



REFORMASI GAGAL TOTAL, KAWAN!:

A STYLISTICS STUDY OF POLITICAL SATIRE IN EKA KURNIAWAN'S CORAT-CORET DI TOILET

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss and analyze political satire in Eka Kurniawan's short story titled Corat-coret di Toilet. By applying descriptive qualitative research as well as stylistics approach, researcher then reading the whole text of the short story, analyzing the political satire, and taking notes the sentence related to political satire inside. Found that there are nine sentences of satire in the short story that refer to political satire that was written by some students on the campus toilet's walls against the situation of the government in the year of 1990s where the freedom of conveying aspirations is tightly limited. The ubiquity of political satire in this short story builds critical thinking on the readers and also stimulates them intensely to be able to interpretatively understand what is meant by the political satire, the relation of those political satires with the political and social condition in Indonesia, specifically in the end of New Order and the beginning of reform era. Finally, the political satire in Corat-coret di Toilet reflects legal and social injustice in Indonesia. Nevertheless, Kurniawan's work able to persuade the readers with a sense of humor, sadness, anger and the truth of the Indonesian situation, to understand and care more about social and government phenomena in their own country.

INTRODUCTION

In pertaining to the language styles that are studied by stylistics, there are several types of figurative languages commonly used in literary works. Tarigan (2013) defines 60 figures of speech divided into four classifications as follows:

1. Comparison figure of speech, for example, metaphor, personification, depersonification, allegory, antithesis, periphrases, etc,



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2. Contrast figure of speech, for example, hyperbole, litotes, irony, satire, innuendo, sinism, and sarcasm,
3. Uniting figure of speech, for example, ellipsis, gradation, asindeton, epithet, and eponim,
4. Repetition figure of speech, for example, alliteration, chiasmus, tautology, anaphora, symploce, and anadiplosis.

Among those types, to limit the scope of the study, this paper focuses on the discussion of the contrast figure of speech, namely satire. Keraf (2007) defines satire as critique expressions that laugh or refuse something, while McArthur (1992) states that satire is a way to humorously criticize people or ideas.

Satire, as part of figurative language, has a long history. It began to develop in America in the seventeenth century as a form of resistance against Britain colonialism. At that time, cartoons were used to depict a satire. While in England, satire reached its heyday in the eighteenth century (Greenberg, 2019). Alison Dagnes, a political science professor at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania stated in an interview at *voanews.com* (2016) that political satire has been used throughout American history as a more gentle way of commentary. Political satire became popular in the American colonies in the early 1700s, as the colonists fought for independence from Britain. Since many people were illiterate, cartoons provided important commentary against the colonial rule.

Great writers such as Swift, Pope, Dryden, Addison, and more, all wrote satire in the form of poems, drama, essays, and criticism. Satirists use laughter to address situations they find unacceptable and, therefore, in need to have a change. There are two different types of satire, formal and indirect (Harmon and Holman, 1996). In a formal satire, the writer usually uses a persona who speaks directly to the reader or one of the characters in the work. Formal satire has two types: *Juvenalian* which is quite bitter and angry, biting harshly at the situation and people that the writer finds corrupt and unacceptable; and *Horatian* which is gentler, using laughter to try to change the situation. While in an indirect satire, the characters of the satire are themselves being ridiculed and made fun of. The *Menippean* form of indirect satire, as example, usually does not have characters but more commonly mental attitudes to deal with.



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Furthermore, a satirist is a person who finds a specific situation or occurrence to be unjust and unacceptable and will try with his satire to identify what is wrong with the situation and offer his solution. For a satire to be successful the satirist's point of view must be accepted and agreed upon by the reader, which means that "the art of the satirist ... is an art of persuasion" (Sutherland, 1958).

It can be summed up that satire is an art that was born from the thoughts of a satirist when social and political issues occurred around, were unacceptable, and need a change. The background of the birth of a satire is the inability or obstacles or difficulties of expressing an opinion and social criticism directly. The freedom of expressing an opinion and social criticism needed high risk in the past because it was strictly limited by the government. Looking at that situation, satirist with a unique way of thinking expressed social criticism through a style of language called satire.

Political satire is one of the critical topics in communication literature during the last decade. It is the inherent part of political humor concept. Since political humor is a broad concept, scholars prefer to use narrower terms, such as political satire, parody or irony. Usually, they juxtapose existing political reality with a normative ideal, just demonstrating this imperfection or even criticizing its aspects (Bloom & Bloom, 1979; Young, 2017).

