

**CONSUMER SOCIETY IN UMAR KAYAM'S *JALAN MENIKUNG*
A STUDY OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD'S POSTMODERNISM**
Masyarakat Konsumen dalam Novel *Jalan Menikung* Karya Umar Kayam
(Tinjauan Postmodern Jean Baudrillard)

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Abstract: *The research aims to reveal the consumer society in Jalan Menikung, a novel by Umar Kayam. The theoretical framework used is the postmodern theory of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard explained the characteristics change of culture in contemporary society and introduces the characteristics of Western society as a simulation society. The method used in this study is qualitative. The data acquired from a novel and analyzed using the conception of Baudrillard. The significant concept used is the change in value, simulation, simulacra, hyperreality, and consumer society. The results of the study show that in the novel Jalan Menikung, there is a change in value that occurs in the form of consumerism. This consumerism is in the form of consuming clothes, food, or drinks, certain types of buildings, certain luxury goods, consuming in orgies, the use of power, and high-class associations. Simulation processes of consumption in Jalan Menikung also happen on technology, especially information technology and language signs. In Jalan Menikung Umar Kayam describes consumer society as a complicated culture intertwined.*

Keywords: *consumer society; changes of value; simulation; Baudrillard; Jalan Menikung.*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkapkan masyarakat konsumen dalam novel Jalan Menikung karya Umar Kayam. Kerangka teori yang digunakan adalah teori postmodern Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard mengungkapkan terjadinya perubahan karakter budaya dalam masyarakat Barat kontemporer dan mengintroduksi karakter masyarakat Barat sebagai masyarakat simulasi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif. Data penelitian diperoleh dengan studi pustaka dan dianalisis menggunakan kerangka pemikiran Baudrillard. Konsep penting yang dipergunakan adalah perubahan nilai, simulasi, simulakra, hiperrealitas, dan masyarakat konsumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam Jalan Menikung perubahan nilai yang terjadi berwujud konsumerisme. Konsumerisme tersebut berupa kegiatan mengonsumsi pakaian, mengonsumsi makanan atau minuman, mengonsumsi bangunan tertentu, mengonsumsi barang mewah tertentu, konsumsi dalam pesta pora, konsumsi dalam pemanfaatan kekuasaan, dan konsumsi dalam pergaulan kelas atas. Proses simulasi di balik konsumsi tokoh-tokoh Jalan Menikung beroperasi pada perkembangan teknologi, khususnya teknologi informasi dan permainan bahasa/penanda. Jalan Menikung yang menggambarkan masyarakat konsumen disampaikan pengarang dalam jarring kebudayaan yang kompleks dan saling berkelindan.*

Kata kunci: *masyarakat konsumen; perubahan nilai; simulasi; Baudrillard; Jalan Menikung.*

Keywords: *consumer society; changes of value; simulation; Baudrillard; Jalan Menikung.*

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INTRODUCTION

Postmodern discourse in Indonesia began to bloom in the early 90s. In an editorial of a magazine, *Prisma* (1993) said that today's society is entering an era of excellence "imagology", reality (economic) defeats ideology (ethics) and reality is defeated by the image (the image of ethics) (pp. 2). In such conditions, the commodity "goods" is shifted by commodities "culture". Technology and industry knowledge form the basis of mass consumption. Production is no longer intended for the use of value but for the exchange rate. People then talk about consumer culture, about all the things that can be produced, and all the things to be consumed without limitation as if people are given the freedom to choose what is necessary and what does not need to be purchased (Wibowo, 2020, pp. 20).

Under these conditions, the background for the emergence of "consumer society" was marked by several phenomena, including the establishment of malls as shopping centers in various cities, especially big cities in developed countries of the world, such as Paris (France), Las Vegas (USA), London (UK), followed by other developed countries, even cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Bekasi, Tangerang, Bogor, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and others). Since the globalization era, the phenomenon continues to grow until now, among others, as can be seen with the establishment of Carrefour, Giant, Sun, Ramayana, and others. On a smaller level, various residential complexes and small towns in Indonesia stand as Alfamart minimarket and Indomart as the place to shop for the people (Fadhilah, 2010, pp. 1).

People are heading life in equal order and uniformity. Fashion patterns, patterns of technology use, diet, and leisure patterns lead to something similar and uniform (Baudrillard, 2011).

The problem that arises then is the unconsciousness of people in breaking their daily needs. Society cannot be observant to distinguish the needs of primary, secondary, or tertiary. Through various channels, namely advertising, television, music, movies, books, magazines, and others, the public is led to a society of consumption. These people live in an abundance of objects supported by the strength of global industry. As a result, people trapped in the chaotic cross mark and tied the condition to lose awareness of the value and function, then living in a culture of consumerism (Baudrillard, 1983).

In the view of Baudrillard (2011) consumption is understood holistically, in other words, consumption is social integration that covers all aspects of human life, both materially, spiritually, physically, and spiritually, and even consumption can also be false or fake. Baudrillard's perspective differs from economists who so far only view consumption as the fulfillment of benefits (utilities) based on the needs of an object/goods. Referring to Baudrillard's view of seeing the reality of human life in contemporary times, the analysis of consumer society cannot be separated from cultural analysis (Baudrillard, 2011).

Literary work is a means for authors to face the society in which they live. The author as a member of society captures various social problems in society to be reflected in his work. Thus, the public can be as source of inspiration upstream of the birth of literary works as well as downstream to create literary works has a specific function for the community (Wellek dan Warren, 1970, pp. 109).

