



## Human Transformation in the Disruption Era in the Indonesian Novel

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### ABSTRACT

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The big cities in the world, including Jakarta, cannot avoid the era of disruption. Humans behave like animals, and animals behave like humans. Humans intend to control everything; as a consequence, their actions become violent. Inanimate objects talk and move to demand life. This picture of disruption is reflected in the novel *O*. What is actually intended to be presented by the writer? This current study is aimed at revealing the meaning of the disruption presented by the writer. The theory of deconstruction proposed by Derrida was used to analyze the object of the study. It was applied to reveal the ideology that the text contains. The result of the study shows that the ideology that the text contains is the ideology of physical and mental transformation of humans and animals.

### KEYWORDS:

Derrida's  
deconstruction  
,disruption,  
transformation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Each city has its own pulse and development. The dynamics of one city is different from that of another. Several cities which rapidly develop are Depok, Denpasar, and Jakarta. The cities located in the hilly and upland areas usually develop slowly. The development of one city can be seen from the level of its citizens' economic, social and cultural lives. As an illustration, the industrial, trading and service sectors greatly contribute to the economy of Jakarta City (<https://www.bappenas.go.id/files/2715/8529/3891>).

On the one side, the very rapid development of a city, viewed both from its infrastructure and economic development causes the quality of the life of its citizens to improve. On the other side, such a development leads to a number of new problems. The fact that most of its citizens live below standard generally shows one of the problems. Employment is one problem that is most complained about. The poor people living in big cities generally work as beggars, scavengers, street vendors, small shop owners, prostitutes, singing beggars, and construction laborers. Their income is inadequate, and many are jobless. They reside in slum areas and illegal settlements. They usually live in the river banks and under the bridges as they cannot afford to rent a house or a room and let alone buy a house. The results of the studies conducted by several experts show that the level of the socio-

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economic life of those living in the big cities is very low (Tjiptoherijanto, 1999:7). This has caused the acute poverty-related problems to be getting more complicated. They are frequently forced to clash with the law. As a result, it is not surprising that crime rate in the big cities of the world is very high where pickpocketing, robbery and murder take place violently and arbitrarily.

Even the middle class citizens of the big cities cannot avoid different problems either. Nasrullah (2017) once wrote the situation of the big city community complete with its problems. Physically, the big cities are full of crowds that their citizens can enjoy; however, they have a lot of social problems. The relations among the citizens are not as close as the relations among those living in the rural areas. The different ethnic groups they belong to and the different occupations they have can lead to social distances.

The problems of those living in the big cities as reflected above are adopted by and inspire the writers. As they are sensitive to the different problems around them, they attempt to process such facts in such a way that the stories they write can include them as lessons to their readers. In addition to becoming the documents of human life, they can also play an important role in proving awareness. According to Damono (1984:6), literary works are written to be enjoyed, understood, and made use of by society. In this case, literary works present the picture of human life and what life is as a social fact taking place in the societal environments where they are written. Their writers are part of the societies where they live.

Although literary research focusing on human, individual, and societal problems has widely been conducted

by many researchers, there are still many facts that have not been successfully revealed. Several literary works adopting urban people-related problems are the novel entitled *Detik Terakhir* written by Alberthiene Endah (2006), the novel entitled *Winter in Tokyo* written by Ilana Tan (2008), the novel entitled *Tikungan* written by Achmad Munif (2000), and the novel entitled *Bulan Susut* written by Ismet Fanany (2005). One of the novels that narrates the human life in the big cities is the novel entitled *O* written by Eka Kurniawan, published in 2016.

According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (2018: 398), the word “disruption” is defined as ‘something that is uprooted from its origin’. The phenomenon of disruption is indicated by the rapid and fundamental (basic) change in which the old order is disrupted in order to create a new order (<https://nasional.sindonews.com>). On the one side, this phenomenon is susceptible to leading to chaos. Disruptions can take place massively in different aspects of life, starting from the economic, legal, political, health, educational, and business aspects to the socio-cultural aspect. According to Kasali (2017), there are four disruption indicators; they are simpler, cheaper, accessible, and faster. In literary works, a disruption leads to big change in general, and the development of production, distribution, and appearance of literary works in particular. From the aesthetical point of view, there are no clear boundaries between serious arts and non-serious arts and between great arts and popular arts. Everything is mixed up.

