

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

Taufiq Ismail holds the credit as a prolific Indonesian poet who actively produces his literary works (El Shirazy, 2014, pp. 45-47). There are thousands of poems that he has written since the very beginning of his career as a poet in 1954 up to 2008 and in later years during the 2010s. Some of his poems are read on a podium in front of the mass audience gathered to attend cultural and arts events or exhibitions, broadcasted in programs of different radio stations, printed in columns of newspapers, and literary magazines. Most of Ismail's poems are published in anthologies and books. In chronological order, some of his previous works published in anthologies are as follows: *Tirani* (1966), *Benteng* (1966), *Puisi-puisi Sepi* (1971), *Kota, Pelabuhan, Ladang, Angin dan Langit* (1971), *Buku Tamu Musium Perjuangan* (1972), *Sajak Ladang Jagung* (1974), *Kenalkan, Saya Hewan-poems for children* (1976), *Puisi-puisi Langit* (1990), *Tirani dan Benteng* (1993), dan *Malu (Aku) Jadi Orang Indonesia* (1998) (El Shirazy, 2014, pp. 45–47). Aside from producing thousands of poems, Taufiq Ismail has received international recognition. He is given some awards from foreign countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, and Egypt. Those international awards that he received among others are the Cultural Visit Award from Australian Government in 1977, South East Asia Write Award from Thai Monarch in 1994, *Sastrawan Nusantara dari Negeri Johor* (Celebrated Poet of Johoran Nation) from Malaysia in 1999, and the last but not least is Awards and Appreciation from Education

Minister of Tinggi from Egypt in 2013 by publishing Anthologies of Taufiq Ismail poetries in Arabic language.

For the majority of Indonesians, i.e. Moslem Indonesians, he is known as a preaching poet¹ (Suminto A. Sayuti, 2005, p. 25). He uses poems as a medium to communicate Islamic teachings, values, and speak for the hearts of Muslim Indonesians. Hadits and Koran are the sources of his inspirations to write his religious poems (Suminto A. Sayuti, 2005). So powerful and moving that his religious poems are made into lyrics and sung by Indonesian caliber singers such as Bimbo Brothers and Chrisye (El Shirazy, 2014, p. 54). Aside from his devotion in *berdakwah* (transl. preach) through his beautifully arranged verses, Taufiq Ismail is praised by a Dutch literary critique, A. Theuw, for his distinctive and original works among polyphonic voices of Indonesian poets² (Ismail, 2008).

So far, the writer has managed to find a previous study on religious content and Islamic teachings found in Taufiq Ismail's selected poems: *Ada Anak Bertanya Pada Bapanya, Jangan Ditunda-tunda, and Ketika Tangan dan Kaki Berkata*. This study, which was conducted by Habiburahman El Shirazy, uses Julia Kristeva's Intertextuality theory in application. The results of this study are two findings; they are (1) a modification, and (2) convention of hypograms in intertextuality sense³. In his study, Habiburahman El Shirazy presents his findings on Taufiq Ismail's works were inspired by Koran and Hadits. Some

¹Professor Suminto A. Sayuti's description of Taufiq Ismail. As Mohammed Qudth calls it, Taufiq Ismail is an artistic Moslem person. Ismail is able to produce and performed *dakwah* to help other Moslem understand Koran and Hadits without having to disregard the aesthetic values included in his poems.

² This commentary and appraisal is found printed at the back of a cover of *Mengakar ke Bumi Menggapai ke Langit 1: Himpunan Puisi 1953-2008*, an anthology published by *Majalah Sastra Horizon* in Jakarta.

³Habiburahman El Shirazy's writing can be read in AT-TABSYIR Journal, Volume 2, Issue 1, page 35-56

verses and chapters within the Holy Koran and Hadits were modified by Taufiq Ismail into poetic verses in his works, including Al Maa'un and Ad Dhuha verses. The theme of these poems is religious devotion. The content of these three poems remind people to have an intimate and close relationship to their God, develop their spirituality, improve their understanding of God, religious teachings, and Islamic values taught to the followers of Islam, e.g. how to behave properly when people are fasting, how to control and manage their anger, and to restrain themselves from any sinful deeds (El Shirazy, 2014, pp. 47–54).

As the writer interpreted it from her own perspective, the real message that is successfully conveyed within these selected poems in El Shirazy's study is devout followers of Islam. Giving prayers and reciting Koran verses will allow Moslems to draw themselves nearer to God. This result of a study conducted by Habiburahman El Shirazy encourages the writer to analyze and study other Ismail's works. Ismail could get as much inspiration from verses and chapters in Holy Koran, but it is undoubtedly he would get inspirations from Indonesian environment and the people. In this study, the writer intends to analyze the contemporariness⁴ on Taufiq Ismail's works. Aside from that, the writer will apply Semiotics approach to unveil some historical events in Indonesia, societal conditions, and political state that inspired Ismail to produce poems. The writer selects two of his works which were published in 1971.

