THE REPRESENTATION OF GWANGJU UPRISING IN HUMAN ACTS NOVEL

Aris Masruri Harahap¹, Sri Utami²

¹President University, ²STBA Pertiwi

¹ aris.masruri@president.ac.id ² sriutami.ibrahim@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe how Gwangju Uprising that happened in Gwangju, South Korea, in 1980 was represented in *Human Acts* (2016) novel. In the bloody event, a rebellion took place involving army and civilians. To understand how the Uprising is represented in the novel, the writers use representation theory by Stuart Hall. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze data based on some events in the novel. The result of the analysis shows that *Human Acts* represents what happened in the Uprising in accordance with major historical narrations. The novel also represents how civilians with power were able to create a disorder situation.

Keywords: Gwangju Uprising, Human Acts, representation, rebellion

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana Pemberontakan Gwangju atau *Gwangju Uprising* yang terjadi di Gwangju, Korea Selatan, pada tahun 1980 direpresentasikan dalam novel *Human Acts* (2016). Dalam peristiwa berdarah itu, sebuah pemberontakan terjadi yang melibatkan tentara dan warga sipil. Untuk memahami bagaimana *Uprising* direpresentasikan dalam novel, penulis menggunakan teori representasi oleh Stuart Hall. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk menganalisis data berdasarkan beberapa peristiwa dalam novel. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa *Human Acts* merepresentasikan apa yang terjadi dalam *Gwangju Uprising* sesuai dengan narasi sejarah utama. Novel ini juga merepresentasikan bagaimana warga sipil mampu menciptakan situasi kekacauan.

Kata kunci: Gwangju Uprising, Human Acts, representasi, pemberontakan

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 1948, the Republic of Korea was known widely in the world that they were capable of handling elections and political competition. However, According to Kim (2000), the Republic of Korea at that time was still under authoritarian regimes where elections and potent competition were never fair between the government and public. Therefore, the condition caused limitations and lack of freedom in democracy (11).

The condition explained above made Korean people have limited access to their politics. It was because they had never been involved in any government decision. They felt that there was no democracy in their country. They could not express their opinions in determining the president's leadership. The authoritarian regimes had total control in determining who would be the next president. The

total control style helped the regimes lasted for decades.

소년이온다 (Sonyeon-i onda or The boy is coming) novel by Han Kang was translated into English entitled Human Acts in 2016 by Deborah Smith. Han Kang is a writer born in Gwangju, South Korea in 1970. She is familiar with the events that took place in the novel namely the rebellion in Gwangju. Aside from Han being a Korean, she had grown up and lived in Gwangju until the age of nine in 1980. The same year the year of the rebellion that took place in Gwangju was the background of the novel he wrote. Then Han moved and lived in Suyuri, Seoul, South Korea.

Comparing the story in the novel and historical narrations, we found many similarities between the two. According to Smith (2016), Han Kang has personal experience and connection to what she wrote in the novel (10). This means the novel is an attempt to represent what Han Kang felt about the historical event in Korea. In this article, we want to show how the novel represents Gwangju Uprising.

LITERATURE REVIEW History of Gwangju Uprising

The authoritarian regimes in Korea were started in 1948 under President Rhee Syngman which lasted for twelve years. Then, Park Chung Hee continued for eighteen years before finally died in October 1979. The death of Park Chung Hee marked the end of his era. Chun Doo Hwan continued to be the next president of the Republic of Korea for seven years (Byeong-cheon, 2006: 186).

In the transition period between Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan presidency, a big demonstration happened. Unfortunately, the demonstration followed with a chaos or riot in May 1980. The chaos took place in Gwangju, South Jeolla for ten days. Kim (2000) further explains that Republic of Korea also did not have freedom of expression and thought. This can be seen that the demonstration carried out by the people in Gwangju was considered as a rebellion not as expressing opinions. Demonstrations were opposed by the formation of martial law soldiers. Then the people have not been fully involved in the decisions that would be taken by the state. This happened because the presidential system at that time was still using dirty methods in conducting power struggles (11).

