POWER ABUSE IN LEGAL PROCESSES REFLECTED IN JOHN
GRISHAM'S *THE INNOCENT MAN: MURDER AND INJUSTICE IN
A SMALL TOWN* NARRATIVE NONFICTION (2006):
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

PUBLICATION ARTICLES

by:

Yanita Utaminingsih
A 320 090 241

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
2013
Surat Persetujuan Artikel Publikasi Ilmiah

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini pembimbing skripsi/tugas akhir:
Nama : Dr. M. Thoyibi, MS.
NIK : 410
Nama : Titis Setyabudi, S.S, M.Hum.
NIK : 948

Telah membaca dan mencermati naskah artikel publikasi ilmiah, yang merupakan ringkasan skripsi/tugas akhir dari mahasiswa:
Nama : Yanita Utaminingsih
NIM : A 320 090 241
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Skripsi : POWER ABUSE IN LEGAL PROCESSES REFLECTED IN JOHN GRISHAM’S THE INNOCENT MAN: MURDER AND INJUSTICE IN A SMALL TOWN NARRATIVE NONFICTION (2006): A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Naskah artikel tersebut, layak dan dapat disetujui untuk dipublikasikan.
Demikian persetujui dibuat, semoga dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Surakarta, 27 May 2013

Pembimbing I

Dr. M. Thoyibi, MS.
NIK: 410

Pembimbing II

Titis Setyabudi, S.S, M.Hum.
NIK: 948
SURAT PERNYATAAN
PUBLIKASI KARYA ILMIAH

Bismillahirrahmanirrohim
Yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini, saya
Nama : Yanita Utaminingsih
NIM/NIK/NIP : A 320090241
Fakultas/Jurusan : KIP/Bahasa Inggris
Jenis : Skripsi
Judul :
POWER ABUSE IN LEGAL PROCESSES REFLECTED IN JOHN
GRISHAM’S THE INNOCENT MAN: MURDER AND INJUSTICE
IN A SMALL TOWN NARRATIVE NONFICTION (2006): A
SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dengan ini menyatakan bahwa saya menyetujui untuk
1. Memberikan hak bebas royalti kepada Perpustakaan UMS atas
penulisan karya ilmiah saya, demi pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan
2. Memberikan hak menyimpan, mengalih mediakan/mengalih
formatkan, mengelola dalam bentuk pangkal data (database),
mendistribusikannya, serta menampilkan dalam bentuk softcopy untuk
kepentingan akademis kepada Perpustakaan UMS, tanpa perlu
meminta ijin dari saya selama tetap mencantumkan nama saya sebagai
penulis/pencipta.
3. Bersedia dan menjamin untuk menanggung secara pribadi tanpa
melibatkan pihak Perpustakaan UMS, dari semua bentuk tuntutan
hukum yang timbul atas pelanggaran hak cipta dalam karya ilmiah ini.

Demikian pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya dan semoga dapat
digunakan sebagaimana mestinya.

Surakarta, 19 Mei 2013
Yang menyatakan

Yanita Utaminingsih
A 320090241
The major problem of this study is how power abuse in legal processes reflected in John Grisham’s The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town. The objective of this study is to analyze the narrative nonfiction based on its structural element and to analyze the narrative nonfiction based on sociological perspective. In analyzing The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town, the writer uses descriptive qualitative method and sociological perspective. The data sources consist of primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source is The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town narrative nonfiction and the secondary data source are taken from some books, websites, and other literary and other matters that support this analysis. The technique of the data collection is library research and the technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis. The outcomes of this study are as follows. First, based on the structural analysis of the narrative nonfiction, Grisham emphasizes that those who are sentenced as guilty are sometimes innocent and are only the victims of power abuse. Second, based on the sociological analysis, there is a close relationship between The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town narrative nonfiction and social realities of American in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

Keywords: Power Abuse, Sociological Analysis, The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town

A. Introduction

Power is defined as the ability to influence someone to do or not do something based on orders given. The power can be affected by how high a person achieves in his education. It means that the higher of a person’s education, the higher power he has. People such as judges, polices, lawyers, detectives would have the power of a high performance in legal process. John Chipman (in Friedman, 1995: 1) states that the law as the
provisions outlined by the authorities to regulate the rights and obligations of the legal. The law is a tool to set the norms in society. So when we live in society, there should be a law and the process to control the human activity. By having the rules of applicable law in the country, it automatically makes the society feel safe and protected from all sorts of evil.

