

## SATIRE IN EMMA HEALEY'S WHISTLE IN THE DARK: POSTMODERN STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The aims of this study are to identify the social issues which are being satirized in Emma Healey's *Whistle in The Dark* and and explicate Healey's ways in satirizing the social issues in *Whistle in The Dark*. The writer applies the theory of satire in order to analyze social issues in the novel.

This study applied qualitative research because the writer interpreted the novel in order to answer the research questions. The data are the narrator's narration and characters' utterances in the novel which are taken through scanning and skimming reading technique. The data analysis was done by classifying the narrations and utterances into the types of satire, discussing the findings, and concluding.

The results of this study revealed that there are several social issues in the novel that are being satirized by Emma Healey, they are; environmental racism, mother-daughter relationship, queer issue, society's fairytale, religious issue, technology in society, high-class society, society's judgement, work and occupation, cyber pornography, sexual behaviour, people's dissatisfaction, people's anxiety, women's insecurity, and teenager's mental illness. The most used satire in the novel is Narrative.

**Keywords:** Whistle in The Dark, Social Issue, Satire.

## INTRODUCTION

Satire is a term that often used to criticize, ridicule, mock, and quip person, people, or objects that become a matter for someone. From the past until these days, many satirist using satire in their work in order to convey problems happen surround them which mostly comes from social problems. According to Gilbert Highet, “Where other patterns of literature tend sometimes to be formal remote, satire is free, easy, and direct” (2015:3). It means that through the form of satire, someone or individuals can freely ridicule the object they aimed. Satire is a literary device used to criticize something in life. It is in line with as Harris’s notion arguing that inseparable from any definition of satire is its corrective purpose, expressed through a critical mode which ridicules or otherwise attacks those conditions needing reformation (2018:1). Critics can be a though of something happen in society. It can be delivered in any form, include satire.

. That means satire can be classified under the coverage of postmodernism, in case of postmodern is a term which close to social reality and criticism. It is in line with literature is a mirror of human life , because it represents daily life of human being. Many aspects can be represented as a literature, and it can be written in form of plays, poets, or even novels. There have been many novelists who write their works using satire to quip about something happening in real life. For example, Emma Healey which slightly including satire in her works. She writes satire itself to criticize social issues in society.

Healey’s second novel, *Whistle in The Dark*, is full of interesting problems from the society’s life that can be analyzed. For example, queer issue which is roled by Meg, mental illness which is roled by Lana, and anxiety which is roled by Jen as a mother. Healey seems to satirize those social issues in her work. some researchers from the past using the concept of satire and its elements as their basic theory, such as in “*The Uses of Satire in Fiction: an Analysis of Wahome Mutahi’s Three Days on The Cross and The Jail Bugs*” (2000) by Wasike Chris J. C., “*Getting The Joke: The Efficacy of Science Fiction for Social Satire in Kurt Vonnegut’s Cat’s Cradle—with Perspective Gained from Herman Melville’s Bartleby, The Scrivener*” (2015) by Ren Osouli, “*Satire and Symbolism in Bleak House*” (1958) by Louis Crompton, “*Satirical Methods in Eight Novels of Evelyn Waugh*” (1951) by Joseph Thomas McIntyre, “*Contrivance, Artifice, and Art: Satire and Parody in The Novels of Patrick White*” (2005) by James Harold Wells-Green, “*Satire in Edward Albee’s The American Dream*” (2007) by Frumensius Sonachir Huterlan Ampur, “*A Study on Satire Towards Society Through The Four Characters’ Attitude in Austen’s Northanger Abby*” (2003) by Fatma Widhiarti, “*An Analysis of Political Satire of Sentilan Sentilun on MetroTV*” (2005) by Junaidi, and “*Satire and Parody in The Fiction of Thomas Love Peacock and The Early Writings of William Makepeace Thackeray*” (2004) by Mary Elizabeth Contree.

The concept of satire has been developing. Satirical literature can be categorized as Horation, Juvenalian, or Menippean. Nowadays, many literatures take the Menippean as the way to satirize. Northrop Frye said that “Novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, but the Menippean satirist sees them as diseses of intellect” (2000:309). It shows that someone who understand the way satirical literature delivered, is an intellectual person.

Satire is one of elements of postmodern and it links with the social condition of people nowadays, meanwhile postmodern itself is closely related with criticism and social terms. This study focuses on the satirical elements in *Whistle in The Dark*,

because it provides suitable data for this study. In this study, the writer will analyze several social problems that being satirized, such as social issues happened in the society.

## METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative research method in case that the data of this study appeared in the form of text or word, along with a statement by Miles, Huberman and Saldana that "Qualitative studies are rich in descriptions of settings, people, events and processes" (2014:316). Moreover, this study occurs in natural setting, which means there is no manipulation in this study but naturally analyzed.