According to Byeong-cheon (2006), the death of Park Chung Hee was caused by Kim Jae-Kyu, the director of Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), who murdered him (186). After Park Chung Hee was killed, the president was replaced by Chui Kyu-ha. President Chui Kyu-ha looked like a puppet where power and orders are completely controlled by Chun Doo Hwan who was a security command and had the same military background as previous president Park Chung Hee. Chun Doo Hwan was also holding the control of the investigation into the death of Park Chung Hee. When Chun Doo Hwan was ordered to carry out an investigation, he gave the news that there was an infiltration of the North Korean side to Republic of Korea. Until finally he decided to bring the army to Republic of Korea, one of which was Gwangju. At

that moment he also closed most of the universities in the country, closed press agencies, and prohibited political activities (Smith, 2016: 8).

According to Kahn-chae (2003), the army closed the university by guarding the gates of the campus and did not allow students to enter. The army gave a threat to students who were still inside. They gave the choice to go back home voluntarily or stop forcibly. Students responded that with angrily. They began throwing stones at the army. The army felt angry and then attacked them by hit and took off their clothes. This incident then spread to citizens and students on other campuses to spread widely. The army learned that the spread of information increased the number of people who carried out protests condemning their actions. They formed defenses by adding troops. They carried weapons for anyone who tried to fight. They shot and beaten without looking at students or civilians. This made many victims fell even some of the demonstrators arrested and then put into army trucks (179).

This then triggered the rebellion in which the Gwangju people felt that day they did not accept a condition of being uncomfortable because of the existence of the army in their place and felt they had no freedom to express their opinions. They also felt that the president was unfair because he did not allow the citizens to take part in contributing their votes. This was evidenced by the existence of a presidential election in a dirty way to get authority. People began to realize the existence of dictatorship elements. Moreover, the place where the rebellion happened was a region with a low economy. Gwangju is an area that is less noticed and represented by the central government (Smith, 2016: 9).

The people fought on the basis of wanting justice in achieving democracy. Those who felt they were not free and oppressed finally made a revolution to reach a democratic country. Democracy is usually disseminated naturally in communities that have one common goal. Positive changes will be achieved together for a system of openness and responsibility for freedom (Helgesen, 1995: 5).

Chun Doo Hwan began to realize that what would be done by the people would destroy the structure and form of defense that had been arranged, and then he moved to avoid this. He used his power as head of military security to form martial law soldiers to deal with all who took to the streets. This is triggered a rebellion. Chun Doo Hwan has the same background as the late Park Chung Hee. They both tried to lead the people by bringing in the military methods they had and still under the influence of the authoritarian regimes. Park Chung Hee who has an identity as a military soldier and military security chief under the regime's authoritarian to control the social environment as he wishes. This is because the power a person has can be motivated by the power formed in one's identity. In this case the background is the role that plays the power. Then it is with the social environment that has existed before, namely the magnitude of the authoritarian regimes influence in leading a country (Goldman, 1992: 10).

The military power possessed by Chun Doo Hwan led to the taking of police power which was replaced with an army to cripple the demonstrators; soldiers with weapons against civilians without weapons. This action then

attracted a lot of attention which then brought more masses to support the civilian militia movement. Many of them eventually died and injured. Some of them were even arrested because they were considered as provocateurs to carry out rebellion (Smith, 2016: 8).

Jong-cheol (2002) explained that resistance lead to oppression. This was because the soldiers were chasing students who were rebellious and ran away. The army also raided people's houses. Those who were proven involved were then forced to go out to be beaten, removed their clothes, tied with ropes and then taken away. Soldiers were always ready to carry truncheons but not infrequently they carried bayonets (123). In that monstrous event, the demonstrators were treated like they were not human beings. This incident inspired Han Kang to publish 소년이 온다 온다 (Sonyeon-i onda or The boy is coming) in 2014.