In the reality, the rights of human are sometimes abused by people who are not responsible for his own actions. Bratteli (2003: 7) explains that abuse refers to any willful act or mission of a caregiver or any other person which results in the physical injury, mental anguish, unreasonable confinement, sexual abuse of exploitation. Sometimes, a person who has a high authority abuses their power to pressure others to recognize something that never done just for the sake of people who have a big authority. Those who have an authority in law are police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, detectives, etc. These people have a high probability in abusing authority. Abuse of power which is committed by the authorities can be such as violation of the law (corruption, do the crime, and embezzlement) and violations of human rights. So power abuse itself is abusing authority which is owned just for the personal interest.

One of the official sites in America that worked on the case of the death penalty for innocent people is the Innocence Project. The Innocence project was founded in 1992 by Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld. The Innocence project has freed 305 wrongfully convicted people, including 18 who spent time on death row. Based on the statistical data of the Innocence Project, there have been 305 post-convicted DNA exonerations in the United States. The first case is founded in 1989. 18 of the 303 people exoneration through DNA served their time on the death row (http://www.innocenceproject.org/).

Through the case of abuse of power resulting in a person sentenced to death or life imprisonment inspires John Grisham to make a work of nonfiction written by way of narration that gives impression of such a
work of literary fiction. John Grisham criticizes about the justice system in America through his work *The Innocent Man*. John Grisham is one of the people who is still care about the justice, so it is encouraged him to write a true story that is experienced by the citizens of Oklahoma when they received unfair treatment during the trial proceedings. John Grisham describes the scene in detail from the murder, the search for evidence and finally establishes defendants who are innocent.

The major problem of the study is how power abuse in legal processes reflected in John Grisham’s *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*. Based on the problem, the writer formulates the objective of the study to analyze the narrative nonfiction through both structural element and sociological perspective.

Swingewood and Laurenson (1972: 11) state that sociology deal with the human beings in society. There is a close relationship between literature and sociology. Sociology is studied the real life, and literature is created based on phenomena as social life. Swingewood (in Faruk, 1994: 1) states that sociology is a study on people in society and on the social process and the institution embedded on it. So it is clear that literature is the work of art that expressed the human life and the problem of society such as religion, law, norms, economics, and politics.

**B. Research Method**

The primary data source of the study is *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town* narrative nonfiction written by John Grisham. The secondary data sources are taken from some books, websites, and other literary and other matter that support this analysis. The technique of data collection is library research, such as 1) reading the narrative nonfiction, 2) determining the character that will be analyzed, 3) reading some related books to find out the theory, 4) taking notes of the influence information in textual in both primary and secondary data, 5) arranging the data into several groups on its classifications, 6) selecting
particular part considered important and relevant for analysis, 7) drawing conclusion and formulating suggestion. The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009: 1)

C. Findings

Based on the sociological analysis of The Innocent Man narrative nonfiction, there is relation between the narrative nonfiction with American society in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

1. Social Aspect

The class model society in America is divided into three classes; they are working class, middle class, and upper class. Three of them are based on job status, income, capital and sometimes birth (Mauk and Oakland, 1997: 243). In The Innocent Man narrative nonfiction, John Grisham describes the social class in American through the character found in that story. The lifestyle of Debbie Carter show that she belongs to the middle class. Debbie is a twenty first year old who was graduated from the Ada High School and after graduating, she worked on the coachlight as a bartender. John Grisham shows the Debbie’s life as a middle class because she had her own car and apartment as the result of her working in the bar.

