

DYSTOPIA IN PUTU WIJAYA'S SHORT STORY *PROTES*

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Abstract

Dystopia paints a grim portrayal of the future, spotlighting threats to individual freedom, human rights, and core human values. Putu Wijaya's short story *Protes* employs the dystopian concept to provoke critical examination of society's trajectory and to caution against the potential adverse outcomes of unsustainable policies or behaviors. This study adopts a literary sociology approach, an interdisciplinary method blending sociological principles with literary analysis to unravel the social significance embedded within the text. Supported by pertinent concepts and theories, the research employs qualitative methods, generating descriptive data from the written words of the short story *Protes*, which serve as the primary data source. The researchers themselves serve as the research instruments. Data collection employs a tabulation system structured around discussion points pertaining to dystopian aspects. Analysis involves thorough reading and comprehension of the text, selection and categorization of relevant data, identification of key problem areas, description of observations based on the data, compilation of a research report, and ultimately, drawing conclusions. The findings reveal that *Protes* encompasses dystopian elements manifested in the forms of poverty, social conflict, and environmental degradation.

Keywords: dystopia; environmental damage; poverty, social conflict

1. Introduction

Everyone certainly hopes for a life with a comfortable and calm environment; but in reality hopes do not always come true because life does not always go well. Definitely obstacles must be faced. Human life will never be free from problems and trials and from any form of adversity, the quality of a human being can be verified. The point is whether a person is able to overcome a problem well or whether the person concerned then is increasingly drowned in the problem. The complex level is closely related to the state of mind and also the perspective and cognitive abilities of each person. A small matter can become complicated because the mind conditions it that way. For this reason, when a problem approaches, one should ensure one's mind not to be carried away by the current. Another thing that is no less important to remember is that there is no problem without a solution. A person must be able to face various

problems by means of clear and wise insight (Seeger, & Davison-Vecchione, 2019; Campbell, 2019; Gonnermann, 2019).

The research is related to social environmental problems termed dystopia originating from the short story *Protes* by Putu Wijaya and is expected to provide input to readers to learn more about a social environment that is completely uncertain or more precisely irregular so that it can be used as anticipation learning medium. Putu Wijaya, whose full name is I Gusti Ngurah Putu Wijaya, is an Indonesian literary artist from Bali; he has produced approximately 30 novels, 40 drama scripts, around a thousand short stories, hundreds of essays, freelance articles and drama criticism. Putu Wijaya also writes film and soap opera screenplays (Afria and Warni and Wardhani, 2021).

Putu Wijaya is known as one of the contemporary literary figures, influential in the development of modern Indonesian literature. Putu Wijaya's works cover various genres, drama, short stories, novels and essays. Since the beginning of his career, he has shown courage and creativity in exploring a variety of contemporary themes, often with a satirical and critical touch on social and political realities. Putu Wijaya's writing style is characterized as unique, provocative, and full of creative expression. He often combines elements of satire, absurdity, and philosophy in his work, creating complex and profound narratives. The language style is strong with sharp dialogue, often using distinctive language and incorporating theatrical elements into the prose. His main strength lies in his ability to convey philosophical messages and social criticism through rich imagination and innovative use of language. Putu Wijaya succeeds in creating a literary legacy that reflects the diversity and complexity of modern Indonesian society. As a writer and thinker, he has made a major contribution to the diversity of Indonesian and world literature as well as understanding the complexity of modern life.

Protes is one of the many short stories Wijaya (1994) has written containing social criticism of dystopian conditions. The story goes around the major characters making the path of protest as a form of expression of dissatisfaction with a certain system or situation. The internal and external conflicts arise as a result of firmness against injustice or inequality. The storyline highlights the struggle in pursuing the truth, inserted with obstacles and pressure from various parties. Through a strong narrative, the readers are invited to reflect on the importance of voicing objections and the possible consequences of criticism in creating change in a society shackled in a dystopian circle.

