

Violence and Abnormal Sexual Behavior in *Titisan Iblis* by Abdullah Harahap

Fitria Sis Nariswari

University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
fitriasism@gmail.com

M. Yoesoef

University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
yoesoef@yahoo.com

Abstract—This research examines *Titisan Iblis* (1989), a novel written by an Indonesian writer Abdullah Harahap, using Sigmund Freud's concept of *das Unheimliche* (the uncanny). This research aims to reveal how violence and abnormal sexual behaviors depicted in a literary work can be used as the manifestation of the chaos within the public order using the concept of *das Unheimliche*. Violence and abnormal sexual behaviors occur because of the absence of the authority's supervision. The violence conducted in the public is inevitably related to the violence happened within the private one. Additionally, a horror story can also show how it is used to confront anomaly, anxiety, and fear which is different compared to the everyday life. Fear and anxiety are impossible to be expressed in the real world, but they can be manifested through a literary work. In this context, the distrust towards the formal and informal authority is shown through the process of problem-solving in which does not involve any state apparatus as well as "orang pintar" (shaman).

Keywords: Abdullah Harahap, abnormal sexuality, *das Unheimliche*, *Titisan Iblis*, violence.

INTRODUCTION

The strongest emotion within human nature is fear, meanwhile, the strongest type of fear is the fear over the unknown. Something that is unknown or unpredictable can be considered as the source of a dreadful disaster (Lovecraft, 1993: 1). The terrifying things constructed in a literary work is then classified as one of the definitions of horror. Horror gains its popularity as a genre in literature. Horror is also identical with supernatural elements which are used as the medium in the method of storytelling. In addition to that, horror can also be said to be identical with violence since it can be used as an element to create terrors. Freud developed a concept called *das Unheimliche* that is related to stories which can trigger fear and terror. *Das Unheimliche* is translated to English as 'the uncanny', meanwhile, in Bahasa Indonesia it is translated as 'keanehan yang mencemaskan' (Milner, 1992: 170).

The uncanny is then shown in various medium, for instance literary works. The horror stories permeated in Indonesia during the period of 1970-1990s were considered as the third-rate literature, even though it had a considerable amount of readers who were fans of these stories. During the period, several horror writers were coming into the spotlight, such as Tara Zagita, Teguh S., Abdullah Harahap, or S.B. Chandra. Yet, only Abdullah Harahap who could set the record as the most productive horror writer compared to the others. During the span of two decades, he had written more than 110 literary works (80s horror novels and 30s romance novels), short story anthologies, and some film scripts. He wrote the most literary works compared to other horror writers during the same period.

However, Abdullah Harahap, who were prominent among readers during 1970-1990s, turns to be a less-known writer when it comes to academic research. There are only two research found, conducted by Chotimah (2014) and Darmawan (2015), which discussed his works within the horror genre studies in the academic field. In addition to the aforementioned research, the discussion on Abdullah Harahap can only be found in blog writings (Paramadhita, 2011) or a book's introduction (Kurniawan, 2010). However, his books are hard to find in bookstores but can be easily found in cigarette kiosks, preloved-book stalls, or train stations (Kurniawan, 2010).

The above elaboration can be considered as one of the reasons why Harahap's works are important among the historiography of Indonesian literature. Even though Salam (2002) stated that Harahap's works are less-important than the others since his works only considered as popular readings in the 1970s. He also mentioned that popular fiction is something that is less significant in its literariness and aesthetic aspect, therefore makes the works do not meet the standard to be examined academically. By putting Harahap in the said position, his works are not taken seriously by critics which resulted in the minimum amounts of research conducted on them.

Harahap's horror stories possess the similar themes in each of his novels. Besides highlighting supernatural elements, themes such as violence and abnormal sexual behaviors constantly appear in his writings, which can be considered as a pattern of

his works. Harahap's characteristic emerges through the consistency of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors theme. It can be concluded that the themes are densely featured on Harahap's craftsmanship, even though the themes of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors as well as the elements of supernatural also developed in each of the decade.