In the disruption era, there is no communication between one another but there is behavior of controlling and ignoring one another for the sake of dominance. The absence of communication leads to chaos everywhere. Concern and love for one another that commonly appear to maintain peace among the created beings turn into a sense of selfishness and full of prejudice against each other. This certainly threatens harmony among the citizens of a city. These are all well recorded in the novel *O*.

Recently, the cities with a savage character as illustrated above have started to appear. The cruelty of Jakarta City used to be reflected as a step mother. Jakarta with its large number of problems is well-known for its negative images. It is frequently exposed that its citizens, especially the weak ones, have to work extraordinarily hard in order to survive. Its crime rate is high as the citizens are not able to overcome their economic burden (pp. 98-99). The circulation of the news like this is not surprising. However, the burdens of the life of those belonging to the upper and middle classes are equally heavy too. They experience a lot of inner conflicts due to the contact with the sophistication of technology. The horrifying and merciless global current hits humans, causing them to collapse.

As the results of what is reflected by the writers, literary works are expected to be able to be the learning media for the readers to avoid the anti-humanist traits such as slandering, hurting, and killing. The event tensions and

contradictions reflected by the writer in the novel *O* seem to have several certain objectives. It is written to reflect what a big city is like and how animal characters dominate the story.

So far the animal characters presented in a story has been unnoticed. They are not more important than the human characters. The portion describing the animal characters is usually extraordinarily limited. However, in the novel *O* the portion describing the animal characters is huge. They dictate the human characters, causing them to lose confidence. In the disruption era, the human characters fundamentally change. It is this that has caused the novel *O* to be a special one and worth researching.

This current study is intended to identify the contradictions found in the text, leading to the identification of the ideology of the inconsistencies presented by the writer.

## II. METHOD AND THEORY

In the novel *O*, the world is described as a place which is full of chaos and negative things. The animal characters and human characters are mixed. The paradigm of deconstruction can be used to approach this kind of text. According to this approach proposed by Derrida, the main aspiration of deconstruction is to reveal the hidden and marginalized meanings of a text. It is assumed that the chaotic characters, setting and plot created by the writer of the novel are intended to shake the reader’s consciousness. What is intended by the writer can be traced through the origin of the structured concepts. The deconstruction approach assumes that the text is the center of everything. Generally, there are four steps that can be taken to deconstruct the text. First, the center of the text is determined; second, the ideology of the text is deconstructed usually using the binary logic form; third, the metaphysical hierarchy is reversed and neutralized; last, meanings are disseminated (Haryatmoko, 2016).

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *O* narrates the journeys made by humans in the metropolitan city of Jakarta. It is one of the examples of an extraordinarily urban city. According to Wirth (in Daldjoeni, 1997:29), it is featured by social class, economic, ethnical, and passion heterogeneities. The density of population leads to the competition in the use of the urban space. Its citizens choose where to reside based on the classes they belong to. The rich ones reside in the elite housing complexes, whereas those coming from the middle class choose to reside in the common housing complexes. And those belonging to the lower class such as street vendors, laborers, and beggars have no choice. They reside in illegal huts. The depravity of its citizens is hidden by the image of being a magnificent and intellectual city

The human characters in the novel *O* are, among others, Betalumur, Sobar, the Scavenger, Jarwo, Rudi, Wulandari, and Rini Juwita. The animal characters are the monkeys named O, Entang Kosasih, the dogs named Kirik, Wulandari; the anonymous parrot, the mouse named

Manikmaya, and the inanimate objects, such as the revolver and the sardine can. If observed, the human naming and the animal naming are also exchanged. Are the animals so worthy of occupying the human position that they are named after humans? Possibly, it is the way in which the writer provokes the reader's logic and awareness.

In the novel the humans are pictured as acting like animals. Their behavior is very cruel; they are killing, consuming animal flesh, torturing animals, and raping. On the contrary, animals are pictured as acting like humans and seriously intending to become humans. This is shown by the monkey O, the character which does not mind being tortured by its master. The monkey named Entang Kosasih is narrated to do its best to save a child named Ujung, and a dog named Kirik is narrated to help the monkey O. The parrot is the character which always reminds people to pray, and the mouse named Manikmaya is narrated to be able to tell fortunes.