Dystopia is a picture of a present situation that will continue into a gloomy, dark and often frightening future. In a dystopian world, society is governed by an authoritarian government, miserable social norms, and often an imbalance of power that creates injustice. Individual freedoms are often suppressed, and technology can be used as a means of control by governments or certain powers. The physical and social environment tends to deteriorate, creating an atmosphere of hopelessness and anxiety. The dystopian theme often appears as a reflection or criticism of current social and political conditions, inviting readers or viewers to reflect on the potential risks and dangers that may arise if certain trends are not overcome. Dystopia has become a popular genre in literature and media, providing space for the exploration of philosophical ideas and warning against the potential for a bleak future if action is not taken for positive change (Claeys, 2022).

Through a literary sociology approach, the picture of the dystopian world can be clearer in this research because the essence of literary sociology is to reveal phenomena that exist in a society through literary works. There are three points of discussion in the

research: social conflict, poverty and environmental damage. These three discussion points are a reflection of the dystopian world and are revealed through the words of the characters in the short story and also from the existing texts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociology of Literature

Literary sociology is a branch of social science that studies the relationship between literature and society. The main focus is on analyzing the dynamic interaction between literary works and their social context. This approach considers literary works as reflections or even constructors of social reality, seeking an understanding of how literature influences and is influenced by social structures, values, norms, and dynamics of society. Literary sociology involves the study of the relationship between narrative, characters, themes and literary styles and social phenomena that exist in society. By analyzing literature from a sociological perspective, researchers can gain deeper insight into how literature plays a role in shaping and reflecting the complexity of social life (Vana, 2020).

In the study of the sociology of literature, a researcher seeks to identify and analyze the social implications of literary works, including how literature can reflect class structures, gender differences, social conflict, and cultural changes in a society. This approach also involves understanding how literature contributes to the formation of individual and collective identities, as well as how literary narratives can influence people's perceptions and attitudes towards certain issues. Literary sociology recognizes that literary works are not only works of art, but also social phenomena that play an important role in understanding the dynamics of human life. By combining literary elements with sociological theories, this approach presents an in-depth analytical framework for uncovering the complex relationship between literature and society and broadens the scope of understanding of the mutual influence between the two (Leiwakabessy & Ermansyah, 2020).

The sociological approach to literature is an analytical method that examines literary works as a reflection of social reality. The main focus of this approach is on the relationship between literature and society, paying attention to how literary works reflect, mirror, or create social dynamics. This approach opens up opportunities to understand how literature not only reflects social reality, but also has the potential to shape people's perceptions of themselves and the world around them. The sociological approach used in this research brings a deeper understanding of the dynamic interaction between literature and society, in this case the interaction between society and dystopia and both of course mutually shape and influence each other (Emre, 2019).

2.2 Dystopia

Dystopia is a literary genre or depiction of the future characterized by a state of society constrained by an imbalance of power, authoritarian government control, and often by moral and physical decline. In a dystopian world, social norms can be transformed into miserable rules, individual freedom is risked for the sake of false stability, and chaos reigns. Dystopia often reflects concern and criticism of the direction of development of society and technology, inviting us to reflect on the possible consequences if we are not careful in managing these changes. By exploring extreme social and political conditions, the dystopian genre offers deep reflections on the nature

of humans and their role in shaping the world around them (Viera, 2021; Hollywood, 2019; Cavalcanti, 2022; Norledge, 2022).

As it is related to political, social and economic issues, the time setting in a dystopian situation is usually not much different from the current world situation. This is also what makes some people think that dystopia is closer to realistic fiction than science fiction or even fantasy. Through dystopia, writers can express their concerns about humanitarian issues and the prevailing socio-economic system. The author uses dystopia as a way to discuss current conditions and reveal various forms of problems that may occur in the future. Through dystopian works, writers can also show various mistakes that often occur in society. For this reason, dystopia is often seen as a form of implicit criticism and warning for the government in power and the prevailing system (Rosenfield, 2020; Bradshaw & Fitchett & Hietanen, 2020; Moylan, 2020).