Theory of Representation

In the dictionary of Cambridge, representation means the way someone or something is shown or described. It also has a meaning like a sign, picture, model, text, etc (Cambridge Dictionary). Hall (1997) said representation has a relationship with culture and it could be formed through cultural assistance. Hall also mentioned that culture is a 'shared meaning' that is conveyed using a media. One of the medias used to make relations between culture and representation is language.

Language can make us able to interpret a thing where the meaning will be generated and exchanged to represent something in thought or concept that will be formed in the community. Indirectly this can be said that our thoughts or concepts are shaped or constructed using language. Language has to do with forming concepts that are in someone's mind. The representation works when people associate a language by using context to produce an idea. Language can construct meaning by operating a representational system. In language, not only text can be said as a language, but signs and symbols are also included in the language.

Signs or symbols can be applied to sounds, written, word, electronically produced images, musical notes even objects. Signs or symbols will then form ideas or concepts in the human mind which will later be shared with others to form the same thought. Thus, indirectly the language will convey thoughts, ideas and feelings which simultaneously represent the delivery of culture itself contained within it. Language can be conveyed in various ways such as text, sign, or symbol. In text, people can understand the purpose and purpose of writing to form a meaning that has a relationship.

Renkema (2004) explained that sign or symbol is related to objects through a 'rule' which can be interpreted by bringing other people to agree with what is interpreted (35). The rule is a sign with an object either people or event has similarities and quite reasonable to interpret. Sign used to describe something or even determine the perception in an object. This proves that language can work through small particles which are then referred to as assign to produce a separate perception in the ideas and thoughts of someone.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this study is a qualitative research which uses descriptive method in presenting its analysis. Creswell (2014) explained that this kind of study elaborates the meaning of a text that explains a phenomenon to be understood by others (34).

In addition, we also use a historical approach in analyzing the novel. Historical approach is to re-check the validity of the written information and then compare it to get a comprehensive conclusion. In investigating historical, organizational, and political topics in texts, the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate available knowledge about historical sources themselves and social and political background. Until finally, all sources of information can explain the actual context (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 65). In this case, a lot of information will be found to differ from one another so that it will make different views. But in this case, analyzing cannot be said which is 'right' or 'wrong' because it depends on how the point of view and accuracy in the analysis. The historical context is always analyzed and integrated into the interpretations of discourse and texts (71). That means all forms of analysis will depend on the amount of information found. Integrating information may lead to new information and perspectives.

In analyzing the novel, there are some steps that we use. First, we read the novel to understand the storyline and events described and narrated in the novel. Then, we compare the storyline and events in the novel with the main historical narrations by Korean historians regarding the bloody event, Gwangju Uprising.

DISCUSSION

Hall (1997) explained that to represent something is to use language in sharing meaning to others. The production of meaning here uses language, sign, or images as a medium of representation (15). Through language, which is as a medium for delivering information, a new idea will be formed and delivered that can be accepted by other people. In this part of article, we will show some events described in the novel which represent Gwangju Uprising that took place in 1980.

Government's Action through the Army to Society

First, the moment of rebellion that occurs on campus and involves students:

She'd been eating lunch late in the university cafeteria when the glass door banged open and a crowd of students raced in. [...] she stared blankly at the sight of plainclothes policemen pursuing them through the cafeteria, roaring threats and brandishing clubs. One of their number seemed especially worked up--skidding to a halt in front of a chubby boy whose mouth was hanging open above his plate and curry and rice, he snatched up a chair and swung it over the table. The burst of blood from the boy's forehead gushed down over his nose and mouth [...] her hand closed upon

a flyer that had fallen to the floor. [...] DOWN WITH THE BUTCHER CHUN DOO-HWAN (Kang, 2016: 83).