Furthermore, this study is based on writer's interpretation in analyzing the data by referring postmodernism approach focusing on satire. The writer tried to interpret through the personal experience of the writer, following the statement of Miles, Huberman and Saldana that qualitative researchers tend to work some extent by insight and intuition

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Social Issue

According to Puja Mondall (2020), there are two types of social issues. The first is caused by the way the community or the society is organized, and the second is problems of the adjustment of people to conventional ways of living. The findings of this study are in line with the theory of Mondal above. Every social issue which happens in the society has those two reason to occur. If some members of society disagree and refuse to accept a right which the community created, it will be a trigger leading to social issues. As well as problems of the adjustment of people to conventional ways of living, it can be leads the disagree party commit deviation along with the dissimilar opinions. In this study, the writer only analyzes the the social issues which are happen in the society, but does not divide them into the two reasons that suggested by Puja Mondal.

In *Whistle in The Dark*, there are several social issues that satired by Emma Healey which are explicated below,

#### a) Environmental racism

'A painting holiday.'

'Yes, I heard it said. From London, are you?'

'That's right.'

**'Wouldn't live there, I wouldn't. Wouldn't bring up children there, neither. Dirty place.'**

'Well, I suppose it depends on what you mean by dirt,' Jen said, thinking of the fields of sheep dung and cow pats she'd walked through the week before.

Based on the data above, Healey as the author of the novel seems like quipping about the 'Dirty London' through the knitting woman utterance. The writer assumes that the author of the novel satirize the social issues about condition of dirty environment in London. During Victorian Era, London was called as Dirty City. Of course, it was certainly based on many reasons. Filth can be found anywhere, such as streets, waterways, and other places. The people of London oftenly complained about the filthy living condition, but they were unwilling to provide their money for

necessary sanitary work. Beside that problem of filth, the number of crime in London also high-rated at the time. When the environment getting dirty from unbearable filth, the crime cases also rapidly roses at the time. From that statement, it can be said that 'dirty' means not only about filth, but also the crime in the city.

#### b) Mother-daughter relationship

Another social issue being satirized in the novel is mother-daughter relationship as a problematic part of human life.

'Think she'll tell you where she's been when she wakes up?'

'Yes, Of course.'

'Don't you believe it.'

'**We're very close,**' Jen said, though this was a kind of lie. What did she mean by 'close'? Close enough to have a screaming row, close enough to cry in each other's presence, close enough to sit for hours in silence while Jen waited for some sign that she could leave to go to work, or have lunch with a friend, or just make a cup of tea without the fear that Lana would be dead when she came back.

(Emma Healey, 2018:16)

From the data above, Healey seems like satirize the social issues about a relationship between mother and daughter in the society. Family is a place where a child learning how to socialize from the parents. Normally, a child has a closer relationship with mother than father. It is because a mother can be more accepting and understanding rather than a father which usually more to be judgemental and act as an authority figure. From that statement, it means that mother and daughter are supposed to have a close relationship. Meanwhile, Jen as a mother, said that she is very close with her daughter, but on the other side, she knows that it is a lie as the reality is she is not that close with Lana. They always have an awkward situation when it just both of them. So, the writer assumes that Emma Healey is satirizing the mother-daughter relationship in society nowadays, which mostly have a mother-daughter issue when the daughter in teenage age.

#### c) Queer issue

Emma Healey also satirizes queer issue specifically represented by the occurrence of pregnant lesbian as shown below.

'Why?' Jen said, putting her coffee down on a windowsill.

'**She says she's pregnant.**'

'Pregnant. Meg?' She pictured her elder daughter, the tall, brown sensibleness of her, the straight fringe and the neat shoes and the slight, sturdy figure in between. 'How?' she said at last. 'Or do I mean who? No, I definitely mean how.'

(Emma Healey, 2018:25)

Based on the data above, it seems like Emma Healey is satirizing the society's perspective about a pregnant lesbian. As already known, sexual diversities in Europe is a common issue. Europe is a country where people with sexual diversities

are possible to live in. In other meaning, LGBT people in Europe also have their right to live their choice in the society. In spite of common case, LGBT is still become a controversial issue. Some people in the society can accept their choice, but another some also discriminate LGBT people. There are some of them (LGBT people) living a conventional lives, while some others have to live unconventionally. In that case, Healey satirize the society which still doubt about how same-sex couple can have child. The word 'How?' which Jen said describes her hesitation on Meg's pregnancy.

#### d) People's anxiety

People's anxiety occupies the postmodern era is satirized in this novel telling how people imagine something as if it will come true in the future.

'What the hell are you doing?'

**Lana was standing against a wall, her outline blurred by the monster growth of a passionflower vine that had climbed over someone's porch and was stretching up towards their first-floor windows.**

'Are you following me?'