The selected poems are entitled *Bagaimana Kalau* and *Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang*. Ismail covers various topics inside these two. One of those focuses on the ups and downs of Indonesian citizens' lives, e.g. different occupations that

⁴ The works of Indonesian contemporary poems contain messages on spiritual longing. Sutarji said that Indonesian contemporary poems show more tendencies to embrace traditions and cultural heritage.

people have, hurdles that people encounter in maintaining their work for their keep, and difficulties in earning good money. Aside from that, these poems also cover political and social environments in times of New Order. These poems are two out of the thousands that Ismail wrote that cover pretty much the interconnected aspects that represent Indonesia at that time (Sayuti, 2005 as cited in El Shirazy, 2014, p. 38).

Bagaimana Kalau and *Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang* are two poems that have their setting of place and time set in Indonesia under the times of Suharto's New Order, especially in the beginning of 1970s. These two poems stand out amongst Ismail's other writings because they meet the categories of *Puisi Kontemporer Indonesia* (Indonesian contemporary poems). The first reason why the writer decides to choose them is the year it was published. According to many Indonesian literary critics, every poem was written in Indonesian, by Indonesian writer, and was published in the country during the 1970s and later years are regarded as "contemporary". Contemporary Indonesian poems no longer focus solely for the meaning of words or their literary meanings. The word 'contemporary' as an adjective to describe new form and way of writing Indonesian poems is a distinctive category that classifies unconventional way of writing poems and seemingly 'modern' content of Indonesian poems (Ipangesti, 2017). Since these two poems are published in 1971, it is believed as Indonesian contemporary poems based on the year these poems were published or released.

Bagaimana Kalau is a poem written by Taufiq Ismail in 1971. There are many parables that Ismail uses in this poem. Ismail writes about the first half of the decade (1970 until 1975) in *Bagaimana Kalau*. The title itself is a clear

indication that shows this poem uses 'what ifs' and Ismail's personal assumptions on what will become of Indonesians if certain things did not happen at the very first place or the possibility of questioning our own individual predestination. The writing of this poem also questions about the logic, rationale, and common sense that people usually have already developed in our civilization and modern society.

Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang is the second poem that the writer is going to analyze. It was published in 1971 and this poem includes topics widely-varied in terms of its content. The way the poet present this poetry is almost the same as a storyline. The essence of contemporariness is clearly reflected in this poem: a spiritual longing and the proper attitude religious individuals would portray. Some religious aspects of human being found in *Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang* are: (1) to be grateful for what is already provided by God, (2) never to lose any hope because the time will come when God decided to reward us with a better state of living or even a prosperous life, and (3) to always remember God or develop a religious attitude. These three certainly meet the characteristics of contemporary Indonesian poems.

The writer will conduct a library study that requires her to collect books, academic journals, and articles that give more references on Semiotics as an interdisciplinary approach to literary works and what events that historically occurred in Indonesia. In particular, the writer's task is to find out specific events that inspire Taufiq Ismail to produce poems at the very first place and communicate his ideas through his writings and other works (e.g. songs he composed for Indonesian singers, like Chrisye). In conducting this study, it is crucial to carefully read the content of both poems, recognizing what signs,

symbols, or codes Ismail used to write about Indonesia in 1970s, looking for the actual representations that communicate about the real events that took place in cities and other historical landmarks in Indonesia (e.g. what happened in Madiun, Jakarta, Semarang, Siliwangi, Yogyakarta, Solo, etc.), the last and most important one is to find out the true meaning wrapped up in hidden messages of what exactly occurred before and in the first half of 1970s Indonesia.

Interpreting signs, symbols, and cracking codes used in the selected poems will assist the writer to know what the content of poems are about. Another activity such as identifying and classifying kinds of figurative speeches Ismail used will reveal the way he narrates stories written in the object of study. However, identifying kinds of figurative speeches, finding out what is being narrated within the poems and describing findings are not enough in this study. To find out the real meaning of signs found in the poems and understanding codes Ismail used in his works requires the application of descriptive interpretations and analysis. This kind of method enables people to discover the real messages Taufiq Ismail wished to communicate. Through signs, the writer will be able to uncover truths and see which part and where to focus on in the research. Therefore, Semiotics approach is the right method of uncovering hidden meanings and interpreting signs that Ismail uses in *Bagaimana Kalau* and *Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang*. Semiotics analysis will allow the writer to develop such insights to find the actual meaning and messages that are hidden in objects, event or any forms of representation presented in the selected poems. Specifically, the writer is using Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics, that is known for its Triadic System of Linguistic Signs. In this Triadic (also known as 'Trichotomy') signs, there are

three parts known as **Representament**, **Interpretant**, and **Object** are known to assist people in recognizing both connotations and denotations of signs. Further explanation on Triadic system of Linguistic Signs can be found on Literary Review.

