

The Portrayal of the Student Movement's History in the Novel *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori: A New Historicism Study



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ABSTRACT: This study intends to describe the form and historical portrayal of the student movement during the reform era in *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori. This is an interpretive qualitative study employing the knife analysis of new historicism. The New Historicism approach is used to analyze Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* which integrates non-literary texts into the literary texts to be analyzed. The results of the study identified four student movements depicted in the novel *Laut Bercerita* during the reform era: (a) discussion of the "*margin kiri*" book, which was considered an attempt by students to overthrow the government, (b) rejection of the dual function of ABRI, (c) the Blangguan incident as an act of rebellion students to defend corn farmers whose land will be confiscated, and (d) the Kamisan Action, which was carried out by the families of those who had been coerced into disappearances while they were all dressed in black and gathered in front of the State Palace in an attempt to uncover the truth about human rights violations. These events are reflected in the story through the experiences of the characters. The novel contextualizes actual historical events. According to New Historicism, socio-political historical events are presented to call into doubt previously recorded historical truths. It is expected that the results of the New Historicism study on Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* will help individuals comprehend Indonesian history and allow them to learn from terrible historical occurrences so that they won't be repeated in the future.

KEYWORDS: Portrayal, the Student Movement, New Historicism

INTRODUCTION

A country can never be separated from its history. Similarly, the Indonesian country has both recorded and unrecorded history. Literature is an art form that uses language media through a process of in-depth reflection in order to be appreciated and understood by the public. In accordance with this, Istiqomah asserted that literary works are fundamentally the embodiment of life, the product of authors' observations of life around (Istiqomah & dan Sumartini, 2014). In addition, Ernawati et al. noted that a literary work is a collection of images of the author's ideas that are derived from actual life and processed through an intelligent and vivid imagination (Ernawati et al., 2017).

Literature is created from the reality of people's lives, which is then combined with the author's imagination to create works of aesthetic value. The creation of works of literature is inextricably linked to the socio-historical conditions of the society that gave birth to them. Literary works are created by authors who are part of society and are based on social reality (Wiyatmi, 2013). Literature is a technique through which humans express their existence and respond to the issues that arise in society (Septianingsih, 2019). The author uses language media to represent truth and fantasy in a literary work that describes the relationships between humans and God, humans and each other, and humans and themselves.

Literature and history are like two distinct sides of a coin that cannot be separated. Given that history can serve as a source for literature, and literature can serve as a source for history. Not all offered literary works are real, but they are logical and grounded in historical fact. In this unusual circumstance, literature and history have a very close relationship.

Despite their close connection, literature and history remain independent. History is still history, and literature is still literature. History is based on factuality, while literature is based on fiction. History is still history, and literature is still literature. Literature is based on fantasy, whereas history is based on fact. These two opposing factors create a very distant connection between literature and history. In reality, however, history and literature are not entirely separate and can complement one another. A lot of literary works are produced as a result of historical reconstruction or history.

A novel is one sort of work of literature. A novel is one type of fictional or fictitious literary work (imaginary). The Latin word for novel is *novellus*, which is later discovered to be *novis*, meaning 'new.' A novel in English is a *novelette*, while the

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Indonesian term novelette refers to "a piece of prose fiction that is neither too long nor too short." Novels and literary works provide a larger, full, more vivid, and more dynamic picture of reality that surpasses common comprehension (Ayuningtyas, 2019). It is claimed to be a novel because it was published later than other literary genres including poetry, drama, and other forms of literary works. As a literary work, the novel has its own distinctive qualities; more precisely, the novel's plot is highly intricate or complex. Novels provide not just pleasure and artistic value, but also historical background. The Buru Tetralogy by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the short story Clara by Seno Gumira Ajidarma, and the novel Kubah by Ahmad Tohari are known to have historical value. Through narratives that are dense with literary works, these works might jog our recollections of significant events from the past.