The elements of supernatural as well as the themes of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors were also changed throughout the decades. For instance, during the period of 1970s until mid 1980s, the elements of supernatural focused on *pesugihan* (an effort to get much wealth and money through a black magic) and *makhluk jadi-jadian* (mythical creatures) which demand *tumbal* (something to sacrifice in exchange for some goal) and lead to the murder of the person who worships a particular mythical creature. The abnormal sexual behavior was not described much during this period. The sexuality that existed only revolved around incestuous relation or necrophilia, but those were not the determinant of the plot.

Meanwhile, during the period of mid 1980s until the early 1990s, the theme of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors became a dominant feature in Harahap's stories. For example, domestic violence—particularly a murder conducted by the husband to his wife, state apparatus (village chief, police, *babinsa*—Bintara Pembina Desa, a non-commissioned officer with a supervisory role in their villages) who perpetrated violence against the locals, or a rape which resulted in the death of the victim. Those elements appeared in several of Harahap's stories during this period. In addition, the abnormal sexual behaviors were shown in more various ways, such as sadomasochism, homosexuality, bestiality, necrophilia, or sexual intercourse with ghostly spirits. During this period, incestuous relation or necrophilia were appeared in several stories. Meanwhile, the elements of supernatural—which often depicted in the works were evil spirits and mythical creatures—highlight the underlying causes between the abnormal sexual behaviors and the elements of supernatural emphasized within the period.

The elements of supernatural and the theme of violence and abnormal sexual behavior cannot be separated from a particular social, political, and cultural context, in the same manner with Harahap who wrote all of his works during the ever-changing situation of the Indonesian society. The violence and abnormal sexual behaviors can also be considered as a symbol to illustrate, for instance, the society that is far from the phrase of 'living in prosper', the absence of the authority which resulted in the society taking the law into their own hands, or the degradation of values within the society.

This research takes one of the novels written by Harahap as the source of the study, titled *Titisan Iblis* (1989). This novel is considered to represent the story in other novels, which also included the element of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors. The research is conducted by analyzing the plot of the novel in order to reveal its pattern. The analysis of plot and its characters will be used to examine how the violence and abnormal sexual behaviors are shown in *Titisan Iblis* (1989).

In that context, this research will focus on the aspect of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors depicted in Harahap's horror story. Another thing that should be underlined is the relation of horror story and Freud's concept of *das Unheimliche* or the uncanny. The source of anxiety comes from the scope of the most familiar environment, included one's home and its residents. Besides that, the violence and abnormal sexual behaviors can also be considered as one of the embodiments of anxiety, for instance, to confront against the social context during a particular time. Therefore, the objective of this research is to reveal how violence and abnormal sexual behavior can be interpreted as the manifestation of the chaos within the public order using the concept of *das Unheimlich* in *Titisan Iblis* (1989) written by Harahap.

Abdullah Harahap in Indonesian Literature

The dominant theme that was brought by horror writers in the same period with Harahap, for example, Tara Zagita, focused on the ghostly entities who disturbed the lives of urban residents in modern cities. Zagita also wrote the series of the Goddess of Snake Legend (*Legenda Dewi Ular*). On the other hand, S.B. Chandra was consistent with the sequel of "Tiger Man" (*Manusia Harimau*) legend with a dense Sumatra background as well as the contestation of values within the local cultures. During this period, other writers also emerged as the epigon of Harahap, such as Teguh S. And Taufan Halilintar. There are several ideas, plots, and titles which similar to the stories written by Harahap. For instance, Teguh S. wrote *Lukisan Berdarah* in 1991, which derived from its title is similar to Harahap's *Lukisan Berlumur Darah* written in the 1980s. Even though those two works are almost similar, which tell the story of a husband and wife who recently moved from a city to a countryside and live in a huge house with a bleeding painting of a woman attached on its wall. The story revolves around the murder mystery behind the painting.