The significant picture of dystopia reflected in the short story *Protes* by Putu Wijaya is related to social conflict, poverty and environmental damage.

2.2.1 Social Conflict

Interactions carried out by individuals or groups in a community or society which are followed by mutual threats and violence against one another can be said to be social conflict. Social conflict can also be interpreted as a social process between two or more people who try to make the other party powerless. Social conflict can appear in various forms, including class, racial, religious, gender, or political conflict. Behind social conflict there are also inequality, injustice, or differences in power that create friction between these groups.

Social conflict is not only negative, because in some cases, it can be a driver of positive change and improvement in society. Social conflict analysis often involves understanding the root causes of conflict, power dynamics, and its potential impact on social structures. Awareness of social conflict plays an important role in the formation of social policies, peace efforts, and the search for just and sustainable solutions in overcoming inequality and injustice in society (Rosenfeld & Thomas & Ernesto, 2021; Stokes, 2023; van Zomeren & d'Amore & Pauls & Shuman & Leal, 2023).

2.2.2 Poverty

The inability to fulfill basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education and health is a picture of poverty and poverty as a social problem is part of a dystopian situation. Poverty is not only related to financial deprivation, but also includes the inability to gain equal access to the opportunities and resources necessary to live a decent life. Factors that can cause poverty involve uneven economic structures, inequality in the distribution of wealth, lack of access to education and employment, and difficult social environmental conditions. Poverty can be temporary or chronic, and can affect individuals, families, or entire communities. Poverty reduction involves efforts to increase access to education, employment, health services, and economic infrastructure, as well as improving social and economic structures to make them more inclusive and equitable (Brady, 2019; Spicker, 2020).

In a dystopian world, economic inequality often expands into a system that inhibits access to vital resources for large segments of society, creating a gap between those who have and those who do not. Deteriorating social and economic conditions, linked to deep inequalities, can create an atmosphere similar to the experience of poverty in real societies. Poverty in a dystopian context is not only an individual or

group condition, but also creates the basis for widespread social conditions and influences the structure of society as a whole (Sanchez-Pages, 2021).

2.2.3 Environmental Damage

Damage to the natural environment cannot be separated from human behavior. It has been proven that the majority of disasters that occur are not due to natural factors alone, but human actions and behavior. Environmental damage refers to substantial changes or losses in ecosystems or the natural environment that can harm the sustainability of nature and human life. Environmental damage simply occurs owing to human activities, such as air and water pollution, deforestation, climate change, decline in biodiversity, and excessive use of natural resources.

Additionally, industrial accidents, toxic waste, and other human actions can also cause significant environmental damage. Environmental damage can also occur due to natural disasters, in which case humans have absolutely no role. The consequences of environmental damage involve loss of natural habitat, threatened ecosystem sustainability, and negative impacts on human health. Efforts to prevent and overcome environmental damage involve nature conservation policies, environmentally friendly practices, and public awareness of the importance of preserving ecosystems and the environment (Sumantri, 2019; Hsiang & Oliva, & Walker, 2019).

3. Research Method

The research is conducted using qualitative research by a literary sociology approach. The data collected after analysis are then described to get comprehensive paradigm. A qualitative approach is a research and understanding process based on a methodology investigating social phenomena and human problems. In this approach, the research emphasizes on the socially constructed nature of reality. There are two sources in this research, primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the short story *Protes* by Putu Wijaya; the secondary data source is the respective references.

The data collection techniques are also supported by library research, reviewing several books, scientific articles, or the results of the existing research reports. The technique that is also used in data collection is the look and note technique, a research technique covering reading the research object, then comprehending the data already obtained as material to be analyzed in the research. The data analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative, describing the picture of dystopia in the short story linked above (Miles, & Huberman, 2014).