Laut Bercerita is a book written by the Indonesian author Leila Salikha Chudori. She is a journalist for the magazine Tempo. This novel, which was released in 2017, explores themes of friendship, romance, kinship, and loss. This novel, which is set in the 1990s and 2000s, is able to sedate its readers so they can reflect back on the events of the year in question without having to dig too deeply into the past. In this 394-page novel, the author reminds readers of the 1998 reformation era, which was terrible and cruel for people's defenders. In other words, the author combines the historical fact of the reform era with conflict, irony, symbolism, perspective, etc. Leila combines the lives of her characters into historical events with a smart mix of conflicts, using the points of view of the various characters she creates as if positioning them as sources and symbols conveyed by the characters to create romantic nuances, and there are many more things that are astonishing that history can be conveyed through history books or documentary films, but can also be conveyed through a series of words and the fabric of the plot in the novel.

Leila, as the author, highlighted that this novel is only historical fiction, however, she based her writing on actual historical events. Before writing this work, Leila conducted in-person interviews with survivors and relatives of the victims for research purposes. In addition, the author acknowledges that she needs to conduct a thorough examination of the current characters, locations, and past occurrences. Based on the factors that give the work a sense of life when it is read. The completion of this novel took roughly five years.

Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori was published for the first time in early October 2017. This novel's plot begins with the birth of the protagonist, Biru Laut Wibisono. This character grew to be a student who was particularly concerned about the inequality he experienced under the presidential administration at the time. Biru Laut is a student as well as an activist involved in advocating cases of human rights violations. As portrayed in the novel, there were numerous violations of human rights during the New Order's establishment, including the kidnapping of student activists. Biru Laut's movement flung him to the bottom of the sea, dismissing him as a subject and student. This tragedy was also accompanied by the reaction of the family's parents and fellow activists, who demanded answers about the disappearance of their missing child in front of the State Palace.

In the novel *Laut Bercerita*, students were among the most dangerous groups during the Soeharto regime. The government pays special attention to students who belong to the extremist or left group. Constant government surveillance and threats blight their life. Students participating in radical movements, such as reading leftist literature and criticizing government policies, will be kidnapped, tortured, and murdered. Students engaged in several protests against government policies, which resulted in their detention and torture. This student effort is considered to be a lawsuit against the quasi-undemocratic New Order administration because they took rapid action with the community. The Biru Laut characters were born into a harmonious family, with the father as a journalist and the mother having a food catering business, and the younger brother works as a doctor. They grow into figures who are physically and mentally healthy. Biru Laut's involvement in the effort to reform Indonesia is regarded as a form of business, but it is viewed as a radical move against the government.

This novel by Leila, *Laut Bercerita*, reflects the sociopolitical circumstances of students as the pre-reform student movement that desired economic and political stability in Indonesia. The novel *Laut Bercerita* describes the student movements in Yogyakarta, in particular. The term New historicism was introduced by Greenblatt in the early 1980s in his studies of cultural poetry. Greenblatt opposes the ahistorical trend of formalist textual studies in the new criticism tradition. In addition, Greenblatt considers literature to be an autonomous aesthetic realm distinct from features that are regarded outside the work (Ardhianti, 2016).

New historicism is not a theology; rather, it is an operational model or best practice. In simple terms, new historicism is a way of researching the past based on the placement of historical and non-historical documents (literature) and written and non-written sources (images, anecdotes) as equally significant sources. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the research, new historicism is more commonly associated with cultural studies or cultural studies. New historicism is a much diversified literary critique; thus, it cannot be defined in a standardized manner (Ardhianti, 2016). Nevertheless, according to Vesser, the new historicism includes five fundamental assumptions that connect its initiators and critics. Three of the five basic assumptions are

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as follows: (1) that every expressive action is closely related to a network of material cultural praxis; (2) that literary texts and non-literary texts circulate inseparably; and (3) that there is no discourse of any kind, whether fictional or factual, that gives access to absolute truth and cannot change or express human nature without another alternative.