Political satire is usually operationalized as a satirical motif in late-night comedies, animation series or other types of entertainment media. However, this paradigm changed with the beginning of Web 2.0 era when political satire and humorous criticism spoiled the web space. Political satire in this sense is not along with a product of professional comedians and script writers but instead is the user-generated content, which portrays involvement of mass against a certain discussed issue (Reilly, 2012). As a satire that specializes in gaining entertainment from politics, it has also been used with subversive intent where political speech and dissent are forbidden by a regime, as a method of advancing political arguments where such arguments are expressly forbidden (Aburmishan, 2018).

Sarcastic humor in political satire is well positioned to trigger people's emotional responses (Jones, 2005). Although previous studies mostly emphasized the relationship between exposure to political satire and negative attitude, following this line of



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reasoning, Lee and Kwak (2014) argued that sarcastic humor about a public issue featured in a political satire program would elicit negative emotions toward a government policy. Combining worry and anger as an index of negative emotion, they found a positive relationship between exposure to political satire and negative emotions.

The journey of expressing the opinion and social criticism develops from time to time. The high risk of expressing an opinion and social criticism in the past is 180 degrees different from the present day. Now, the media freely expresses criticism of the government and excludes ordinary civilians who are also involved in voicing their freedom of speech in a straightforward, sarcastic and satire manner in current highly-developed social media accounts. That situation happened in Indonesia during the New Order era under the administration of President Soeharto because many mass media were banned for criticizing the government at that time. Then the issue of kidnapping and killing of activists and critical civilians was prevalent at that time. The situation of post-collapse of the New Order era opened the freedom of speech and even becomes out of control as social media develops today. It is marked by the unstoppable satire of social criticism and politics propaganda that rose to the journey of the presidential election of Indonesia in past 2019.

Corat-coret di Toilet, a short story written by Eka Kurniawan in 1999, first published in 2000 by Yayasan Aksara Indonesia, and followed with a series of reprint following that first ever fiction works publication of Kurniawan - can be entitled as one of the most important- political satire in Indonesia. The background of this short story is the situation of post-collapse of New Order under the administration of Soeharto who has been in power for 32 years, and the beginning of the Reform era. The story tells about some students who wrote their complaints and aspirations about social and political problems that occurred in Indonesia on the wall of newly painted toilets on their campus. The writings on the toilet wall seemed to be the voice of the Indonesian people at that time. Insinuating what happened in Indonesia during the New Order period in which freedom to express aspirations is minimal, the campus toilet wall eventually becomes a medium to convey their aspirations. Because of that compelling



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case within the sociolinguistics field, this paper is discussing the political satire in that story content.

In the short story of *Corat-corek di Toilet*, Kurniawan (2014) dominates the style of his writing with the political satire. It is a satire in modern time to show the criticism of the political chaos that occurred in the New Order and the beginning of Reform era as well as a trace of social and humanitarian problems in the history of Indonesian republic. He is an author who is known as a straightforward and honest author in his language style. He is good at discussing the things that are considered taboo and strange. So, his language style tends to be vulgar, humorous, but real.

METHOD

This study applied the descriptive qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest that qualitative research is a research procedure bringing about descriptive data in the form of written or oral data from the subject of the research being observed. In other words, qualitative research concerned with the data described in words instead of in numbers or measures.

The data was analyzed by using stylistics approach to know the political satire written down in short story *Corat-corek di Toilet* and to understand the meaning of the political satire. This research focused only on one of figurative languages; political satire used in short story *Corat-corek di Toilet*. Hence, the data were political satire figurative languages found in the short story titled *Corat-corek di Toilet*, written by Eka Kurniawan, published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Kompas Gramedia Building, Blok 1 Lantai 5 Jalan Palmerah Barat No. 29-37, Jakarta, while the method of collecting data was using documentation. Meanwhile, the technique of data collecting was reading the whole text, analyzing the political satire, and taking notes the sentence related to political satire.