Besides the middle class, there is also an upper class in the America during the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries by describing the character of the prosecutor and detectives in America. As the educated people, the prosecutor and detective must graduate from at least at the university. So it can be the reason why the prosecutor and detective are included to the upper class. As the upper class, they have a great wealth and prosperous and pride with their job as a detective and prosecutor. John Grisham also puts the character of Dennis Smith as the upper class because he has taught at the Junior High School in Konawa city, but after moving into a rented house he got a job as a biology teacher and as a coach of basket ball in the
Noble city (TIM. 34). So by this description, John Grisham takes these as the upper condition.

Roy Williamson is the reflection of the working class or poor class. He works as a salesman who is marketing the product from the Rawleigh Company (TIM. 12). When his son named Ron Williamson wants to attend the baseball camp, Roy could not afford it because he does not have enough money. So by this condition, it can be concluded that Roy Williamson is included to the working class.

The social condition in America inspires John Grisham to criticize the condition in which there are so many bad habits done by the factual people mentioned in that story. John Grisham uncovers the alcoholic habit for almost the character written in that story. Ron Williamson is one of the factual people who have the bad habit of drinking alcohol. He often visits the bar to get drink and having sex with other girl at that bar.

“Ron was hanging around the bars, chasing women, and drinking a lot of beer (TIM. 25)”.

As the effect of the bad habit, the raping case becomes the usual thing in America. John Grisham also tells about the condition when Roy Williamson is accused as the rapist for several women in Ada. The examples of his rapist case are firstly, there is a girl named Lyza Lentzh was calling to the police in Ada and told that she was raped by Ron Williamson (TIM. 27). Secondly, the girl named Ferneyhough reported to the police that Ron Williamson has raped her in her apartment. For the second times in five months, Ron paid the bail. With two rapes accusation, Ron finally left his nightlife (TIM. 28). So by this fact, it is clear that the young people in America have a sex outside of marriage.

John Grisham also describes about the races found in America. Through the story of *The Innocent Man*, John Grisham tells about the white race. It can be found through the photos of Ron’s
family, Debbie, Bill Peterson, Mark Barret, etc. All of them are included into the white race. By this phenomenon, John Grisham wants to share that there is so many white race in America in the late twenty and early twenty first centuries.

2. Economic Aspect

Mauk and Oakland (1997: 250) claims that in 1994, the US economy recovered steadily and most economic indicators were positive. Besides that, between 1979 and 1996, the US created 27 million new jobs and leads the world in this area, even though the equality of jobs varies. These have resulted in the price and wage stability; the improvement of productivity and growth rates, the dollar has been performing strongly, although with fluctuations (250).

Through the story of The Innocent Man narrative nonfiction, John Grisham wants to criticize the economic condition in America since the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Sports can be one of the new jobs in America. The author emphasizes on how the sport gives the effect on the economic aspect in America. In the late of twenty century, baseball becomes so popular in America. The athletes of baseball use their jobs to fulfill their needs. The people compete each other to get the best position in the baseball competition in each group.

John Grisham describes the character of Ron Williamson as one of the professional baseball player. He has a big talent in playing baseball. When he was eight year old, Ron Williamson has shown his talent. One of the coaches of baseball in police eagle heard about the Ron’s ability in playing baseball, so as soon as possible the coach contracted Ron to join at his club in Ada (TIM. 13). Ron Williamson played in Yankees club. When he was adult and played in Asher, he became a baseball star player. Ron was elected with the highest price ever in the Ada city. Soon, he was a professional baseball player. After getting a lot of money from his playing in the Asher club, he
bought his own new car ‘Cutlass Supreme’ and he also bought some new clothes. Ron also bought his parent a new color television, and then he spent the rest of the money in a poker game.

Based on that real fact, John Grisham wants to show to the readers that sport in America can be a livelihood and can fulfill their needs. So the main point factor of economic condition is about money. Money determines if people could live in a better condition or not. Money also can secure the people whether he or she gets a better treatment of judicial. It means that if the rich people should face the trial, he or she can rent the best lawyer, but it is different if the trial comes to the poor people.