The reflection of the exchange of behavior between humans and animals may indicate the disruption intended to be presented by the writer. In a big city like Jakarta, how humans work exceeds their abilities, causing them to suffer from mental disorders. However, the writer does not present the mental disorders that the characters suffer from; he replaces them with the disorders of human behavior in the form of cruelty. It is possible that this is intentionally done by the writer as the characters with mental disorders have been mentioned a lot, meaning that the writer takes the initiative of making such an initiative that his work looks different and can be differently appreciated.

The disruptions reflected in the novel *O* are the problems that are interesting to explore within the disruption context. Not many researchers have investigated the disruption era in literary works. The studies already conducted related to the novel *O* were carried out by Yusuf Muflikh Raharjo and Titi Setioningsih (2016); they connected the disruption era with the children's characters, and Meistika Intan Utami (2018) who photographed the urban life in the novel *O*. However, none focused on the ideology of the text or none revealed what was hidden in the text. They only viewed what appeared in the surface of the text. New possibilities can be revealed using the deconstruction approach (Haryatmoko, 2016: 215).

### The Text Tension Center

In the deconstruction approach, the first step taken is determining the text tension center. In this way, the main thing constructed by the writer can be identified. The text tension center in the novel *O* is the disruption problem. The reader focuses his/her attention on the disruption occurring to the characters of the text. The disruption appears in the form of changing points of view of humans, animals and inanimate objects. As an illustration, the inanimate object named revolver regards itself as 'being impressive' (p. 8). The word 'revolver' is chosen to show the reader that the object is

categorized as being dangerous as it can kill humans. However, in the text it is reflected as being able to talk casually and lightly, causing it to have the impression of being far from 'being terrifying'.

*Revolver tahu dirinya tak sekuat sepucuk pistol. Bagi para pembunuh keji dan maniak penembakan, ia dipandang sebelah mata. Tapi ia boleh merasa senang bahwa para polisi masih mempergunakannya dan seringkali menghibur diri bahwa mereka dan orang-orang, akan terus mempergunakannya hingga tahun-tahun yang akan datang, ketika alat pembunuh semakin hebat (hlm. 8).*

[The revolver knows that it is not as good as a gun. The heinous killer and shooting maniac underestimate it. However, it may feel happy that the cops still use it and frequently amuse it that that they and other people will continuously use it in the future when the tools that can be used to kill will be getting more sophisticated (p. 8)].

Similarly, the sardine can is also reflected as being able to talk by itself (p. 33). Then, the monkey is reflected as being pointing its gun at the cops and the other monkeys that try to imitate what is done by humans, even transform into humans. The writer indirectly presents what a disruption is like. The natural structure and interaction of the behaviors of humans, animals and inanimate objects are destroyed. The truth that the text construct is disruption. "Being disruptive", according to the public view, is negative. Therefore, the binary opposition that can be determined and becomes the umbrella in the text is chaos >< order. The reflection of disruption versus order is shown by the behavior of the cops who work hard to fight crimes (p. 9). The order is shown by the scavenger who attempts to become a kind man. In addition, the order is also shown by Rini Juwita who loves animals.

In the disruption era the behaviors of all creatures and inanimate objects are mixed. Humans behave like animals, whereas animals intend to be humans. The character O, that is, a monkey, is very confident that it can learn to become a human by following the monkey mask. The masks it wears when acting make itself like a human (p. 49). Even its lover, Entang Kosasih, attempts to look for its ancestors whom are told to be humans. They practice hard to walk upright (p. 50). "Humans do not bend, the Monkey! Upright! "The truth constructed in the text is the disruptive behavior as mentioned above. This attracts the reader's attention. The ideology of the text leads the reader to siding with the disruption mentioned above and criticizing it. Why such a disruption takes place? It inspires the reader's curiosity. He/she sides with the animal characters as their properties are like his or hers.