It is inevitable that Harahap's story reminds us of the short story written by Edgar Allan Poe titled "*The Oval Portrait*" (1850). The short story tells about the character of "I" who is wounded severely and deliberately takes some time to rest in a castle full of paintings. "I" is enchanted by a particular painting which shows an extremely beautiful woman. The story behind the painting is about a wife's obedience towards her husband. The wife is willing to remain sitting for weeks so as her husband can paint her until she finally dies. The husband is obsessed with the idea to perpetuate the beauty of his wife, but he forgets to treat his wife as a human. The similar element which ties the two stories is a murder behind a painting.

The above elaboration can be considered as one of the reasons why Harahap's works are important among the historiography of Indonesian literature. Even though Salam (2002) stated that Harahap's works are less-important than the others since his works only considered as popular readings in the 1970s. He also mentioned that popular fiction is something that is less

significant in its literariness and aesthetic aspect, therefore makes the works do not meet the standard to be examined academically. By putting Harahap in the said position, his works are not taken seriously by critics which resulted in the minimum amounts of research conducted on them.

However, the assumption should be reviewed. The literary canon and popular literary works have their own differences in criteria, construction, convention, and the history of the period they emerged, in which make them cannot be simply put in a comparison to one another. Teew (1989) emphasized on a particular period in Indonesia during 1960-1969 when high quality novels were hard to find. Therefore, novels, such as Harahap's—which preceded with the emergence of Motinggo Boesje—became the only fiction available during that time. In the context of the present time, popular fiction can be used as a link which connects the void within the interrupted history of literature in the mid of crisis that was once hit Indonesia.

Harahap kept being productive as a writer in the early 1970s, but he shifted his writings from romance to horror stories. Violence—which included violence against women, violence from the state apparatus against the citizens, violence over weaklings, or domestic violence—abnormal sexual behaviors, rural-urban relation, social inequality, murder, female ghost, condemnation, revenge, affairs, and mythical creatures become the elements that often appeared simultaneously in one story that he wrote.

Violence and Abnormal Sexual Behavior in *Titisan Iblis*

Harahap's horror stories cannot be separated from the elements of violence and abnormal sexual behavior, including *Titisan Iblis*. Horror is identical with violence and sexuality because violence can be used as one of the elements to create the atrocious things possible as well as the uncanny. Based on the unit content elaborated above, it can be concluded that the plot of *Titisan Iblis* is formed by the elements of violence and abnormal sexual behaviors. The table presented below shows the form and type of violence depicted in the novel.

Table 1: The Manifestation of Violence

The Form of Violence	Description	Page
Rape	Pak Lurah tried to rape Lila	15
Ambush	Parman is ambushed by the locals because he wanted to take revenge on Pak Lurah	41—45
Rape	Young Parman was used as Pak Lurah and Bu Lasmi's sex slave	64—67
Terror	The ghost of Lila threatens to kill Pak Lurah if he do not confess any of his sins	222, 243
Murder	The ghost of Lila orders Parman to jump off of Pak Lurah's attic	244

From table 1 and the unit content mentioned above, the elements of violence in *Titisan Iblis* are rape, ambush, terror, and murder. The power relation between characters is obviously seen in its perpetrator-victim pattern. The perpetrators are those with authority in their hands, such as Parman positioned as Pak Lurah and Bu Lasmi's helper. He was raped by both of them without giving any revolts.

Meanwhile, the elements that formed this novel is not only limited to violence but also the abnormal sexual behaviors. Peterson (1984: 1) said that the definition of abnormality is vague since it will always be in the grey area. However, he mentioned that several elements included within the requirements of abnormality, which are misery, the inability to adapt, irrationality, lose control, the uncomfot feeling of the viewers, and moral violence of the ideal standards. The more those elements appeared, the clearer something can be called as an abnormality.

In this context, the abnormalities shown through Harahap's novel occurred in the form of incestuous sexual relation, necrophilia, homosexuality, sexual relation with ghostly spirit, sadomasochism, or bestiality. The following table will show the abnormal sexual behaviors depicted in *Titisan Iblis*.