4. Discussion

The short story *Protes* by Putu Wijaya reflects contemporary society filled with injustice, social conflict, poverty and environmental damage. An attitude of rejection or dissatisfaction with certain situations or systems emerges from society, whether related to government policies, inequality, or other social problems. In a social framework, the short story explores characters who try to fight or voice their disagreement with the injustice they experience or witness around them. A protest may be expressed through interpersonal conflict between characters or through interactions with systems that represent dissatisfaction and desires for change.

4.1 Poverty

*Masak sudah 69 tahun merdeka kita masih makan tempe terus! Lihat orang korea dong, tebar mata ke sekitar, simak pondok indah, Bumi serpong Damai, central park. Mana ada lagi rumah-rumah BTN yang sangat, sangat sederhana. Kandang tikus itu bukan hunian orang merdeka! Ah?! Semua sudah direnovasi habis jadi masa lalu yang haram kembali lagi.
(Wijaya, 1994: 181).*

The lines above are conveyed by a character named Mr. Baron who directly provides motivation and also criticism that his aim in building housing complete with the supporting facilities is to provide a social color that the people around him have to show that they are worthy of an established life. He also compares the surrounding community settlements with residential areas in Bumi Serpong Damai elite area. The people there still live in houses on credit, which according to him are no longer suitable for today's era, he even goes so far as to say that the residential areas there are almost the same as rat cages, meaning they are not housing for free people. The lines above also reflect a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction with the enduring poverty and lack of progress in society despite being 69 years after independence. The mention of still eating "tempe", a traditional Indonesian food often associated with modest living, suggests a continued struggle with poverty and lack of economic advancement. The comparison with South Korea, and the affluent areas like Pondok Indah, Bumi Serpong Damai, and Central Park, highlights the stark contrast between the prosperity enjoyed by some and the continued poverty experienced by others in Indonesia. The reference to BTN (National Housing Development Agency) houses, which are typically associated with low-income families, further underscores the persistence of poverty and inadequate living conditions for many despite the passage of time. The expression of frustration and disbelief at the lack of improvement, with even renovated houses becoming dilapidated again, highlights the cyclical nature of poverty and the challenges in breaking free from its grip. Overall, these lines depict a poignant portrayal of the ongoing struggles with poverty and the disparities in wealth and living standards in Indonesian society.

Settlements can be considered as a significant indicator to measure the level of poverty or stability of an area. Settlement characteristics, such as the level of access to basic facilities, quality of housing, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability, can provide a clear picture of the socio-economic conditions of the population. Marginalized settlements, with limited access to clean water, sanitation, and health services, often reflect high levels of poverty. On the other hand, settlements that are well organized, have adequate infrastructure, and provide equal access to education and employment, can be an indicator of community stability and prosperity. Therefore, a settlement is not only a physical place to live, but also reflects the social and economic structure of an area, which can be a strong marker for measuring the level of poverty or stability within it.

Semua orang wajib menyadari dirinya masih kere, di jambrut khatualiswa ini! Bangun, marah! Jangan marah sama saya, marahi nasib! Jangan takut pada perubahan. Takutilah takut! Ambil risiko! Perubahan itu berkah, cabut uban, berhenti cari kutu! Aahhh, capek saya menghadapi orang-orang kecil yang kampung!! Risih! (183).

Here again, a character named Mr. Baron says that all local residents must realize that they are still poor. Poor people are faced with serious challenges to get out of their downturn. Even though the situation is difficult, lifting one from poverty is not an impossible task. First of all, it is important to have a positive mental attitude and a strong determination to change. This involves a willingness to learn, adapt, and face challenges with tenacious determination.

In addition, education and skills are important keys to increasing opportunities to escape poverty. Increasing education levels and developing skills relevant to the job market can open the door to better jobs and more decent income. Vocational training and education programs can also help prepare poor individuals for more competitive jobs. Local economic empowerment can also play a big role. Support for small and medium-sized businesses, as well as access to capital and credit, can help poor individuals to start or expand their own businesses. Community initiatives and cooperation between poor individuals can also strengthen their economic empowerment.