DISCUSSION

The political satires written in *Corat-corek di Toilet* lies on the aspirations that were conveyed by some students on the wall of the toilet. The analysis of political satire in the following description:



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1. *“Reformasi gagal total, Kawan! Mari tuntaskan revolusi demokratik! (p. 22)*

This sentence wants to convey about the transition of the governmental system from Soeharto’s reign to the new system, which is called a reform era. The boy (the first writer on the wall of the toilet) feels that the reforms advocated by the controlling government were not producing any results. The post-collapse era of the New Order did not get better as expected. There was, for instance, no response to the case of the abduction of student activists before the collapse of the new order regime, nor was there an answer to the case of the shooting of four Trisakti students in May 1998. The early days of reformation were the toughest periods of the Indonesian people. It was not only about multidimensional, economic and political crises that needed to be fixed as soon as possible—Indonesia had to lose Timor Timur as one of the provinces in Indonesia. There were no significant differences in after the ending of the New Order era so that he thinks that a democratic revolution must be carried out.

2. *“Jangan memprovokasi! Revolusi tak menyelesaikan masalah. Bangsa kita mencintai kedamaian. Mari melakukan perubahan secara bertahap.” (p. 23)*

The second satire tries to convey and make sure that an alteration cannot happen as quickly as turning the palm. The journey to better lives does require not only prayer, efforts, and support but also optimism from all Indonesian people. This character strives to be a mediator to calm down the problem in which situation will get better gradually so that no need for a revolution that will be able to even destabilize the nation’s peace. Furthermore, if that happens, the struggle to proceed for better lives will be useless. However, this sentence means that the person was seemingly a supporter of the New Order, or probably just an ordinary student who does not care at all about the political and social situation in his country.

3. *“Kau pasti antek tentara! antek orde baru! feodal, borjuis, reaksioner goblok! Omong-kosong reformasi, persiapkan revolusi!” (p. 23)*

This character represents a girl because the story author narrated that the character used lipstick to write. She tries to suspect the previous character who had written that revolution was not needed because the people loved peace, as a pro-feudal stooge to the New Order regime that infiltrated a college where he also



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studied there. This political satire tends to be sarcastic rather than senses humorous because of the swearing and angry tone in the sentence. She seems tired and bored of the bourgeoisie actions which sided with a corrupt regime and was insensitive to the suffering of the people under the control of the power. Then she assumes that the reforms that are echoed are mere nonsense that has no clear goals and future so that it will not affect political change. So, she provokes by her writing to prepare the revolution.

4. *“Hai, Gadis! Aku suka gadis revolusioner. Mau kencan denganku?” (p. 24)*

This boy responds using humor about what was said by the previous character who was a girl by inviting her to date with him. However, this boy tries to neglect that not many women care about social, political and governmental issues. When a woman is caring about these issues, then he is not just an ordinary woman or student who only carries a bag containing a set of makeup and a book as a complement of physical appearance then comes to campus to sit, listen and go home. It can be stated that it is a criticism of women who only adore their appearance but put aside social issues occurred in her country. And the writer of this satire seems not to recognize that superiority.

5. *“Mau kencan denganku? Boleh! Jemput jam 9 malam di cafe. NB: jangan bawa intel” (p. 25)*

The previous or another girl unexpectedly responds to what was said by the later persona (a boy) about a date invitation. This sentence seems a mere responding sentence and nothing wrong with that. However, at the end of the sentence, she added *“jangan bawa intel”* or warning to the boy not to come with an *intel* (intelligent agent). It is a manifest of political satire that tries to poke the tragedies that occurred in the New Order era about the existence of “secret forces”. In the New Order era, there was a term *“penembakan misterius”* or mysterious gun shootage, abbreviated as *Petrus*. It was a secret operation of the Soeharto’s regime in the 1980s to deal with the high crime rate. In general, this operation was an arrest and murder operation against people who are considered to disturb the security and peace of society, especially in Jakarta and Central Java. The culprit was unclear and had never been caught so that it was called as *“petrus/penembak misterius”*



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(mysterious shooter). The victims of Petrus commonly found in the condition of hand and neck tied. Most victims were put in sacks left by the roadside, in front of the homes, thrown into the rivers, the sea, forests and gardens. The patterns of taking the victims were mostly kidnapped by strangers and picked up by security forces (Galih, 2018). In relation with the sentence that was written by that girl about “*jangan bawa intel*” is not a kind of warning but can be a preventive action if the boy who invited her to date is a real “*antek orde baru*” or even a part of *petrus*.

