

“JANGAN BERPIDATO” AND GUS MUS’S SOCIAL CRITICISMS

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Abstract

In this paper, I present a stylistic study of “*Jangan Berpidato*” (Don’t Speechify), a poem by Mustofa Bisri or Gus Mus, a Muslim cleric from Rembang, Indonesia. The study is aimed at revealing Gus Mus’s messages and criticisms to the government and people of Indonesia and was conducted by examining the graphology and metaphorical utterances of the poem and relating them to the socio-cultural context of the poem. The graphology or typography of the poem displays a *joglo* house because it was a critique of Soeharto’s Javanese style of leadership that was fond of “status display and arrogance” (Mulder, 1996), while the metaphors are expressions of such emotions as distrust, discontent, contempt and resentment. The poem, meant to be a critique of Soeharto’s government, remains relevant and valuable to the present, as it reminds us that hypocrisy and tyranny are not the norms of good and strong governments. Therefore, if the people of Indonesia want to have a strong and firm government, as well as a strong and firm country, they should choose honest and considerate people as their leaders.

Keywords: stylistics, Indonesia, Gus Mus, poem, and social criticism

Introduction

Seventeen years after the fall of Soeharto’s governance, which marked the beginning of the reformation period, Indonesia remains mismanaged and underdeveloped in many sectors and is continuously struggling to become a prosperous and civilized country. In economic sector, for example, Indonesia’s currency Rupiah has only recently reached its lowest rate against US Dollar. In social sector, conflicts, be they among civilians, among different religious believers, among people of different religious denominations, or between *rakyat* (lay people) and the government officials, are mushrooming. Reformation, celebrated to be the starting point of a new era, is unable to guarantee welfare and prosperity for all the people of

Indonesia, since a large number of Indonesians are continuously striving for justice, equality and welfare.

What happened and what has happened in Indonesia are frequently captured by Mustofa Bisri (or Gus Mus) in his poems. For instance, in his poem "*Jangan Berpidato*" (Don't Speechify), Gus Mus (1993a) portrays Indonesia as a house or a building ready to tumble down at any moment because of its untrustworthy, corrupt, hypocritical and tyrannical government. Gus Mus wrote and published "*Jangan Berpidato*" in 1993, and the messages he expressed in the poem came true in 1998. Soeharto resigned after thirty-two years of reigning. Indonesia plunged into severe economic crisis, eventually leading to horrifying chaos and dreadful humanitarian conflicts. Thirty-two years ruling Indonesia, Soeharto failed to create a just and prosperous country. Indonesia, one of the largest countries in South-East Asia, was among those countries that suffered from the worst impacts of the 1998 economic crisis.

Now, twenty-two years after its publication, the poem "*Jangan Berpidato*" continues to communicate valuable messages for the government and people of Indonesia, i.e. hypocrisy ruins a nation, and tyranny is the norm of a weak government. This is the reason I want to present the analysis of the poem in this paper. I want to discuss Gus Mus's insightful messages and criticisms expressed in the poem using stylistics as the theoretical framework. Thus, in the next section I deal with the stylistic study of "*Jangan Berpidato*", and in the last I present the summary.

I. "*Jangan Berpidato*" and Gus Mus's Social Criticisms

JANGAN BERPIDATO

Jangan berpidato!
kata-katamu yang paling bijak
hanyalah bedak murah yang tak sanggup lagi
menutupi koreng-borok-kurap-kudis-panu-mu
Peradaban koreng!
Hak asasi borok!
Perdamaian kurap!
Demokrasi kudis!
Humanisasi panu!
Berlagaklah adi siapa peduli
Bangunanmu tinggal cantik di luar
Tinggal menunggu saat-saat ambyar

1413

(Bisri, 1993, p.8)

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the languages of literary and non-literary texts (Malmkjaer, 1991; Mills, 1995; Simpson, 2004). Language is at the heart of stylistic analyses because “the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text,” and “the text functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation” (Simpson, 2004, p. 2). Language elements, such as sounds, words, sentences and utterances, together with the non-linguistic context of the text, provide bases for its plausible interpretations:

While linguistic features do not of themselves constitute a text's meaning, an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible (Simpson, 2004, p. 2).

Stylistic analysis, as Simpson argues, is to be carried out at all linguistic levels. It does not matter, however, from which language level we shall begin the analysis; most importantly, we present to our readers reasonable and valid interpretations of a text by carefully examining the linguistic elements of the text and thoroughly reading the entire text so as to understand it. The interplay between the study of a text's linguistic elements and a comprehensive understanding of the text is what matters in the interpretative process:

Stylistic analysis involves examining carefully the linguistic structure of a text and showing the role that linguistic structure plays in helping a reader to arrive at an interpretation of that text. Students often ask me whether they should start by analyzing the text linguistically or by reading the text thoroughly in order to understand it. My answer is that it does not matter, as long as both things are done thoroughly. What is most important is that there is a clear and strong relationship between the interpretation proposed and an accurate account of the language of the text (Short, 1993, pp. 8-9).