Through the story of Ron Williamson when he got a sentence of a murder of Debbie and when he was not be a baseball player. The Pontotoc County did not have a full time public defender. Ron who are accused of a crime and he cannot hire a lawyer to defend his case. The judge set a local lawyer to become advocates for the suspects who are poor. As the consequences, because of a little wages, the lawyer decided to refuse to handle the case. The judge often provides the cases to the lawyers who have little or no experience in criminal law. John Grisham portrayed this condition through the story of Ron Williamson. When he got a trial and he cannot afford a lawyer, soon the judge appointed a lawyer named Barney Ward to be Ron’s defender. As a fact, Barney Ward is a blind lawyer who always needs an assistant to finish his law case.

3. Political Aspect

The judicial system in legal processing should be done correctly and should not be misused. Gorin and Carey (1999: 12) explains that the ‘reactive’ and ‘proactive’ are the two major categories of federal prosecutors. The reactive cases such as a crime that focused on drugs, however, the proactive cases, actually take a lot of time because there is need a lot of investigative work that is done
before a person is arrested. Through the story of *The Innocent Man*, there is the example of the proactive cases in which during the trial, it needs a long investigation done by Bill Peterson as a prosecutor and Dennis Smith as the detective. Based on the story in *The Innocent Man* narrative nonfiction, John Grisham criticizes the judicial process done by the legal experts. In America especially at the Oklahoma, there are so many cases related to the judicial system. Through the story revealed by John Grisham, he describes the real condition about the judicial in America, especially in Oklahoma.

In Oklahoma, particularly in Ada, John Grisham takes the example of so many power abuse cases in legal processes. Through the real story of Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz, both of them are the victim of the power abuse. They actually should get the fair trial. However, the real condition is not based on the real fact. Because of the behavior of the members of the police and other legal authorities, finally someone innocent convicted of things they never do before. John Grisham takes the real story of Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz who suffer in prison for so many years. They got the death sentence for Ron Williamson and sentenced to life imprisonment for Dennis Fritz. Before the die execution came, Ron Williamson had a lot of pressure for being in prison. He suffered depression and his mental condition was unstable, but it was disregarded by the power people in the court proceedings. Finally, there are people from The Innocence Project heard about the case of Ron. As soon as possible, they helped and fight for the rights of Ron to get a new and fair judicial processes. Through the DNA test, Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz are proven innocent and set free.

By this real phenomenon, John Grisham emphasizes that there is still so many cases related to the abusing of power. Ron’s judicial case is just one of the real examples of violations of human rights that everyone has the right to get a fair trial. In the story of *The Innocent*
Man written by John Grisham, he also mentions another cases related to the power abuse. It happened to Tommy Ward and Karl Fentenot. Both of them are accused of killing a woman named Denice Haraway. In the trial of Tommy and Karl case, the prosecutor provides a variety of false confession. With that false confession, the innocent people are sentenced to death. By this phenomenon, it shows that the legal processes in America are still so weak. The innocent people can get the death sentenced because of the unfair trial.

4. Cultural Aspect

The US has created three major cultures. The first is an ethnic culture based on Native American civilization, Black slavery, and immigration, which attempts to express human diversity. The second is a political culture which tries to unite the people under ideal versions of ‘Americanness’ such as egalitarianism, morality and patriotism. The third is an economic and consumer culture driven by corporate and individual competition which encourages the consumption of goods and services (Mauk and Oakland, 1997: 2).

The American culture of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries inspires John Grisham to describe the real situation happened in the society. In the Innocent Man narrative nonfiction told that the young people like to go to bar and get drinking. It is one of the habits of consumerism. It is portrayed as the culture in America. Getting an alcohol and spending too much time at the bar are the usual event in America. It can also be found in The Innocent Man story that Ron Williamson likes to go to the bar and drink an alcohol.