From the aforementioned facts on Ismail's reputations, experiences as a famous poet, nominations and awards that are given to Ismail, the writer is convinced that Taufiq Ismail is a poet whose poems are worth-analyzing and to be discussed in a more academic sense. In this sense, Semiotics is the best approach to conduct in-depth research on Taufiq Ismail's works. Therefore, this thesis is an emphasis on the portrayal of Indonesia in the first half of the 1970s through Semiotics analysis.

1.2. Field of Study

This study is related to the field of Literary Criticism. In this field, one of the approaches used is Semiotics. In addition to this, there is also a Historical-Biographical approach within Semiotics for it is an interdisciplinary study. In application, Semiotics study is suitable for studying poems. Poem analysis does not merely focus on identifying figurative speeches and see what it narrates or describe. Poem analysis will have the need to seek connotative and denotative meanings. This activity is concerned about finding meanings behind signs found in poems. It will not be as easy as people thought for one particular signs may not represent the expected meanings they assume exist according to how it is represented by signs. Therefore, the writer selected these poems as her object of study to analyze by applying Semiotics approach.

1.3. Scope of the Study

In using Historical-Biographical approach the scope of this research is limited to two different settings. For the application of Historical approach, this study is focused on Indonesia during the early years of New Order Era but limits the settings of time in Indonesia of the late 1960s until the first half of 1970s. In this period of time, significant changes in governance and memorable historical events is found occurring before and within the first half of the 1970s, this is exemplified in Suharto's inauguration in 1966, Sukarno's death in 1970, Japan's Prime Minister first visit to Indonesia and *Malari* riots in 1974 that set Jakarta ablaze, etc. Some of the historical events occurred before 1975 are reflected in Taufiq Ismail's poems. This discussion will heavily rely on documents, books, and newspaper articles that discuss Suharto's New Order.

The writer presents the Semiotics analysis by including Trichotomy or Triadic Signs and its diagram as introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce. These diagrams appear in every discussion relating to recognizing and interpreting signs, finding out hidden meanings as represented in form of symbols and code cracking process. Minor discussions are presented in the Analysis. In the Analysis, the writer discusses the social environment and political issues in Indonesia based on the findings and collected data. Social environment and political issues are parts where the Historical-Biographical approach are applied on and further discussed.

Through several considerations, *Bagaimana Kalau* and *Aku Ingin Menulis Puisi, Yang* are more qualified to analyze for they meet the standard of Indonesian contemporary poems. Since Taufiq Ismail is an Indonesian poet belonging to *Angkatan 66*, his works must portray some descriptions on Indonesian political

environment, i.e. events that mark the end and the beginning of Old Order and New Order in Indonesian history that includes two selected poems. Facts, as narrated in the poems and conflicts (both internal and external) that Ismail experienced, could be found in the poems. If findings in this thesis manage to present and cover up those varied elements, they contribute to the emphasis of Indonesian history and Semiotic study applied on Indonesian contemporary poems.

1.4. Problem Formulation

The research question for this study is presented as follows:

1. What are some significant historical events that occurred in Indonesia as seen through Taufiq Ismail's poems?
2. How is the Peircean Semiotics approach applied in the selected poems?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

With regards to the aforementioned problem, this study will achieve the following objective:

1. To point out some historical events that occurred in Indonesia as portrayed in contemporary poems written by Taufiq Ismail.
2. To apply the Peircean Semiotics approach in order to find out the hidden messages and real meaning of the linguistic signs found in the selected poems.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This paper is significant for Literature students who make use of the theories for Indonesian Contemporary Poem, Poem Analysis, and Semiotics study. Discussions and information in this study will be useful for those who have a plan to conduct their studies in Semiotics and have interest in studying Taufiq Ismail works or other Indonesian talented poets.

1.7. Definition of Terms

1.7.1. *Angkatan 66* (transl. Generation 66)

The term *Angkatan 66* is very political in a sense since it is related to what happened during New Order (Lande, T; Batubara, S; Syafitri R., Arpan, 2017, p. 4). Literary works made by poets and writers of *Angkatan 66* are regarded as the people's struggles which are made and published during 1963 until the 1970s and continue to the present time (Sutresna, 2006 as cited in Windri, 2015).

1.7.2. Semiotics

Marcel Danesi perceives Semiotics as a perspective of “science of signs”. Many people who often study and use semiotics would rather perceive it as something more of another form of inquiry that is deeply oriented in philosophy (2004, p. 9).

1.7.3. Peirce's Triadic or Trichotomy

Triadic, which is also known as three-dimensional and Trichotomy system is the center of Peirce's Semiotics (Chandler, 2002; Leedz-Hurwitz, W., 1993 as cited in Sendera, Yakin, & Totu, 2014, p.7). In particular, it is the main focus of his theory of signs. This is a model to distinguish from three different components that form a “triangle” system which includes Representamentt, Object, and Interpretant (Winfried, 1990, p. 83).