Table 2: The Manifestation of the Abnormal Sexual Behaviors

The Form of Abnormal Sexual Behavior	Description
Hypersexuality	Pak Lurah had a wife once; Pak Lurah had sexual intercourse with Parman; Pak Lurah had sexual intercourse with Bejo; Pak Lurah tried to rape Lila; Pak Lurah sexually touched Kardi
Homosexuality	Bejo had sexual intercourse with Pak Lurah
Necrophilia	Parman had sexual intercourse with the ghost of Lila

From the table presented above, it is shown that the elements of abnormal sexual behavior in *Titisan Iblis* are hypersexuality, homosexuality, and necrophilia. The abnormal sexual behavior depicted in the novel is also can be seen as human's unconsciousness. It cannot be separated from the history of violence happened in the past. For instance, Bejo becomes a homosexual because he hates his mother and three of his little sisters since they give him hostile treatments. The violence happens within the public as *das Unheimlich* is presented through the violence conducted within the familiar environment, particularly within the area of a home, which is inevitable to be done by someone's closest people. In the context of this novel, the violence happened in the area of a home affected one's sexual orientation.

Supernatural Elements in *Titisan Iblis* (1989)

A horror story is constructed by the supernatural elements within the plot. From its plot structure, it can be concluded that only one ghostly spirit which appeared throughout the story, which is Lila—who appears in a horrible form of a female ghost. Nevertheless, the supernatural elements are not limited to a ghostly spirit, but also dead body, amulet, and a secluded room depicted as the other supernatural elements.

Yet, the description of the ghostly spirit given in the story is combined with the sensual sensation of seeing a female body from the perspective of male gaze, which in the story represented by Parman. It is shown from the quotation below,

Before his eyes, Lila comes within the mist. His hapless wife is fairly naked. Her blouse is half down, one of her bra straps is on loose. Her breasts are almost shown. The side of her breasts are bruising in blue, striking clear in her glittering white skin. (p. 50)

The quote shows that the female ghost appeared in the form of a horrible creature, or Creed (2012) called it as the monstrous feminine—a concept about women's depiction in a form of an atrocious monster. However, an appalling depiction is not enough, the female ghost in the story also carries the burden of satisfying men's fantasy of a woman's body that is considered as a sexual object, such as "*payudara menyembul*", "*hampir-hampir tidak berpakaian*", atau "*salah satu tali kutangnya lepas*"—protruding breasts, barely dressed, or one of her bra straps is on loose. The choice of the phrase is used to give a sensual sensation to the readers.

This sensual ghost depiction is related to who the ghost is dealing with. In that context, the ghost of Lila is confronted with Parman, her husband—who is in fact, a man—therefore she emerges as a form of men's fantasy despite her being a ghost. However, the depiction is immediately changed when Lila confronts Dorothea, her sister from the same mother. The same ghostly entity is described differently if the person it confronted comes from the opposite sex. Nevertheless, the female ghost still portrayed as a horrible creature, which is shown from the quotation below,

A figure stands in front of her!

A body in the darkness of the room. Even though the room is perfectly closed. She is sure it was locked from the inside. Yet, she is not dreaming. This tall figure in front of her, dressed in ragged clothes. There are wounds in some parts of its body. Bleeding. The blood swiftly flows from a wide wound as if it ruptures on its forehead. (p. 45)

In addition to the characterization of the ghost, the other supernatural elements used in the story is the setting of the place, which depicted a secluded house, haunted area, or a particular room within a house. Pak Lurah is described to own a

particular room to keep his amulet as well as all of his loot. The room is illustrated in a way that it can triggers the strange and odd sensation among the readers, which can be seen from the following quotation,

The darkness which raises nape hair makes Parman stunned shortly after he got in. A musty smell lunges into his nose. He knows he is in a dirt hall with lumbar support on each side and thick board covers the top. (p. 76)

