion, dan meminta untuk keluar dari asrama"*  
(Kafaza14, 2020, ep. 8).

After the incident of the seniors dropping their juniors who they were carrying to get points, the plot continues with a teacher who gives the students a poisoned cake that causes the students to vomit and faint, except for Agrin who chooses not to eat the cake, but is caught and ends up fainting because of being hit by the new teacher, seen in a quote in episode 7. until it continues with the cruel teacher's delivery about collecting points to get prizes or special privileges.

These differences show the adaptation of the plot influenced by the horror genre and the characteristics of the webtoon medium.

### 3. Otherworldly Setting

Setting refers to the place, time, and atmosphere in which events in a narrative occur, functioning to create a concrete framework that enables readers to imagine the story world as if it were real. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the setting is an explicitly otherworldly space that deliberately defies logic, where strangeness is immediately visible and unquestioned as a natural characteristic of the fantasy realm. By contrast, *Dorm Du* presents its otherworldly dimension through a dormitory that initially appears ordinary and familiar. The sense of strangeness gradually emerges through subtle details that generate unease and psychological tension. The dormitory thus operates as a transitional space between reality and the otherworldly, producing a confusing and suspenseful atmosphere. Rather than directly imitating Wonderland's fantastical setting, *Dorm Du* reinterprets the concept of the otherworldly by situating it within a modern, realistic environment that resonates more closely with contemporary readers' experiences.

### B. Discussion

Based on previous findings, it appears that the *Dorm Du* webtoon recreates elements from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* through a transformation process, rather than a direct copy. This change occurs due to differences in media, story type (genre), and the backgrounds of the readers of the two works. Using the concepts of hypogram and hypertext, the intertextual relationship between the two works is evident in the way *Dorm Du* reworks the basic idea of a character entering another world into a darker, more stressful story. According to Genette (1997), hypertext like *Dorm Du* essentially involves a textual transformation of its hypogram (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), allowing for the creation of a new work that retains traces of the source text.

In terms of characters, although Alice and Agrin are both accidentally trapped in another world, their roles are very different. Alice is portrayed as a child facing an unfamiliar world filled with curiosity and confusion about identity. Meanwhile, Agrin is presented as a character who must survive in a threatening environment. This change indicates that *Dorm Du* shifts the focus of the story from an exploration of imagination to an inner experience filled with distress. This shift in focus and character roles aligns with Hutcheon's (2013) view, which states that adaptations in intertextual representation often involve pragmatic relationships designed to adapt the story to suit new cultures and

readers. Thus, characters in hypertexts become not only observers of the strange but also victims of a cruel, otherworldly system.

In terms of plot, the differences in narrative form further clarify this transformation process. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is divided into episodic and casual scenes, where strange events occur without a clear end goal. In contrast, the *Dorm Du* webtoon uses a progressive and interconnected plot, with the main conflict developing toward a single goal: the attempt to escape from the dormitory. This difference can be understood as an adaptation to the horror genre and the webtoon medium, which demand constant suspense to maintain reader curiosity and emotional engagement. According to McKee (1997), in storytelling theory, a structured plot with strong cause-and-effect relationships is crucial in modern genres to build tension and deepen emotional engagement.

Meanwhile, the otherworldly setting elements in *Wonderland* and *Dorm Du* both function as alternative spaces that separate the characters from their home world. However, the forms of representation differ. *Wonderland* is depicted as a fantasy world that openly defies logic, while the otherworld in *Dorm Du* emerges through a modern dormitory that appears normal but actually harbors strangeness. This strategy makes the otherworld in *Dorm Du* feel closer to the reader's real life, thus intensifying the sense of fear and alienation it evokes. This blending of the ordinary with the strange is a hallmark of modern horror. According to Todorov (1977), this creates a "fantastic" effect because it gradually challenges the reader's perception of reality, unlike a pure setting where the rules are clear from the outset.

Overall, these findings indicate that *Dorm Du*, as a hypertext, not only adapts the intrinsic elements of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* but also reconstructs them according to the cultural context and digital medium. Changes in the characters, plot, and otherworldly setting demonstrate that the intertextual relationship between the two texts is alive and interconnected. This finding corroborates Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality as a "mosaic of quotations" in which each text absorbs and transforms the other, demonstrating that no text truly stands alone (Luthfialana, n.d., para. 5). Thus, this study demonstrates that classic texts can live on and gain new meaning through representation in modern digital literary forms such as webtoons.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the *Dorm Du* webtoon is a hypertext that profoundly transforms the intrinsic elements of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, its hypogram. The intertextual relationships that emerge are not simply a crude rendering, but rather a creative reconstruction adapted to the digital medium and the modern horror genre. This transformation is evident in the shift from Alice's initially curious character to Agrin, who must survive under psychological pressure. Furthermore, the once relaxed and episodic storyline transforms into a series of tense cause-and-effect events. The setting also changes, from a strange fantasy world to a seemingly normal but in reality terrifying modern dormitory. Overall, this research demonstrates that classic stories can remain alive and feel real to today's readers through the process of intertextuality in webtoons.

This research theoretically reinforces the idea that transferring stories from books to digital media requires significant adjustments to maintain their appeal. This helps us understand how old stories are absorbed into today's popular culture. Practically, the results of this research can serve as a guide for writers and content creators reworking classic works. They can change the atmosphere and structure of the story to suit the tastes of modern readers, while still maintaining the essence of the original story.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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