The New Historicism Literary criticism is one of the criticisms and literary theories that believes that a literary work must be viewed as a product of its time, place, and environment, rather than as an isolated work of genius. Greenblatt highlighted in "The Touch of the Real" that the world described in the literature is not another universe, but rather a technique of amplifying the one world in which we live (Ardhianti, 2016). New historicism emphasizes the deological political dimension of cultural output while examining these networks.

Based on this background, this research focuses on the representation of the student movement in Leila S. Chudori's novel. A new historicism technique will be used to address this problem. This strategy was chosen due to the characteristics of Leila S. Chudori's novels, which have a tendency to reflect historical events in Indonesia.

METHOD

The representation of historical events in Leila S. Chudori's novel is explored through descriptive qualitative research with a new historicism approach. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and study occurrences, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals and groups of people (Muflihaini, 2017). The new historicism approach emphasizes the background of historical events in the creation of a literary work and then uses non-literary materials as a reference to relate historical events in literary works.

This method involves reading literary texts that portray historical events and historical documents that explain the same event in parallel. This method is utilized in this study to describe and interpret the portrayal of historical events of student movements in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita*.

The source of the data in this research is Leila S. Chudori's novel published in 2017 entitled *Laut Bercerita* and Indonesian history books that are described in the novel. The documentation method was employed to collect data in this study. In this study, the processes for data collection are as follows: (1) reading the novel *Laut Bercerita*, (2) recording data in the form of sentences or paragraphs that correspond to the study's objectives, and (3) data classification by collecting data on literary works based on the study's objectives.

Data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and plot units were extracted from the study novels and historical books that provided information relevant to the research subject. In addition, information about the representation of historical events in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* was collected.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori is based on the true event of activists kidnapped near the conclusion of the New Order period in 1998. Nine activists have been released, one activist has been found dead, and thirteen others have gone missing with no explanation till now. *Laut Bercerita* is a novel written by Indonesian author Leila Salikha Chudori. She also works as a journalist for Tempo magazine. This novel, released in 2017, explores themes of hardship, friendship, romance, kinship, and grief. This work, set in the 1990s and 2000s, can anesthetize its readers into breaking through the past and looking back at the events that transpired in the year in question.

The research results in the novel *Laut Bercerita* found four student movements in the reform era. The findings of the research are as follows.

a) Discussion of the book "Margin Kiri"

The novel *Laut Bercerita* is set in Indonesia during Suharto's reign. Its less-democratic power causes students to get fed up, so they carry out a movement. The initial action taken by students is to conduct discussions. Discussion with left margin books reading materials. Reading and discussing left-margin books during the Soeharto era was a criminal act because it threatened the stability of the government at that time (Agung & Wahyuni, 2020).

The incident of the arrest of activists for possessing a number of prohibited books including the work of Pramoedya Ananta Toer which occurred three years ago still haunts us, especially students who really like to read literature or leftist books (Chudori, 2017). *Because the events of the arrests of activists continue to loom over Yogyakarta, carrying photocopies of books by Pramoedya Ananta Toer is equal to carrying bombs: we will be regarded as dangerous and traitors to the nation* (Chudori, 2017).

Books by Ernesto Laclau, Ralph Miliba, Ben Anderson, Karl Marx's thought books, Tan Malaka's thought books, and even Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novels were mentioned as forbidden to read in the novel *Laut Bercerita*. Conducting discussion activities

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with the book's materials is regarded as dangerous and a traitor to the nation. According to the brilio.net website, 12 books are prohibited from being distributed to the general public. The Buru Tetralogy, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the book *Demokrasi Kita* by Mohammad Hatta, the book *Friends* by Agam Wispi published by Lekra in 1959, the White book *Student Struggle 1978* by the ITB Student Council, and others were confiscated and prevented from being published. These books were banned from circulation and investigated for a number of reasons, including criticism of the President's authoritarian policies, revealing several indicators of the Suharto government's failure, opening readers' eyes to events that occurred from the early days of independence to recent conditions in Indonesia, and giving the impression that provocation and violence in 1965 came from the Indonesian military (Yusuf, 2010).