...Parman recalls the hall goes in one direction, the spacious warehouse in the middle of the house, from where people can go upstairs to the common room or go straight to the upstairs porch. ...He is convinced that the hall will end in another smaller room, a particular storage room to keep all the looted items for weeks. ...Nevertheless, from the direction of the room he thought was the place to store the stolen goods, the steam and the smell of fire are coming out (p. 77)

The room is depicted as an inaccessible one, secluded with minimal light to create the horror sensation, in line with what Freud described in *das Unheimliche* concept, the opposite of *Heimlich* 'familiar, a part of home or family'. The meaning of *Heim* is similar to something that is regarded as a *home*, as in 'home, homeland'. Meanwhile, something is considered as *Heimlich* when it is already well known, familiar, and become a part of the everyday life. The presence of something that is out of place or unfamiliar will usually bring a feeling of anxiety and astonishment. Those feeling will appear when someone enjoys a setting of the place within a horror story.

Besides portraying a horrible ghostly spirit and an unfamiliar place, *Titisan Iblis* also make use of the impeccable description of appalling details, such as the description of a dead body. It is used to support horror stories in order to convince the readers that reality and fantasy is hard to distinguish, as shown in the following quotation,

"...this little baby is still warm," he hears Pak Lurah's voice.

"Are you sure," Bejo answers.

"Did you hold him tightly? Look, its knee bone is broken. What if Nyi Saodah knew her child's bone is broken..."

...

He sees Pak Lurah from behind. The man seems to hold something on his lap. Of course, he is holding the baby. Close to his feet, there is a pile of shrouds that has been detached from the dead body.

...

But what Parman sees instead is the baby Pak Lurah hangs on the bamboo to be smeared, on a piece of straw that has a twisted tip on the ceiling of the room. The baby's head goes downward, its left leg is tied to the other end. (p.78)

When Pak Lurah releases the baby, its body swings for a moment following the movement of the burdened rope, and then it stands still. (p.79)

From the quotation above, it is seen that the dead body is used as the medium to emphasize terrors. A dead body in a horror story can also be called as an abject. The idea of abject is established by Kristeva (1982), which defines something that is separated from the human body, such as human waste, sweat, blood, pus, fetus, and dead body. According to her, a dead body is placed in the highest abject as a subject since a dead body which separates itself from human is considered as an object. An abject can trigger the displeasing feeling of terror because it disturbs the identity, system, and order (Kristeva, 1982: 4).

***Das Unheimliche* as a Form of Chaos within the Public Order**

Avery F. Gordon stated that the presence of ghostly spirits in everyday life signifies something that is missing in the society (Gordon, 2008: 15). In the novel, the abnormal sexual behaviors occurred due to the absence of the authority's supervision. Pak Lurah, who is supposed to protect the locals, is the one who causes all the chaos. The locals desperately defend Pak Lurah from Parman's accusation that Pak Lurah is the person behind Lila's death. According to the locals, Pak Lurah is an impeccable man, as seen from the following quotation,

“You are telling lies. You are about to be exiled from this village and Pak Lurah has no power to meet all the people’s interests, so you provoked us. Haram. Robber. Exile. Do you think we will believe in the dirty saying from someone who had lived in prison?” Pak Angga grumbles. “You are defaming the most respectable and wise person in this village. For many years he has been serving as the village chief. Without any flaws. Impeccably. He spent money to set up a school. Building madrasa and mosque. Contributing for the unfortunate people. How could you accuse such kind person as a murderer and rapist?” (pp. 43-44)

The quotation above indicates that Pak Lurah’s power cannot be defeated, even by solid facts. This also happens from Parman's past as a thief. The locals will always assume that once someone go to jail, he/she will not be trusted for the rest of life, even they do not know the truth of the facts. Based on Table 1 and unit content, the source of the abnormal sexual behaviors is Pak Lurah. In this case, Pak Lurah has the highest authority in the village, but he utilizes his power for his personal interests.