The above description is in accordance with historical event told by Korean historians. According to Kahn-chae (2003), the first stage of the rebellion was clashes between students and the Martial Law Army soldiers in front of the Front Gate of Chonnam National University. The army came to campus on the night before the 18th so that when the 18th in the morning there was a tension between students who wanted to go to the campus with the Army. The army repeatedly broadcast the warning that "If you do not return home immediately, you will be dismissed by force." This triggered a feud between the two. The students react to the warning by throwing stones to the army (178-179). The action carried out by the students did not make the army retreat but instead responded to students' actions by beating the students. The soldiers were annoyed because the warning was ignored. Chun Doo-Hwan then closed the university and replaced the police with the army to fight the demonstrators. Chun Doo-Hwan was the one who mobilized the army throughout Korea including in the campus (Smith, 2016: 8).

The second stage, in addition to the students who became victims, civilians living in Gwangju also became victims of the army. In the novel it is also narrated.

"What's the matter? We're just on our way to church..."

Before the man in the suit had finished speaking, you saw a person's arm — what? Something you wouldn't have thought it capable of. Too much process—what you saw happen to that hand, that back, the leg. A human being. "Help me!" the man shouted; his voice ragged. They kept on clubbing him until his twitching feet finally grew still (Kang, 2016: 31).

The army was widespread in several parts of Gwangju. They also began to deal with everyone on the road. They could not distinguish between a demonstrator or not. The army was very brutal (Kahn-chae, 2003: 179). The army considered people of Gwangju just like enemies in a war. They did not ask, all those who were at the location of the rebellion were enemies. In the quotation, it was exemplified as a couple who wanted to go to church but instead became victims from the hands of the army. The army did not stop until the victim was truly lifeless. As soldiers prepared to fight, they would win if their opponents lose. In this case, the victory of a soldier illustrated by how to deal with demonstrators by killing him. Logically, civilians lost because they were faced against soldiers with weapons while they only used their empty hands.

Third, in this term, we give a brief explanation in the form of representation of the events that occurred in Gwangju Uprising. One of the interesting main events is that the demonstrators presented were not only from the student side but there were workers who took part in Gwangju Uprising.

Those were fifteen-hour days with only two days off per month. "Weekend" was nonexistent. The wages were half of what the men got paid for the same work, and there was no over-time pay. You took pills to keep you awake, but exhaustion still battered you like a wake. The swelling of your calves and feet as morning wore into afternoon (Kang, 2016: 158).

Hwang (2017) said some of the activists who carried out the demonstration were laborers. They were one of the residents of the Gwangju community who was nicknamed the Minjung. Minjung is the name for those who are common people of South Korea and then carry out anti-government resistance. One of them was an anti-government factory worker starting in the 1970s until 1980s (230). Their actions show that there was injustice with what they got. They had lost their rights as laborers because of the authoritarian government. They worked as hard as they could but the wages were not appropriate. The female workers even got worse condition as they experiences discrimination where the wages they received were only half of men's wages, unequal salary for the same job. This reason made female workers were part of the demonstration.

Arrest of Demonstrators

During Gwangju Uprising, there were many parties involved in the rebellion. One of the parties involved in the rebellion is a student. Some of the students who carried out the rebellion often died from fighting the army, but not a few of them became prisoners to be jailed and sentenced. The same thing also happens in the novel. It is narrated like this:

What I heard was that soldiers made him get his penis out and rest it on the table, threatening to cane it with a wooden ruler. Apparently, they made him strip and took him out to the patch of grass in front of the guardhouse, where did they tied his arms behind his back and made him lie down on his stomach. The ants nibbled at his genitals for three hours (Kang, 2016: 116).

The army arrested demonstrators just because they got up and fought when the rebellion occurred even though they fought with no weapons. Some of them were quite young students. Shin and Hwang (2003) said that some people who were not shot to death were then arrested and sentenced. The government condemned the demonstrators, especially the young ones, either they were paralyzed or killed (19). A wooden ruler was one of the weapons that were indirectly used to stifle the demonstrators. Wooden ruler is a tool that does not cause death but paralysis. This paralysis is supported by the presence of highly sensitive body parts, namely human vital organs. This paralysis will certainly be felt by the prisoners for the rest of their lives. It is as if the intermediaries want them to always remember that when their genitals are damaged, they will not be able to continue their lineage like normal people in general. Thus indirectly

"crippling" here is taking away the normal lives of the demonstrators so that they will continue to remember the cause of their vital organs being damaged. The wood ruler is a sign that in order to punish the demonstrators they do not always use bayonets or firearms until they die. But with a wooden ruler, they can also "kill" the demonstrator's mentality by touching the most intimate part that humans have, namely a vital tool.