Students might be labeled traitors simply for reading books to gain knowledge, whilst those who eliminate students are lauded as heroes. This infuriated the students because heroes and bandits were selected solely by the regime's power. As a radical subject to all of its programs, the Soeharto government, as the regime's ruler, has stated that students are traitors. *Ah... Sunu's hair is still short and neat. What year is it? My friends looked young, I was thrown into my student days when we were still looking for a place to discuss and spend the night in safety, away from the prying eyes of intelligence. The events of the arrest of three Yogyakarta activists three years earlier still feel hot and haunt us* (Chudori, 2017).

In the quote above, it is stated that Laut and his friends had a period when they had to look for a place to discuss and spend the night safely. The statement "all night at the same time" indicates that they had surely spent quite a long time discussing. They held long debates on important and serious matters, thus it took a lot of thought and time to reach an agreement and understanding on the topic of the discussion. The discussion was perilous at the time, especially when it came to the government and communist views that the administration believed could bring them down.

Discussion is perilous, thus it should take place away from authorities, such as in the middle of a forest or in an old building (Usman & Saguni, n.d.). The students had experienced the arrest of three Yogyakarta activists three years earlier (Kartikasari, 2014). Their voices were silenced so that only acceptance of government policies was expected by the rulers. Meanwhile, students must be cautious because some government policies are detrimental to the nation and state, particularly the regular people. One of the goals of the debate is to find solutions to problems that arise from studying left-hand books all at once before discussing them. Sitting together and risking their lives for the sake of debate has to have a good topic and foundation.

I followed Sunu, and it felt like we both knew straight away that we needed to turn the large room into a secretariat, where we would later carry out administrative tasks for discussions and movement plans. The Winatra student movement has been declared in various cities at the same time. If we only talk for a century without doing anything, our feet will itch (Chudori, 2017).

Laut and his friends held meetings and planned movement actions in a location known as the secretariat headquarters. They were chosen by the headquarters, activists, and students who were part of a single movement. "Winatra" is the name of their movement group. This group has declared its existence in numerous areas at the same time.

If we only talk for a century without doing anything, our feet will itch (Chudori, 2017).

According to the quotation above, this movement intends to take action in addition to discussing. With all of their action plans, the Winatra group looked mature and prepared. For them, discussions are merely for sitting and cannot help individuals with their problems. Of course, the government cannot hear their voices or their ideas, even through discussion. Time-consuming discussions will not change the fate of the Indonesian people, especially the lower middle class who were tortured and oppressed during the Suharto regime.

b) rejection of the dual function of ABRI

In 1998, the Indonesian nation witnessed a bloody event, with protests from all groups of society, including farmers, factory workers, and students. Their goal is to reestablish the long-lost democracy that the New Order regime has destroyed (Sjamsuddin, 1998). The events that once occurred had a huge impact on society such as the conquest of the authoritarian regime by Indonesian students in 1998. The conquering of the authoritarian regime was inspired by the authoritarian attitude of the New Order, which made the Indonesian people upset since the government hired ABRI to control the social system that existed in society using violence (Azwar & Suryana, 2021). The violence took the form of kidnappings and killings of persons who resisted the New Order regime's policies. Students organized protests to bring down the New Order regime. People were upset with the past regime in power because of a lack of jobs and the loss of justice for the Indonesian people in 1998. The impact of the monetary crisis was too hard for the Indonesian people, the price of basic necessities increased and added to the burden of living for the Indonesian people in 1998, as well as the President's attitude of preferring silent voices who try to criticize him (Hasudungan, 2021).

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Using the power of ABRI, the New Order government enforced its will on the Indonesian people through violence. This is consistent with Max Weber's viewpoint, namely that immense power is expansive towards the people with the goal of expanding political influence through violence or threats (Weber, 2009: 193).