'Yes,' Jen said. 'Sorry'.

... There were dozens of flower heads open on the vine and something about them reminded her of Lana. It seemed fitting that she had hidden among them.

... The flowers looked so much like eyes, she thought, with their purple-tipped lashes; uncanny eyes.

(Emma Healey, 2018: 122-123)

From the data above, the writer assumes that Healey satirizes the anxiety of people. That issue also common in the society. People with anxiety oftenly imagines something in their head, as if its really going to happen. In this case, Healey satirize the anxiety of Jen which has a thought about the passionflower is suits Lana well. Today, passionflower is used as a dietary supplement for anxiety and sleep problem. It does closely related with Jen condition where she always fears about something happens to Lana.

#### e) Teenager's mental illness

*My body feels like it's made up of a thousand tiny birds flapping their wings inside my skin: a blue tit at my elbow, a sparrow along my thigh, a pigeon jabbing me in the belly button. I can hardly walk, I can hardly hold myself up, without the exhausting tickling of their feathers. The ticklishness is what makes me scratch at myself, with fingernails and pens and scalps.*

(Emma Healey, 2018:99)

From the data above, it can be concluded that the social issue which satirized by Healey is teenager's mental illness. Mental illness is a condition where someone always feels underpressure, uncomfortable, insecure, overthinking about

something, and any other negative things. It is usually happen to people which ever experiencing bad events. They oftenly see things in a way that they think it hurts them. Mental illness which experienced by teenagers is quite more dangerous. Because of the still-young age, teenagers oftenly doing something based on their instinc rather than their thinking. In most of cases, it can leads to a suicidal condition, where the teenagers would doing something to end their life.

## 2. Shape of Satire

According to Hight (2015), there are three main shapes of satire, they are Monologue, Parody, and Narrative. In *Whistle in The Dark*, Emma Healey mostly uses Narrative to satire the social issues in the society, but sometimes she also uses Parody, as explicated below,

### a) Narrative

*She sat down, too, folding awkwardly on to the ground, and watched the cars bump or zoom or sail up the ramp, the noise of them bouncing off the concrete surfaces and rumbling over their heads. It wasn't long before she felt trampled by them, slighted. Thick fumes, suspended in the damp air, engulfed her and Lana, coating the inside of their mouths and noses. Jen held her sleeve to her face. It was unhealthy place.*

(Emma Healey, 2018:136)

The shape of satire that Healey used in the data above can be concluded as Narrative. In this case, Healey satirizes the pollution in the highway of city through her critics in her narration in the novel. She also adds the detailed condition of the highway full of air pollutions on it.

### b) Parody

‘Good to know that I have your full attention,’ Lily said. ‘What were you looking up?’  
 ‘That farmer who found Lana. I just wanted to see if there was anything about him online.’  
 ‘Why? I though he was the Good Samaritan.’  
 ‘He was. He is. On the face of it, anyway. But, I don’t know, at the back of my mind, I suppose I’m also a bit suspicious. After all, how was it that hemanaged to find Lana when no one else could?’

(Emma Healey, 2018:124)

The data above are entitled the *farmer's in his den* by Healey in the novel. It seems like Healey satirize the dissatisfaction or greedyness of people. The farmer's in his den is a nursery rhyme from Germany which also called *the farmer in the dell*. There is nothing wrong with the song if it is sung, but the lyric seems to describe a greedyness of a farmer. The farmer wants a wife, so he takes a wife, but the greedyness are continue to his wife, his child, and his child's nurse. Here are some lyrics of the rhyme;

*The farmer in his den.*

*The farmer wants a wife, then the farmer takes the wife.*

*The wife wants a child, then the wife takes the child.*

*The child wants a nurse, then the child takes the nurse.*

*The nurse wants a dog, then the nurse takes the dog.*

From those lyrics of the rhyme, it seems like Healey satirize Jen's dissatisfaction with the condition where she tries to find out something if she does not know the thing. In this case, Jen has a skeptical theory that the farmer who found Lana when she was missing is know something about the different Lana's behaviour after the four-days-lost. The, she try to search something about the farmer on the internet so she can verifies her theory. So that, Healey seems to satirizes Jen's dissatisfaction and over-reaction about Lana.

The shape of satire which is used by Healey on the data above is Parody, although it is written in the form of narration, because the context of the narration is parodying the nursery rhyme. Healey is liken Jen as the farmer which is dissatisfied when he got nothing as sung in the song of *the farmer's in his den*.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing social issues and shape of satire in *Whistle in The Dark*, it can be concluded that social issues can be found anywhere, anytime, can be experienced by anyone. Emma Healey mostly satirize the social issues happen in her circumstances. It can be said that *Whistle in The Dark* is a representation of satire towards the family life in the society.

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