“He was also enjoying late hours in bars and clubs” (TIM. 24)
“They drank beer on the weekends and discovered marijuana. They chased the girls. Partying became a routine” (TIM. 17)

As the result of spending the time at the nightlife, automatically the young people are habitually doing the sex. John Grisham also describes the real situation that happened in Oklahoma.
The author writes that Ron Williamson is a man who is very popular in Ada. He is admired by a lot of girls because of his skills in playing baseball, so he is also easy getting friends, dating and having sex.

“They were young, nice-looking, single again, working hard with money in their pockets, and they immediately began hitting the clubs and chasing women together. Ron had always loved the girls, but a few seasons in the minors had brought an even higher intensity to his skirt chasing” (TIM. 25).

By this quotation, it is clear that one of the cultures in America is the young people like drinking a beer and chase the girls to have a sex. So it inspires John Grisham to criticize the moral value in American’s society and to give a better perception to the reader through his writing in *The Innocent Man.*

5. Religious Aspect

Mauk and Oakland (1997: 366) explains that there are three main religions in U.S such as Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. Through his writing, John Grisham shows the protestant belief by describing the Ron’s family.

“Juanita was a devout Christian, a head strong women who had her family in church every Sunday and Wednesday and whenever other services were offered” (TIM. 12).

The quotation above explains that the Juanita grew up he family around the church. The children never missed Sunday school, vacation Bible school, summer camp, revivals, church socials, even a few weddings and funerals (TIM. 12). John Grisham also describes that Ron Williamson is a man who still know dozens of Scripture verses.

6. Science and Technology Aspect

Science and technology in America do not only concern on the industrial side but also focus on the forensic services. In the late twenty century, America has developed the science and technology through DNA as the tools for forensic services. The forensic DNA
testing technology has been applied to identify suspects and victims in violent crimes. The technology is based on the scientific fact that every individual’s DNA is unique except for identical twins. By analyzing and comparing references samples and biological materials such as blood, finger nail left behind at the crime scene (http://www.dnatestingforpaternity.com/forensic-dna-test.html).

In the late twenty and early twenty first century, The America has developed technology as the rich country. This condition takes part to the story of The Innocent Man. In the late twenty century, America has been able to hold the test of truth through DNA testing. This is another proof of the success of science and technology. John Grisham shows in his writing through The Innocent Man that in 1993, a segment of Donahue was devoted to four men who had been exonerated by DNA testing. Through DNA testing, Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz are exonerated guilty from their cases.

7. **Power Abuse Cases in the United States**

The innocence project has reported several cases of power abuse in the United State. Based on the DNA testing, the innocence project has been able to finish the cases or power abuse and exonerate the people who are innocent. The Innocence Project has exonerated the eighteen innocent people through DNA testing. One of them is Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz. Ron spent a decade on Oklahoma’s death row for a criminal case that he did not commit. He was freed in the 1999 by DNA testing. While his friend named Dennis Fritz was sentenced to life imprisonment and spent 11 years in a prison before the DNA testing proved him innocent.

In the Innocent Man story, John Grisham explains why someone innocent can be sentenced to death and life imprisonment. It is caused by the prosecutor and detective named Bill Peterson and Dennis Smith. During the trial of Ron and Fritz crime case, the prosecutor and the detective provided the witnesses with their false
confession. By a little evidences and just false confession from the witnesses, Ron and Fritz are sentenced for something never done before. But after the Innocence Project came and they apply for a reissue of a fair trial with using DNA test result, finally both Ron and Fritz are proven not guilty.

D. Discussion

*The Innocent Man* is a portrait of American Society in the late twentieth century. John Grisham through *The Innocent Man* explains that in America in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries there are three social classes; working class, middle class, and upper class. John Grisham mentions Debbie Carter as a figure who is in the middle class since she has a part job at the bar and has her own car and apartment. Then, John Grisham also mentions the prosecutor and detectives as the upper class. They exactly have a great education and pride with their job as the prosecutor and detective. The last, John Grisham mentions Roy Williamson as the working class because he works as a salesman, so he does not have a fixed income. Through *The Innocent man*, John Grisham explains that most of the young people have a bad habit of drinking alcohol and spending their time at the bar. Grisham also emphasizes that there is a lot of young people having sex without marriage in America. So there is still so many rape cases in America.