Naratama's monologue is accurate, and we have often discussed it in Winatra management meetings. He was clearly not a member of the inner circle formed by Bram and Kinan. Tama may not have realized that we had already discussed the desire for the dual purpose of the Indonesian Armed Forces as well as five political laws that needed to be abolished. We just haven't launched this concept to campuses yet because we're now organizing for corporations to visit various campuses or perhaps Tama is protesting because he feels he is not welcomed (Chudori, 2017).

Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori is set during the events of the New Order regime's overthrow by students in order to re-establish democracy in Indonesia. Arbitrary regimes restrict students in every way, such as making anti-government comments, and reading and debating literature with leftist ideologies can deal with governmental apparatus. Limitations did not diminish the spirit of student resistance to overturn the state; instead, the campaign against New Order policies led to Biru Laut and his Winatra organization friends being kidnapped by military officers and drowned at the bottom of the sea (Chudori, 2017: 16 According to the description of the book's contents, *Laut Bercerita* shares a connection with historical occurrences in Indonesia, namely with those that led to Suharto's downfall as a result of his failure to run the country successfully under a corrupt system that inspired students to topple him through reform.

c) Students Action for Blangguan

Protests are the most anticipated and real form of opposition from activists and students. This action represented the voice of the community's representative group. Wirasena, Jakarta Winatra, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, and Taraka Yogya also sent delegations to join the Blangguan student movement. The corn planting action, begun by students and activists, proceeded well for a time, but the authorities were aware of it and were hunting for the mastermind behind it.

Blangguan Student Action. Bram, Kinan, Julius, Alex, and the East Java Winatra team have been studying and recording the disputes between farmers and military in this area for several years. The people of Blangguan Village were forcibly evicted from their agricultural land because their residential area and land will be used for joint military training using mortars and long rifles (Chudori, 2017).

The student action for Blangguan is based on facts gathered from the region's disputes between farmers and troops. Farmers are the ones who suffer as a result of land eviction. The people of Blangguan Village were forcibly evicted from their agricultural land because their residential area and land will be used for joint military training using mortars and long rifles. The usage of mortars and long rifles indicated whether or not the territory was taken violently. Bulldozers evicted their corn crops. Despite this, the farmers did not remain silent, and with the support of the students, they returned to growing corn on the field.

The student movement in Blangunan was inspired by "Sajak Seongkok Jagung" by Rendra. Laut took action against the army by planting corn because of its literature. The student movement in Blangunan did not have guns with bayonets like the troops or their muscles. Students also do not use state funds like politicians (Azida & Fitri, 2021). The students only had their passion, their own money, and donations from a few people who secretly believed they didn't fit the New Order government style. In reality, as described in Kompas "20 Years of the Trisakti Tragedy," students were arrested and shot not only by security agents stationed in front of demonstration participants but also by gunfire fired from the Grogol overpass and pedestrian bridges. The tragedy left four students dead in the shooting of demonstrators who were carrying out peaceful demonstrations, namely Elang Mulia Lesmana, Hafidin Royan, Heri Hartanto, and Hendriawan Sie. Meanwhile, Kontras' documentation writes that the injured victims reached 681 people from various universities in Indonesia.

I thought that the Blangguan tragedy would kill me as a student who believes in positive change; I believed that my first encounter with such terrible suffering would silence me and turn me into an apathetic person. But Kinan and Anjani are two women who restored my faith in the power of ideals; in humanity's ability to survive persecution, betrayal, and insults. In the dark, goodness is still sprouting and living." (Chudori, 2017).

The Blangguan tragedy turned Laut into a student figure who believes in positive change. Even the anguish he endured did not silence him or make him apathetic. Through the tragedies that happened at Blangunan, Laut witnessed sacrifice and struggle directly. Despite the fact that certain government officials regard Laut and his pals as traitors to the country and opponents. Laut and his friends who took action became heroes in the eyes of the public, at least in the eyes of the people of Blangunan. Acts of rejection or radical action are referred to as "acts of selflessness" since the self is a type of hegemonic and social-cultural constraint and construction. When the boundaries and structures are crossed, the subject truly occurs. Subjectivity is formed