Jungwoon (1999) explained the people involved in the Gwangju Uprising event will affect their feelings when reminded of the event. They were turned off and turned on again after passing the incident in Gwangju Uprising in May 1980. The demonstrators seemed to be revived when they recalled the brutal actions carried out by the army on them. Besides the demonstrators, the army also experienced the same feelings. They live their lives in the shadow of rebellion, plus the comments and prejudices of others towards those who make negative thoughts come to them (11).

The labor member was one of the many parties involved in the rebellion. Some of them died not because of army casualties but depression with what they had been through.

It took you there years to finally become a machinist. That autumn, when you were twenty-one, a factory girl even younger than you died [...]. The government's official report stated that she had cut her own wrist with the shards from a bottle Sprite and jumped from the third floor (Kang, 2016: 161).

One worker member was depressed. The woman was like someone who was under severe pressure when her life forced her to have experienced as one of the people involved in Gwangju Uprising. His experienced as a laborer made him see other labor members raped, beaten, dragged and killed. This is like explaining how heavy the shadow of being a member of the laborers who saw some of his friends being victims of the violence perpetrated by the army brutally. This labor woman tried to eliminate the memory of a bad past by committing suicide to end her life.

Members involved in rebellion who chose to survive have a different storyline than those who commit suicide. Some of them were haunted by nightmares that haunted Gwangju Uprising.

Your own dreams are filled with sight that are quite different from the ones haunting this first witness. At the time, you were more closely acquainted than most with brutalized corpses, yet there have only been a handful of times in the past twenty-odd years when your dreams have been vivid with blood (Kang, 2016: 154).

According to Shin and Hwang (2003), Gwangju Uprising is characterized with the number of damaged bodies and corpses that collide with each other because of the large number of victims. There was a lot of blood spilled during

this event. Citizens in Gwangju Uprising experienced terror, anger, hostility, solidarity, and inspiration. They experienced many things at the same time. A big event that they might not experience again (4). In the above quotation, it can be seen that even twenty years have passed does not mean that the big tragedy has disappeared from his memory. Those involved are always reminded of a bloody nightmare that signifies that the event was a frightening bloody event. People who are increasingly seeing dead bodies because of army brutality will often have nightmares. This is very difficult to eliminate the shadow of a terrible past.

The Disappearance of the Number of Victims Killed in the Gwangju Bloody Incident

Rebellions in Gwangju occur for approximately ten days. Rebellion occurred from May 18 to May 27. The bloody rebellion took many victims. Citizens died from gunfire given by the army and some of them also died because of blows given by the army. This bloody and harmful event is narrated in the novel like this:

They gripped the new bodies roughly, carrying them over and pilling them up in a much more slapdash manner than the usual neat cross shape. [...] Two of the soldiers who'd been standing back came forward and took the plastic can between them. Working calmly and methodically, they removed the lid and began to pour the petrol of the towers of bodies. [...] Only after sharking the last drops out of the can did, they draw back to a safe distance. Each of them broke off a piece of dried shrubbery, sparked their lighters, and, once the flame had caught, hurled it forward with all their strength (Kang, 2016: 69).

In the above quotation the number of bodies is mentioned as "The tower of bodies". This is an expression of how many victims died when the rebellion occurred. The word of tower is a sign of how high a human stack is if they are in large quantities and stacked up. Bodies were like being human giants. This rebellion took a lot of casualties whose numbers were not dozens or tens but hundreds. The tower of bodies will be formed if the human body collected reaches hundreds. This body was burned by the army. They carried out the burning of bodies without identifying the corpse. The body was not returned to his family. This is as if the bodies of demonstrators were the rights of the army so that the army had the right to decide what they should do for the corpse.