Social protection and inclusive policies are necessary to provide a safety net to poor individuals. Social assistance programs, access to affordable health services, and poverty reduction policies can help ease economic burdens and improve prosperity. In order to get out of poverty, synergy is needed between individual efforts, community support and government policies. With this combination of strategies, poor people can build a stronger foundation to achieve better opportunities and escape the cycle of poverty.

4.2 Social Conflict

Baron itu kan buk orang bodoh. Katanya dia punya gelar doktor dari California, meskipun kabarnya itu beli. Tapi apa tanggapannya pada protes kita? Masak tidak tahu, kalau apartemen, kompleks pembelanjannya benar-benar berdiri, pasar tradisional kita akan mati. Ratusan orang akan kehilangan mata pencariannya (185)

The quotation comes from a dialogue between Mrs. Amat and Mr. Amat; Mr. Amat tells his wife that the Mr. Baron, a rich man, in their area is not a fool as they say, Mr. Baron holds a doctorate from the University of California. Mr. Baron wants to build a luxury shopping complex in his area and according to Mr. Amat, the development plan has certainly been carefully thought out; however behind that, Mr. Baron should think that modern shopping centers can kill people's traditional businesses. Modern shopping centers often have a significant impact on traditional businesses run by residents. This is especially true because modern shopping centers offer a variety of advantages and facilities that traditional businesses find difficult to keep up with. Several factors that can kill people's traditional businesses involve economic, social aspects and changes in consumer behavior patterns.

From an economic perspective, modern shopping centers tend to have greater appeal to consumers. Competitive prices, big discounts, and a wide choice of goods are often the reasons why consumers choose to shop at modern shopping centers compared to traditional stores. As a result, traditional businesses that are unable to compete in terms of price and product variety may experience a decline in turnover.

Social aspects also play a role in killing traditional businesses. Modern shopping centers are often places to socialize and spend free time. The presence of restaurants, cinemas and other entertainment areas within shopping centers makes them attractive

destinations for consumers, who in turn may ignore or reduce their visits to traditional businesses in their area.

Shopping malls, although often seen as symbols of economic progress and consumerism, can also trigger social conflict in some contexts. Several factors that contribute to potential social conflict involve economic aspects, inequality, and impacts on the environment and local communities. The economic impact of the presence of shopping centers can create economic inequality between levels of society. The development of modern shopping centers is often accompanied by growing inequality in income distribution. This can create a divide between those involved in the modern shopping industry and those who are not, fueling dissatisfaction and social tensions.

Masak hunian kita mau dijadikan hotel dan apartemen!" Betul!" mau dijadikan pusat perbelanjaan?" betul. Tapi dasar keberatan dan protes-protes kita yang lain-lain sudah kan?" kembali lagi apa dia cukup peka atau tidak." Salah.pak Baron itu peka masalahnya bagaimana Bapak menyampaikannya!" "Ya itu dia Bu Amat terkejut (186).

The quotation is a continuation of the dialogue between Mr. Amat and his wife. Mrs. Amat reminds her husband to convey the community's aspirations to Mr. Baron, aspirations which basically reject the plan to build a shopping center planned by Mr. Baron. The crucial thing here is that land owned by residents will be taken over, which of course can trigger social conflict.

Land developed for shopping centers often results in the displacement or eviction of local communities and small businesses; the people have already been there for a long time. This can lead to conflict between developers and local communities who feel marginalized or have lost their livelihoods. In addition, business competition between shop owners in shopping centers and small businesses in the surrounding area can trigger tensions. Traditional business owners often feel pressured by the attractiveness and scale of operation of shopping centers that can offer more competitive prices and a wider selection of products.

4.3 Environmental Damage

"Di hujian kita ini, rasanya makin lama sudah semakin sumpek. Akibatnya sawah, apalagi taman tergerus, tidak ada ruang bebas untuk bernafas lagi. Hari minggu, hari besar, hari raya, waktu kita duduk di rumah untuk beristirahat, rasanya sumpek. Dimana-mana gedung. Burung hidup dalam sangkar, kita dalam tembok! (181).