The big umbrella of the binary opposition, that is, disruption >< order forms the other oppositions. Several

binary oppositions were randomly found; they are human >< non-human, cruel >< kind/caring, indecisive >< confident, resentment >< gratitude, happy >< sad, dead >< alive, hating >< loving, patient >< reckless, willing >< reward one gets for doing something, angry >< not hungry, arrogant >< humble, rich >< poor, and urban >< rural. It was necessary to make a selection again in order to follow the dynamics of the binary opposition of disruption versus order. Then, four binary oppositions were obtained to support the main the theme mentioned above; they are cruel >< loving; lazy person >< hard worker, resentment >< gratitude, human >< non-human.

### The Text Contradiction

The next step is finding the evidence of the text contradiction supporting the ideology of the text. The disruption reflected by the writer is related to cruelty. Betalumur, as the character who works as a master in the monkey mask circus, is reflected as being cruel to the monkey named O. The monkey O does not mind doing what is told by the master in order to support its desire to become a human. It believes that it can learn to become a human by taking part in the circus (p. 48):

*“Aku tak mungkin meninggalkan Betalumur dan sirkus topeng monyet ini. Di sini aku belajar banyak hal tentang manusia. Dengan cara inilah aku yakin bisa meraih impianku yang paling dalam, impian terbesarku dalam hidup ini.”*

*“Impian? Apa yang kamu inginkan?”*

*“Aku ingin menjadi manusia.”*

[“It’s impossible for me to leave Betalumur and the monkey mask circus. Here I learn many things about humans. It is the way in which I feel confident that my deepest and greatest dream will come true in this life”.

“Dream? What would you like?”

“I’d like to become a human.”]

A dog named Kirik is reflected as being fond of disturbing the master by stealing its food. As a result, Betalumur often gets angry as it has never successfully caught the dog. Then, it vents its anger by torturing the monkey O. Its cruelty is also seen when it kills the Kirik’s sibling; even it eats its flesh. In addition, Betalumur often throws inanimate objects such as ashtray, used bottles, and cans at the parrot as it always chatters and makes noises. Cruelty is also shown by Jarwo, the character that bakes Kirik’s older sibling. Wulandari, Kirik’s mother, and her siblings were killed by Jarwo for being unhappy that its love to Wulandari, a daughter of a businessman, was rejected (p. 69).

*Jadi apa yang kau lakukan dengan anak anjing itu?” tanya Rudi Gudel. Ia masih menjilati belulang dan menggigiti tetelan daging yang masih menempel di sana.*

....

*Tidak. Wulandari yang itu hanya berumur sehari di tanganku. Besoknya, setelah ia pergi, aku memotongnya. Memakannya sendirian. Sejak itu aku tahu betapa enaknyanya anak anjing. Lemak yang berbuih karena panas api. Tulang yang masih lunak.”*

[ Thus, what did you do with the puppy?” Rudi Gudel asked. It is still licking the bones and biting off the chunks of flesh still stuck to it.

Nothing. Wulandari, it was only one day old when it was in my hands. The following day, after it had left, I slaughtered it. I ate it by myself. Since then I knew that the flesh of a puppy was very delicious. The heat of the fire caused the fat to be frothy.”]

The other character who shows its cruelty is the skipper when was watering the batik-making material ‘malam panas’ into the face of Kiai Sobirin causing him to be blind (p. 190). Rini Juwita, who loves animals, turns out to have the heart to kill her husband who disliked animals due to a trauma (p. 417).

On the contrary, the compassionate attitude is shown by the animal and human characters. The dog named Kirik feels sorry to see the monkey O being tortured by its master. Kirik asks O to run away, but O rejects what Kirik asks it to do. However, the monkey O does not mind being dead for the sake of its friend, Kirik. This attitude is also shown by the character Ma, a scavenger who often feeds the parrot. Although becoming a scavenger is identical with an occupation of the lower class, the character Ma has a loving nature (p. 99). The attitude of love is also shown by Rini Juwita that loves Kirik (p. 129).