In addition, the inability of the authorities in solving the problem can also be used as an indicator that the existing social order is in a chaotic point. The chaos in Pak Lurah, such as his abnormal sexuality and his greediness over valuable things, has an impact to the others, which manifested in the violence against many people to the point that it triggered a ghostly spirit to disturb public order.

However, in this case, the locals still strongly believes in the authorities, but in the end the state apparatus does not help in the process of problem-solving. The naivety of the locals who still believe in the power of the state apparatus is not only seen from the trust they put to Pak Lurah, but also to Dorothea's father who pretends to be a policeman in order to bring Lila's mother out from the village, which can be seen from the following quotation,

“Nobody can touch this old woman. She is under my protection.”

For a moment, everyone look at one another, trying to comprehend the situation. All of a sudden, a tall, bald man comes forward. After he saw the gun Suharja carries with him, he grumbled:

“You are just stopping by. Why are you intervening?”

...

“I’m a city police, you hear me? I order everyone to disperse! Quickly! Otherwise my gun will replace me to talk to all of you!” Although with muttering, the crowd finally dispersed, even more after Pak Angga nodded at them. (pp. 186-188)

...

A playful wide grin on Sunarko’s lips appears.

“Man!” later he muttered. “You can be arrested for profiteering my corps name. But it’s alright though. As a fake cop, you succeeded to save an old woman’s life from a horrible death. Nevertheless, about the dead baby modified into smaller form for an amulet...,” the police chief shakes his head. (p. 189)

The quotation shows how the locals simply put their trusts on the state apparatus based on the attributes they wear, without giving any protests. It shows that the authorities become something that the locals believe can provide guard, security, and protection on them. However, in fact, it is the state apparatus—Pak Lurah—who started the chaos.

In this context, the meaning of *das Unheimliche* is not only related to the elements that create an atmosphere or feeling of *das Unheimliche*, but also it cannot be separated from the context of space and time of when the novel is published. The discussion on the contextual dimension of Indonesian popular novels in the 1970-1990s period is related to the society's perspectives on the social context contained in popular cultural products, including the horror novel that is considered third grade like the works of Abdullah Harahap.

The concept of *das Unheimliche* describes the feelings of *Unheimliche* and the things that can bring it about, but on the other hand, it shows how Freud burried the elements that rise *das Unheimliche*. If it seen from the concept of *das Unheimliche*, horror novels written in the 1970s and 1990s, including the works of Abdullah Harahap, shows how the writers viewed and confronted the uncanny, anxiety, and fear which are different from their daily lives. Fear and mystery which is not possible to be expressed in the real world, can be fully expressed in fiction.

The novel was written in 1989 when the ruling government was the New Order. In that period, it could be said that the state apparatus became something to be respected and regarded as the protector of society. The violence perpetrated by the state

or the authorities was taken on the innocent people. Pak Lurah can be used as a symbol of an impeccable country, but he is the mastermind of the chaos. This shows that the state is not always operate without error, the state could be the source of the chaos happened among the society.

However, the end of the story illustrates that the problem is solved by the ghost of Lila. The police who assisted Parman basically did not contribute within the process of problem-solving since they are described to return to town when Pak Lurah is arrested. Moreover, there is any "*orang pintar*" (shaman) who appears in this story. It shows that the belief in formal and informal authority is almost non-existent. The society "can" solve their own problems without any help from the state apparatus or the other form of authority.

CONCLUSION

Based on the elaboration above, violence and abnormal sexual behavior in *Titisan Iblis* can be considered as a symbol of the chaos within the public order and the incompetence of the state apparatus to resolve the problem happens within the society. The formal authority which regarded as the party who can provide the society with safety serves as the source of chaos. The distrust towards both of the formal authority as well as the nonformal one also shown in the end of the story. The state police is depicted as the apparatus who is unable to resolve the problem, it is the ghost of Lila instead who takes the law into her own hands. *Das Unheimliche* occurred in several elements shown throughout the story, such as abnormal sexual behavior, violence, cadaver, and secluded rooms. In addition, related to the context, it is also shown that violence and abnormal sexual behaviour is closely related with its familiar environment.

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