Mr. Amat goes on to say that their situation is much different; the difference lies in environmental issues. Initially they could feel the sustainability of the environment around them, but now their environment is worrying; there is no more space to enjoy the beauty of nature; almost all the rice fields have been replaced by modern buildings.

Uncontrolled and unsustainable construction of buildings has a serious impact on the environment. The development process often involves deforestation, resulting in loss of natural habitat and biodiversity. Additionally, the use of chemicals, construction waste, and changes in water flow patterns can cause soil and water pollution, harming human health and ecosystems. High energy consumption during building construction,

operation and maintenance contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Increased local temperatures or urban warming effects, caused by building materials absorbing heat, can create hotter and more uncomfortable urban environments. In addition, building construction can change the natural water system, causing flooding, soil erosion and changes in river patterns. To overcome these negative impacts, it is necessary to implement sustainable development planning, green technology and strict environmental policies, while increasing public awareness of the importance of environmentally friendly development. They currently live like caged birds, surrounded by building walls.

Tidak ada pemandangan, tempat pandangan kita lepas. Betul, tidak? Karena itu perlu ada paru-paru buatan supaya hidup kita berkualitas! Kan saya memelopori pendirian taman, alun-alun, sekolah, dan tempat rekreasi di lingkungan kita ini (181); di samping itu di komplek kita ini kan ada peninggalan sejarah, karena disinilah dulu para gerilyawan di masa revolusi bertahan ..” (187).

The text above is delivered by Mr. Baron when talking to Mr. Amat. Baron states that the environmental problems that residents are worried about could be resolved with plans to build parks, squares, schools and recreation areas. Apart from being used as a recreation area, parks can also be the lungs of the environment. Parks can act as an effort to prevent or prevent environmental damage. As a green element in an urban or rural environment, parks have several benefits that can help mitigate the negative impacts of development and human activities on nature. In addition, parks can act as green zones that reduce the effects of urban heating. Plants and vegetation in gardens help lower air temperatures and create cooler areas, beneficial for human health and reduces the need for artificial cooling.

Parks also play a role in solving water problems. Vegetation in gardens helps absorb rainwater, reduces the risk of flooding, and improves groundwater quality. Inclusive garden design can also include rainwater absorption systems and sustainable water management. Environmental damage is also related to historical heritage. Historical relics are priceless treasures and if they are evicted due to modern development, history can also be erased. In their place there is a museum about the struggle during the revolutionary era and if they are evicted then the next generation will forget the services of the fighters and appreciation for a struggle can fade.

5. Conclusion

The short story *Protes* by Putu Wijaya is basically a medium for providing social criticism to the community and also the government. Through this short story, Putu Wijaya succeeds in depicting aspects of dystopia through a straightforward writing style and appears as it is. Poverty, social conflict and environmental damage are aspects of dystopia that are reflected in the research results. In the storyline, an idea or plan to build a modern shopping center complete with facilities appears. This development plan is based on the positive consideration that it is time for local residents to enjoy the results of independence; they should no longer be in a state of poverty. This is acceptable in one sense; with a shopping center, the local environment can change completely and the nuances of poverty can be eliminated. However, there needs to be more in-depth consideration or study that the poverty of local residents will not immediately disappear because of the existence of this shopping center; on the contrary,

poverty is merely disguised as luxury, while in essence local residents remain poor. Local residents will not be able to compete with modern shopping centers.

Another impact that arises is the existence of prolonged social conflict in the form of social inequality. Not all local residents can follow these changes, so their environment will be inhabited by immigrants who are more established from an economic perspective and local residents will be automatically displaced. This is a distinctive feature of social conflict and if left unchecked it can trigger conflict on a larger scale. Environmental pollution or environmental damage is also part of dystopia. Green land, refreshing air and historic buildings will be replaced with modern buildings which generally do not support environmental conservation. Poverty, social conflict and environmental damage cannot be resolved easily and this becomes a dark shadow for the future of the next generation and this is the core image of dystopia.

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