This burning made it difficult to identify victims because they leave no trace. This also affected the difficulty of determining the number of victims killed in bloody acts in Gwangju. Shin and Hwang (2003) said that the rebellion resulted in 500 dead people, 3000 people wounded and 3000 arrested. Those who died were victims of rifle targets and batons through the hands of army (12). While Cheol (2003) said government stated the death toll was approximately 200 people, more than 1000 people were wounded and more thousands of participants were arrested by the army (232). The two sources explained the number of significant

victim differences. The above quote had the same year but mentions different numbers for each type of victim. The average numbers they mentioned have a different range. It can be said that it is difficult to calculated the number of victims who have not been identified but have been destroyed by burning. The community did not have a definite number of how many deaths are parts of Gwangju Uprising.

Censorship Institution

The censorship was one of the things that also triggered a rebellion in Gwangju. The government through the army-imposed restrictions on the dissemination of information related to the occurrence of the rebellion.

She pictures the scene: middle-aged inspectors sporting army uniforms, their face entirely unfamiliar, poring over the open books covering the table. [...] Her initial impression is that the pages have been burned. [...] More than half of the sentences in the ten-pages introduction have been scored through. In the thirty or so pages following, this percentage rises so that the vast majority of sentences have a line through them (Kang, 2016: 85-86).

This quote explains that there was army intervention in the censorship process. During the demonstration, the army was not only dealing with demonstrators but interfering in made regulations so that publishing companies remained under government control in terms of censorship agencies. Young-khee and Sun (2003) described that the initial regulations for the control of the dissemination of this information were not approved by the mass media. This was because there was no free press and the mass media felt what the government was doing by force. They refused with the control by the new military authorities. However, their rejection efforts failed because in midnight on May 17, full control of the control press was implemented in the newly created emergency law (211).

If the rules have been made in the law, it is clear that those who do not comply will then be punished for those who violate. It was previously seen that in terms of the dissemination of news or information there was no freedom for the mass media. This is like news that will spread widely to be in accordance with the wishes of the government or army. They do this by limiting every word or even information that they think is information that is detrimental to them. They continue to allow information to be disseminated on the condition that the narrative to be disseminated is narrative after the revision is completed by the government. When a regulation has been implemented in law, the regulation will be valid and must be followed or even feared.

But when the last slap had been delivered [...]. Seven. "Bitch. A bitch like you, in a place like this? Anything could happen, and no one would find out. Listen to what I'm telling you, if you don't want to die in some ditch where not even the rats and crows will find you. Tell me where that

bastard is." [...] She had met up with the translator— "that bastard"—a fortnight ago, at a Bakery by Cheonggye stream (Kang, 2016: 75-76).

This quote explains that anyone who is behind the screen of a publication is afraid to appear on the surface. He is one of the people who make news related to Gwangju Uprising even this person was nicknamed a fugitive. This person is considered like someone who made a mistake so that his existence must be known by the censorship institution. This proves that the rules entered into the law are successful. The authors who collaborate with the successful censorship institution are feared and feel guilty when making a work based on the facts that happen during the rebellion.

In addition, the actions taken by the army in seeking information used violence. Slaps are given to an editor so that the editor could talk about the people involved in publishing a work. The military did not have the authority to punish editors because the work done is only stringing word by word. Instead, the translator was sought because he was considered a brave person for doing the things that destabilized the power owned by the army.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, it can be understood that the novel narrates the power that is owned by Chun Doo-hwan used through the army. He is successful in using and utilizing his power to narrow the space of movement for the demonstrators. He also utilizes the power he possesses as a means to forming its forces in the army. However, this novel does not only narrate the powers owned by the army. The novel also narrates how civilians could create a disorder situation. In the novel, the disorder situation created by the masses is something that destabilizes the army's power and order.

In conclusion, the result of the analysis shows that *Human Acts* represents what happened in the Uprising in accordance with major historical narrations. There are events like the arrests of the demonstrators by the army and the killings of the demonstrators are told happening in the Uprising by Korean historians are represented in the novel.

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