As a stylistic analysis has no rigid formula as to where we shall start our study, for “*Jangan Berpidato*,” I would begin the analysis by examining its graphology, i.e. the form or typography of the poem. The typography is eye-catching; it is the first, obvious thing we will

notice when looking at the poem for the first time. The poem was composed in such a way that it looks like a “*joglo*”, a term originally referring to the shape of the roof of traditional Javanese houses. However, people normally use the term “*joglo*” to include those houses or buildings that have traditional style of *joglo* roofs. *Joglo*, because of its complex structure and expensive material, was and is commonly owned by Javanese aristocrats or by the rich.

Java, the atmosphere of Java, or the state of being Javanese is projected in the graphology of the poem because it is directed to and is a critique of the ruling government of Indonesia at the moment of its production. The poem, as we shall readily see, was written in 1413 (of Islamic lunar calendar) or in 1993, meaning that it was written during the governance of President Soeharto, who ruled Indonesia from 1965/1966 to 1998. Soeharto is a Javanese and is largely criticized for having practiced a Javanese style of leadership (Basuki, 2006; Mulder, 1996; Rachman, 1993; Robertson-Snape, 1999). Anderson (in Robertson-Snape, 1999, p. 597) wrote that Soeharto practiced “a particular form of personal rule that can be seen as part of the tradition of the Javanese kings”. Unfortunately, as Mulder (1996, p. 50) puts it, they were the negative elements of Javanese tradition that he practiced:

..., it is the worst element of the Javanese heritage that has been promoted, such as hierarchical rigidity, authoritarianism and arbitrariness, a development which they call ‘Mataramization’ and ‘feudalization’, which are accompanied by a fondness for status display and arrogance, for which the word *priyayiisme* is used: behaving like a member of the Javanese upper class.

That the typography of the poem reveals Gus Mus’s criticisms of Soeharto’s governance is supported by the rest of the poem. In terms of speech act, the title of the poem, as well as the first line of the poem, is a directive utterance, which aims to get someone to do something. *Jangan berpidato* is a negative form of order or command; in this case, the speaker of the poem ordered or commanded the person he was talking to either to stop lecturing or not to speechify. In the first line of the poem, though, the directive is intensified by the use of an exclamation point. Exclamation points, in written communication, are generally used to indicate rising intonation, which can also mean expressions of such negative emotions as dissatisfaction, discontent, distrust, impatience, objection and resentment. Here, the speaker of

the poem did not only reject this interlocutor's desire to speechify or to continue his talk but also poured all his negative feelings towards him. In other words, he insisted that his interlocutor was to be quiet.

The reason of the speaker's resentment is supplied in the second to the fourth lines of the poem, i.e. *kata-katamu yang paling bijak/ hanyalah bedak murah yang tak sanggup lagi menutupi koreng-borok-kurap-kudis-panu-mu*. These lines comprise an explicit metaphor, where the topic *kata-katamu yang paling bijak* (the wisest words of yours) is explicitly compared to the analogue *bedak murah* (cheap powder) that can no longer hide your acute dermal diseases (*koreng-borok-kurap-kudis-panu*). This metaphor can only be understood by evoking the past, i.e. the time when the poem was produced, and Soeharto was the president of Indonesia. Soeharto was fond of talking and lecturing, and, in any occasion, when he was to talk, he would boast about the achievement Indonesia reached under his governance. For example, Soeharto was fond of preaching about *peradaban*, *hak asasi*, *perdamaian*, *demokrasi* and *humanisasi*, but in reality, all his words were rhetoric or lip services.

Thus, in the fifth to the ninth lines of the poem the speaker produces expressives, which are speech acts used to express the speaker's feelings (Yule, 1996). Expressive utterances, according to Yule (1996, p. 53), "express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow". The expressive utterances of the poem are parallel in structure, namely they are all nominal sentences consisting of subjects and complements, and, also, they are all explicit metaphors:

	Subject (nouns)	Complement (nouns)
5	Peradaban	koreng!
6	Hak asasi	borok!
7	Perdamaian	kurap!
8	Demokrasi	kudis!
9	Humanisasi	panu!

The subjects, which typographically become the left pillar of the *joglo*, are requirements for or characteristics of civil society, while the complements, the right pillar, are dermal diseases. The subjects of the sentences are also the topic or tenor of the metaphorical utterances, whereas the complements are the analogue or vehicle. The features of civil society are explicitly compared to skin diseases, and the comparisons are ended with exclamation points. Also, there are spaces or gaps between the subjects and complements of the metaphors. The spaces may function nothing but to separate the subjects and complements, so that they will altogether form the columns of the *joglo*. Alternatively, the spaces indicate pauses, like those in spoken exchanges. Hence, there are moments of silence (gaps) between the speaker's saying the subjects and his uttering the complements.