6. “*Kawan, kalau kalian sungguh-sungguh revolusioner, tunjukkan muka kalian kalau berani. Jangan cuma teriak-teriak di belakang, bikin rusuh. Dasar PKI!* (p. 26)

The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) is a political party in Indonesia that has ended up. The PKI was the largest non-ruling communist party in the world after the Soviet Union and China before the PKI was finally ended in 1965 and declared as a forbidden party the following year. This persona tries to insinuate the people who express their aspirations on the toilet wall. He wants to say that pouring out the aspirations of the toilet wall was not the gentle action. Besides, it would not be read and responded to by the authorities because it is just a parrot activity. He challenged them that if they are real revolutionaries, then they would have to show themselves, not like PKI who had secretly rebelled against the country because it is not manly action. However, this sentence can also be interpreted that this boy probably was also a supporter of the New Order regime and then accused the person who echoed the revolution as part of the PKI which was a forbidden party in Indonesia.

7. “*Ini dia reaksioner brengsek, yang ngebom tanpa dibanjur! Jangan-jangan tak pernah cebok pula. Hey, kawan, aku memang PKI: Penggemar Komik Indonesia. Kau mau apa, heh?*” (p. 27)

This character responds to sentences written by the previous character with anger because it is marked with swear words in the sentence “*ini dia reaksioner brengsek, yang ngebom tanpa dibanjur!*” It can be considered as a vulgar and dirty sentence - *ngebom tanpa dibanjur* has a conotative meaning of “using toilet without flushing it after”, however, he seems willing to convey that many significant cases occurred during the New Order era but were never completed, and there was no news about the continuation and end of those cases. One of the most significant cases



occurred in Indonesia about President Soeharto is that what placed him as the most corrupt President in the world based on the findings of Transparency International 2004 with a total estimated corruption is about US\$ 15-25 billion. Based on the decision of Supreme Court no.2896 K/Pdt/2009 dated on October 2010, the Supersemar Foundation owned by Soeharto, was punished for compensating state losses amounting to 315.002.183 US dollars and 139.229.178 rupiahs or about 3.07 trillion rupiahs. However, that case has not been executed until today (Galih, 2018).

Also, at the end of the sentence, he added "Indonesian comic fans" to stand for abbreviation of "PKI" and not "Indonesian Communist Party" as he meant. This political satire tends to have a sense of humor. He wants to convey his assumption that the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) in recent Indonesia is merely just a joke, a drama script whose screenplay has been written epically. However, this satire can be interpreted that there are some consequences if someone says that he is a part of Indonesian Communist Party (in New Order era).

8. *"Kawan-kawan, tolong jangan corat-coret di dinding toilet. Jagalah kebersihan, toilet bukan tempat menampung unek-unek. Salurkan saja aspirasi anda ke bapak-bapak anggota dewan"* (p. 29)

In this political satire, the boy does not want to convey about keep cleaning the toilet. However, he wants to convey that the society has representatives in the government that are officially called the House of Representatives. They are the authorities to convey people's aspirations, not the wall of the toilet.

9. *"Aku tak percaya bapak-bapak anggota dewan, aku lebih percaya kepada dinding toilet"* (p. 29)

This sentence is the last political satire in the short story *Corat-coret di Toilet* that responds the previous sentence about a suggestion to convey the aspirations to the House of Representatives. This sentence expresses a crisis of trust to the members of council, especially House of Representative (DPR). They sit as a representative of the society but do not accommodate society's aspirations; the representative of the society but do not have a sense of cares to the needs of the society and busy in enriching themselves. This is marked by the rise of scandals



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involving members of the House of Representative, which include corruption and other moral scandals.

CONCLUSION

There are nine sentences of satire that refer to political satire in the short story *Corat-corek di Toilet*. The nine sentences pitched in political satire were a various reaction that was written by some students on the wall of a toilet on their campus against the situation of the government in the year of 1990s where the freedom of conveying aspirations is something expensive and prestige. Political satire in this short story builds critical thinking on the readers. It also stimulates them intensely to be able to interpret and understand what is meant by the political satire, the relation of those political satires with the political and social condition in Indonesia, specifically in the end of New Order and the beginning of reform era. The political satire written by Eka Kurniawan in *Corat-corek di Toilet* reflects legal and social injustice in Indonesia. It attracts the readers with a sense of humor, sadness, anger and the truth of the Indonesian situation, to understand and care more about social and government phenomena in their own country.

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