The following binary logic refers to the lazy people represented by the characters Betalumur, Rudi, and Jarwo Edan; they all contradict the animal characters that strive hard to achieve their goals. This binary becomes the basis of the disruption taking place. One of the factors causing the world to be disruptive is the existence of the lazy people. Betalumur, as the owner of the monkey mask, relies on the monkey and the dog. They are forced by Betalumur to perform different attractions as what humans do. If they mind performing the attractions, they will be tortured by Betalumur. Intending to obtain big results but having the attitude of being lazy is one the attitudes that potentially leads to chaos. As being not willing to work hard, these people only wait for others’ assistance. Such an attitude is shown by Betalumur who is waiting for a pack of rice from a couple of kind scavengers. The character ‘Betalumur’ is also reflected as the character that wants to live well, causing him to look for ‘pesugihan’ in order to be rich easily (p. 432). Whereas, everybody knows that one has to work hard in order to be able to overcome hard life in a big city. This is the main capital as stated by Sennett (2006).

On the contrary, the animal characters fight hard to achieve their goals. As an illustration, the monkey O trains

hard to become a human (p. 48). Entang Kosasih, the other animal character, tries to become a human by riding a bicycle. It falls many times (p. 104-105). The monkey and parrot also teach one another how to become humans (pp. 104-105). “*Kalau kau yakin kau akan menjadi manusia “kata Si Kakatua. “Segala hal di dunia ini karena kita meyakini sesuatu ...”* [If you feel confident, you’ll become a human.” The parrot said. [Everything in the world works as we believe in something ...”].

The next binary opposition supporting the text contradiction is revenge >< gratitude. The novel *O* shows several attempts at revenge made by the characters. The attempts at revenge are not half-hearted. They want to kill. As an illustration, Jarwo is dead of being bitten by the mother dog named Wulandari; as a result, Rudi (Jarwo’s friend) gets very angry. He seeks revenge to kill the dog (p. 130).

*Dua ekor anjing, induk dan anak, dan ia merasa mereka telah mengencingi mukanya. Membunuh sahabat baiknya, teman minum dan teman makan. Dan, ketika ia berjanji untuk membalas dendam kematiannya, kedua anjing itu menghilang... (hlm.136).*

[The two dogs, the mother and its child, and she feels that they have urinated on its face. Killing its good friends, the friends with whom it ate and drank. And, when it promised to avenge their death, the two dogs disappeared ... (p. 136)].

Then, Rini’s husband, who holds a grudge against every dog due to the death of his younger sibling as a result of being bitten by a dog, appears (p. 126-127). Finally, Rini who is kind and loves animals kills her husband by trapping him in a room filled with a wild dog (p. 417). Revenge is a negative attitude. The matter of revenge is a matter of waiting for time. When the time for revenge has come, sooner or later, humans will release their buried desires. The theory proposed by Rene Girard (2006) reveals how revenge is satisfied. While waiting for the time to revenge, their thoughts and feelings potentially lead to a disruption. Revenge always comes to an end with either death or destruction. On the contrary, reciprocity element is shown by the character Ma Kungkung (the scavenger’s wife) and her husband who repay the kindness of the parrot that has taught them to pray diligently (p. 99). Talking about the aspect of reciprocation, one tends to place it in a respectable position. Repaying the kindness of others is a noble deed. Although one knows and is aware that repaying the kindness of others is a noble deed, one finds it hard to put it into practice. Actually, one holds more grudges.

### The Reversal of the Metaphysical Hierarchy

The final binary opposition is human >< non-human. This opposition is based on the existence of humans who actually occupy a respected place. Humans should be able to

create a peaceful life on earth using their minds. However, the fact shows that they actually do more negative things that break the rules; as a result, disruptions cannot be avoided. This binary opposition reveals that there is the reversal of the metaphysical hierarchy. The violent characters are narrated. Betalumur often tortures the monkey O, the character ‘Jarwo’ kills the dogs, and the character ‘Rudi Gudel’ is full of grudges. On the contrary, the animal characters, as the creatures which are not endowed with intelligence, actually act like real humans. The monkey O is a female monkey who is brave and fights hard to make its dreams come true. Entang Kosasih is a male monkey who is helpful. Kirik is a small dog which feels sorry for the fate of the monkey O as it is always tortured by its master; the parrot always shouts when it is time to pray; Manikmaya, the mouse, is good at fortune-telling. The binary opposition of human versus non-human can be regarded as the turning point. The reversal of the metaphysical hierarchy of human versus non-human reveal the ideology of the text. The turning point in which the crisis takes place is the time when the character ‘Betalumur’ transforms into a ‘babi ngepet’ (a pig with supernatural powers owned by someone and visible only to its owner) (pp. 423-424).