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when conditions are emptied by murdering the 'self,' which is a symbolic interpellation. When humans can be separated from their bodies, then the subject has been freed from the symbolic form of the body

d) Kamisan Action

The premise of Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* is students fighting for justice for human rights violations that took place in it. As a result, resistance is necessary to fight for justice, as seen by the existence of organizations and regular kamisan acts. The embodiment of the Kamisan takes the form of a silent demonstration accompanied by a black umbrella containing demands for case resolution (Adiwilaga, 2018). The Kamisan Action began on January 18, 2007, and it is held every Thursday from 16.00 to 17.00 (Atmojo, 2021). The participants dressed fully in black, stood silently, and carried black umbrellas with numerous incidents of human rights violations printed on them. Participants from many cities attend the action, which generally takes place in front of the State Palace in Jakarta, because victims of human rights violations come from many regions, particularly on the island of Java. The Kamisan action embodied more collective resistance ideals than weekly routines, which merely served to strengthen solidarity among victims/families of victims of grave human rights crimes whose investigations (from a political standpoint) have yet to be finished. Furthermore, they urge a thorough investigation into cases of major human rights violations in the past, which is also a method to preserve the public's memory of the military apparatus's repressive attitude, which violated civil and political rights (Putra, 2016).

It's been quite a long time, every Thursday, parents, friends, relatives, sympathizers, and journalists have gathered in front of the State Palace, holding a black umbrella as a symbol and questioning where the missing activists are (Chudori, 2017).

For 32 years, the New Order was in power, giving rise to the main political characteristics of the time, such as the president's dominance, a political recruitment system that was not transparent, public policies that were not accountable, very low human rights implementation, and a judicial system that was not independent. This scenario gave rise to numerous interest groups as well as social movements aimed at obtaining citizens' rights (Irfani & Sunarso, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be inferred from the theoretically provided data above. To begin, the historical events portrayed in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* are as follows: (1) Discussion on the Book "Left Margin", (2) Rejection of the Dual Functions of ABRI, (3) Student Action for Blangguan, and (4) Kamisan Action.

Second, the occurrence is represented as an integral part of the events that the novel's characters go through. That is, historical events based on true occurrences are contextualized in the author's fiction. Third, from the perspective of new historicism, a lot of sociopolitical historical events in Ayu Utami's novels exist primarily to call into doubt previously recorded historical truths. The New Order regime was accused of engaging in extreme repression and violating human rights. The motions carried out by students in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* are not only negative kinds of action that have a detrimental impact on individuals or groups, but they are also acts that highlight self-rejection and awareness of other things. Students opposed the ABRI's dual function policy, the Five Political Laws, the banning of three media sources in Indonesia, the repeal of campus normalization, and the eviction of agricultural land by the locals of Blangguan Village. Furthermore, throughout the New Order era, the students prosecuted corruption cases, riots caused by political parties, legal monopolies, or an unstable economy that did not receive a resolution and firmness from the government. The students who were reading Marxist publications had no intention of promoting leftist ideas or forming ties with communist countries to overthrow the Suharto regime. Students continue to read literature that includes socialist beliefs, obscuring the reality of the consequences of their actions. This attitude of challenging historical truth is consistent with the new historicist notion that every feature of reality is included in texts and social structures defined by dominating "discursive practices," therefore the truth must be questioned again.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita* shows learning through the student movement's battle against oppression during the New Order era. Aside from that, the characters in this novel educate about solidarity, togetherness, compassion, and a sense of responsibility. *Laut Bercerita*, a novel by Leila S. Chudori, has various behavioral characteristics and an instinct felt or carried out by the main character while engaging in a social activity in his environment. Students as activists play an important part in the novel, such as supporting, loving, and defending one another.

- a. For other researchers, it is suggested to read further material that expands on the idea used in this work, notably new historicism. Furthermore, there are numerous historical studies that have the ability to generate new and more interesting concepts.

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- b. Literature connoisseurs are advised to study other works of literature in order to compare and demonstrate that there are movements made by students in various literature works and that these movements do not just have a negative impact.

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