The dominant *portrait* of *The Innocent Man* is about the power abuse. John Grisham sees there are so many cases of power abuse in America. The unfairly judicial system can lead to innocent people sentenced for things they did not commit before. John Grisham tells through his writing that there is a poor social relationship between the legal apparatus and the convicted person. Actually the legal apparatus are treating the convicted person with arbitrary. They do not pay attention to the mental condition and health of the convicted person while in prison. The police often gives stale food for the prisoner. John Grisham also tells
about the law enforcement in America through this narrative nonfiction. He mentions that the legal apparatus have committed abuses of power by doing a lot of adverse actions to the society. Through *The Innocent Man*, John Grisham shows that there are a lot of unfair trial processes in America. There are so many false witnesses provided by the prosecutor. The community does not believe in legal authorities because someone deemed capable of protecting society through fair law thus provides a sense of fear in the community.

Through *The Innocent Man*, John Grisham wants to give education to the American society that they should know about their rights as the citizen of America. Through his work, Grisham wants to give a better understanding about how the law set up the society, how the law be the norm or rule that must be follow by any human being either from the rich and poor people. Through this narrative nonfiction, the society should know about the legal regulation in America, so when there is a power abuse on the judicial system, as soon as possible they can be aware of what should be done to get right as citizens. By knowing the legal regulation, the human can be taking against the abuses of power.

The last discussion is that John Grisham wants to criticize about the judicial system in America. He describes that the judicial system in America is still so week, so the innocent people could still be sentenced to death or imprisonment for life. Through the real story of Ron Williamson and Dennis Frits, Grisham wants that the court system is repaired as best as possible so the American people really get the justice of law.

E. **Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication**

Based on the structural analysis, the findings show that in this nonfiction John Grisham wants to deliver message that people who are sentenced as guilty are sometimes innocent and only the victims of power abuse. John Grisham writes the story that hit on Ron and Dennis as the two victims of abuse of power committed by the police of the State of
Oklahoma. In The Innocent Man story, there are so many forms of injustice that experienced by the innocent people. They get unfair treatment during the trial proceeding such as providing the false witnesses done by the legal apparatus. One of the innocent people does not get a better treatment of his mental condition during in prison.

John Grisham makes the story for both Ron and Dennis in such a way in the form of a story, so for some people might be impressed as a novel. This indicates that John Grisham conveys the facts not in the form of research reports, but in the form of narrative. So his work is easier to read and to understand.

Based on the sociological analysis, it is clear that John Grisham describes the social reality of the American Society of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries associated with the phenomenon of power abuse. Through The Innocent Man, John Grisham not only gives a lesson to the people of the United States about what actually happened and about their rights as citizen, but he also criticizes the government and law enforcement officials who have committed abuse of power for their own interests.

Based on the issue of power abuse, the writer identifies the problem of education through the research of abuse of power. One example of the problems of abuse of power that occurred in the field of education is a case of misappropriation of funds of the school operation assistance (BOS). The government has allocated a budget of at least 20 percent of the state budget. When the budget for education is so great, then there is a chance of misuse of budgets, malfeasance and corruption.

In the field of education, there are many cases of corruption ranging from misappropriation of funds of school operation assistance, abuses of authority in the procurement of goods and services that may be detrimental to the overall education. The corruption is caused due to human character who is never satisfied with what has been achieved. In
addition, corruption can occur due to less professional in handling and oversee the management of the fund so that it can be abused.

The result of these problems is the declining quality of education. This is because the source of funds for the betterment effort both in terms of human resources and means of supporting the learning may not be immediately implemented. The funds should be used to support the improvement of quality of education thus abused by parties who are not responsible. By the existence of these cases, the Ministry of national education should take immediate action emphatic so the fund of school operation assistance is not abused again. The government should set up and oversee the performance of employees in education.

REFERENCES


VIRTUAL REFERENCE


http://www.innocenceproject.org/