*Tak ada yang lebih merepotkan daripada hidup terjebak di tubuh seekor babi, di tengah hiruk-pikuk kota semacam Jakarta dengan belasan juta orang melekat dari siang ke malam, dari malam ke siang. Ia harus bersembunyi, juga bergerak, dari satu gorong-gorong ke gorong-gorong lain, dari tempat penampungan sampah, ke tengah puing-puing gedung terbengkalai...  
“Jangan panggil aku raja. Kau pikir aku raja tikus? Lihat baik-baik. Aku babi.”  
“Baik, Babi.”  
“Sebut saja namaku, Kampret. Betalumur.*

[Nothing is more troublesome than being trapped in the body of a pig, in the middle of the hustle and bustle of a city like Jakarta with millions of people awake from day time to night, from night to day time. It has to hide and moves from one culvert to another, from the garbage dump to the midst of the ruins of abandoned buildings ...

“Do not call me king. Do you think that I’m the king of mice? Inspect carefully. I’m a pig.”

“Fine, the Pig.”

“Just mention my name. *Kampret*. Betalumur].

On the contrary, the monkey named Entang Kosasih intends to become a human (p. 376). The original is usually revealed in a critical situation. The transformation of a human to an animal is not permanent. Socially, such a transformation is not accepted by society. Betalumur is beaten to death by the angry mass. On the contrary, the monkey O feels confident that its lover, Entang Kosasih, has turned into a human (p.

361). The animal characters are able to attract the reader as there are behavioral similarities. The reader reflects on the animal characters, not on a figure in human form.

### The Dissemination of Meaning

The final stage of the deconstruction analysis is the dissemination of meaning. According to Derrida (Haryatmoko, 2017), meaning constitutes the result of construction. It is possible that a signifier refers to a number of different references, leading to different meanings. Finally, the context will restrict what reference is referred to.

The result of the text center disclosure refers to the opposition of chaos versus order. The chaos constitutes the signifier. The three binary oppositions mentioned above, that is cruelty >> tenderness, revenge >> kindness, and being lazy >> working hard side with the matter of chaos. Such binary oppositions support the ideology of the text. They are forced to be cruel as they can no longer hold back themselves. They vent their frustration at the harsh urban life. Although they do their best to survive, the fate brings them to an urgent situation. They feel angry, disappointed, and frustrated. Then, they spill all those feelings onto another target, that is, the animals which they regard as the powerless creatures.

The turning point of the binary opposition of human versus non-human cannot be separated from the negative behaviors mentioned above. The harsh life has changed their mentality into the mentality of animals. Not only their souls that have changed into the souls of animals, their bodies have also changed into the bodies of animals. The character 'Betalumur' is reflected as choosing to become a 'babi ngepet' which is finally tragically killed by the urban people (p. 450).

### VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the deconstruction analysis of the novel *O* using the theory proposed by Derrida, several conclusions can be drawn as follows. First the analysis successfully revealed the text center, that is, the matter of chaos. The truth that the writer intends to construct is the matter of chaos. Chaos is presented in such a way by the writer that he can attract the reader's attention. The ideology of the text makes the reader pay attention to the chaos that has massively taken place. This is shown through the human characters with the behaviors of being cruel, being lazy and revenge. Humans act like animals, and, on the contrary, animals act like humans.

Second, the contradiction of human versus non-human reveals that there is the reversal of the metaphysical hierarchy. This opposition reveals the hidden ideology of the text. Humans are not only reflected as turning their mentality into the mentality of animals, but they are also reflected as turning their bodies into the bodies of animals (for example, the transformation into a 'babi ngepet'). On the contrary, animals are reflected as turning themselves into humans. This is done to satisfy their life and to earn money.

Third, the change in human characters (the disappearance of humanity) reflected in the novel *O* is a signal that needs to be responded to. As the subject, humans should introspect, for example, by improving their spiritual ability. This is implied through the character 'the parrot', which is good at talking. It diligently reminds people to pray.

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