The fifth to the ninth lines of the poem construct too repetitive and obvious parallelism; they are, therefore, a means of projecting or highlighting the speaker's certain intentions. What his intentions are can only be discovered by deciphering the metaphors. The subjects of the parallel structures, as we have discussed earlier, are features of civil society or prosperous country, and these were also issues Soeharto (and his associates) frequently addressed in their speeches. Consider the following extract of Soeharto's talk as an example:

Another aspect of the Miniature Indonesia project, if it can be implemented, is its by-product of providing employment, not only within the project itself, but also in other fields, like service to visitors and the selling of ice cream, peanuts, cigarettes and so on. All these secondary activities will be opened up for the people, hence **the project will contribute to employment**. So, seen from the point of view of objectives and ideals, it **does not run counter to the strategy of the nation's struggle to achieve a just and prosperous society** based on the Pancasila. Nor does it run counter to development strategy as an effort to give body to our independence and achieve a just and prosperous society. And it will certainly not affect government finances, as it will not be financed from the government budget (in Bouchier & Hadiz, 2003, p. 51).

The excerpt is part of Soeharto's speech at the opening of *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* or TMII (Miniature Indonesia Project). TMII project mostly benefited his family and loyal supporters (Bourchier & Hadiz, 2003), but at its inauguration he preached about the contribution TMII would give to the people of Indonesia.

The hypocrisy and arrogance that Soeharto, as well as his cronies, displayed made the speaker of the poem sick and tired. The metaphors are expressions of his distrust, anger, cynicism or sarcasm; he refused to believe and listen whatever Soeharto said since all was but lip services. The problems Indonesia faced under Soeharto's presidency, such as human rights abuse, injustice, poverty, manipulation, corruption, collusion and nepotism, were too obvious to cover; they were like skin diseases that everyone would easily spot.

In summary, the metaphor *kata-katamu yang paling bijak hanyalah bedak murah* (lines 2-4) and the metaphors that form the pillars of the poem (lines 5 to 9) are expressions of the speaker's distrust, discontent, displeasure, despair, protest and anger to Soeharto (and his associates). The metaphors are protests and expressions of contempt to hypocritical leaders. Further, the speaker of the poem reminds repressive and hypocritical leaders that repression and hypocrisy will not last. Tyrannical and hypocritical leaders will just create a weak government, like an empty shell that gives an impression of strength, power or glory but is actually very fragile. This is what Franz Magnis-Suseno's states about the government of Soeharto, which he considers to be "only a shell, like the outside of a house eaten up by termites, so that three months of student protests sufficed to bring it down" (1999, p. 215). Hence, in the very last lines of the poem the speaker says:

<i>Berlagaklah adi siapa peduli</i>	Boast airs of glories, no-one cares
<i>Bangunanmu tinggal cantik di luar</i>	Your building seems adorable
<i>Tinggal menunggu saat-saat ambyar</i>	but is ready to tumble

Conclusion

I have thus far presented a stylistic study of Gus Mus's poem "*Jangan Berpidato*" (Don't Speechify) (1993). Stylistics is the study of the languages of literary and non-literary texts, but in this paper stylistics is used as a tool to analyze the language of poetry. A stylistic analysis of a poem covers all the language levels of the poem, but, within the scope of this

paper, the stylistic analysis of "*Jangan Berpidato*" is centered upon its graphology and its metaphors. Graphology relates to the typography or the form of the poem, which Gus Mus created in such a way so as to visualize a *joglo* house. The *joglo* is portrayed as a building which seems firm and splendid but is actually empty and fragile. This portrayal depicts the government of Soeharto, who ruled Indonesia oppressively in 1965/66-1998. His government might have seemed strong, solid and impressive from outside, but, from within, it was weak and incompetent. Therefore, he was eventually forced to resign from his presidency in 1998.

The graphology of the poem strongly relates to other linguistic features of the poem, such as the metaphorical utterances of the poem. The metaphors of the poem can be classified into directive and expressive utterances. The directives are to be found in the title and in the first line, while the expressive utterances are in the fifth to the ninth lines of the poem. The directives aim to get someone to do something, meaning that they were to stop Soeharto from his speech or to get him not to speechify. The expressive metaphors function as a means to communicate the speaker of the poem's (or the poet's) feelings, such as anger, displeasure, distrust or discontent, towards Soeharto and his cronies.

"*Jangan Berpidato*", as we shall readily see, is originally directed to the late President Soeharto and his associates. Gus Mus, through the poem, wanted to criticize their hypocritical attitudes. However, his messages and criticisms are relevant to the present.

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Biodata:

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