Of the many writings, Umar Kayam shows that he is a person concerned about cultural issues, especially cultural transformation. In his inauguration as a professor at the Gadjah Mada University,

he delivered a speech entitled “*Our Cultural Transformation*” (Kayam, 1989). A theme that is still be followed and interested to academics, writers, and cultural observer. Faruk (2011), for example, as a student of Umar Kayam brought the idea of a multimedia society.

Jalan Menikung (Kayam, 2002) is the second and final novel by Umar Kayam and talks about a cultural transformation that occurs in the community. Under the heading *Jalan Menikung*, there is a sub-heading called the children of *Para Priyayi 2*. From the title of the novel, it can be said that it is a sequel to the novel *Para Priyayi*. According to Mudji Sutrisno (in Rahmanto, 2004, pp. 117), in this novel, Umar Kayam tries to cultivate the value and impact of conflict in a healthy public opinion. Umar Kayam’s fiction novel *Jalan Menikung* presents its style, which is full of humor, satire, and more attractive than the previous novel (Chusnanto in Rahmanto, 2004, pp. 117).

Regarding the above explanation, there are some interesting issues to be studied in depth, namely, the first value of the sign, simulation, and hyperreality in the novel *Jalan Menikung*: to identify the condition of the forms depicted in *Jalan Menikung*; second, the phenomenon of contemporary public consumption will be a reality in the context of Indonesian are experiencing a shift in values as occurred in Western society; and the third is about consumption in *Jalan Menikung* and functions of postmodern world depiction in the novel: to describe consumption society in literature and its relation to reality, to know the function of the creation of literary works for the community.

METHOD

Research method is a way of obtaining knowledge about a particular object and, therefore, must be following the nature

of the object's existence as stated by the theory (Faruk, 2012). Thus, every research requires appropriate research methods. The right method will make it easier for researchers in the research process and to get research results. This research is a qualitative type of research because the object of research is in the form of concepts and ideas. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, for example, behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc., holistically, and utilizing descriptions in the form of words and language (Moleong, 2018). Because the data is qualitative, the method used is qualitative method. The qualitative research method is a research method based on post positivism or interpretive philosophy, used to research natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection techniques are carried out in triangulation, the data obtained tends to be qualitative, data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the results of qualitative research are to understand the meaning, understand the uniqueness, construct phenomena, and find hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data collection was carried out using a literature study by reading carefully and repeatedly the novel *Jalan Menikung*, then recording the data according to the research objectives. The data obtained is then described by identifying the units, classifying by sorting the data into patterns, categories, and descriptive units so that the basic assumptions, models can be found; and the concepts used in the book. The classification is adapted to the concept of Baudrillard's sociological theory of literature. The three parts are described relationally for later conclusions.

DISCUSSION

As noted by Pujiharto (2010a) literary work is a manifestation of aesthetic experience as well as a manifestation of human experience (pp. 18). However, the events that occur in the mind of literature are often a reflection of one's relationship with others or with society. It fosters the attitude of certain social or even triggers certain social events. Literary work can also be a means to convey a message about the truth, about what is good and bad (Budianta, Husen, Budiman, Wahyudi, 2002, pp. 19).

With the author's literary process as a process of life issues and social reality, it can be said that the literary work is the result of a complex influence of socio-cultural factors. One contributing factor is that everything done by the author in his work may be a form of business to respond to reality, communicate with reality, or re-create that reality. Literary works also provide insights into the reality of society. Thus, it can be said that literary works have an intrinsic relationship with the community. The relationship can be in the form of negation, innovation, or affirmation.

Jalan Menikung novel tells the story of the third and fourth generations of the gentry Sastrodarsono breed. With parents who have positions and materials, the third generation grows into conglomerates in Jakarta. Only the Harimurti figures is portrayed not to be successful enough economically since he was involved in PKI cases when young, so his action is limited. Tommi became a wealthy businessman living and self-sufficiency. His life is an image that can buy, make and consume anything he wants. Even on things that are not necessary. To get an image and gentry status, Tommi builds the tomb complex which cost billions of rupiah. Actions taken by Tommi and his family showed symptoms of the change in value

orientation. A discourse of postmodernity as disclosed by Baudrillard in seeing the reality of Western society.

As exemplified by Baudrillard, in real space, the map is a representation of a region. The simulation mechanism occurs the opposite; the map precedes the territory. Social reality, culture, and politics are built based on models previously created. In the discourse of simulation, humans inhabit the space of reality. Here the difference between real and fantasy, real and fake is very thin (Hidayat, 2012, pp. 10). This is space that is not concerned with the categories of real, false, true, false, reference, representation, facts, images, production, or reproduction. All fused together in chaotic cross mark (Baudrillard, 1987, pp. 33). The cultural discourse offers a challenge and an opportunity for us to start paying attention to the other side of reality of today's society. A reality that can be seen in the products of a culture is literature.

Value Signs/Images in *Jalan Menikung*

Jalan Menikung showed the phenomenon of society in the activities of consumption based on the value of the mark, image, or prestige, not the use value or function. The change of the value is in the form of consumerism in the form of an object of consumption to food, clothing, jewelry, home or building, transportation, consumption of objects associated with intellect, sociality consumption, and consumption of social status. The main motive of activity of *Jalan Menikung* consumption is in the form of image motifs, as exemplified in the case of consumption of these foods.

Consumption of food in *Jalan Menikung* is shown in the excerpt below.

Jeanette, Tommi, and Bambang almost scrambled to name the dish after Claire. They also scrambled to get Claire to try all the dishes. Claire is

overwhelmed by their advice. But still, Claire tried to please her husband's relatives, with a few dishes. It must be admitted that he tried all the delicious and sophisticated tastes.

....

"Eh, you asked what to eat, Claire. Let's order our food at the hotel. It's more practical, right?" (Kayam, 2002, pp. 124-125, translated by Aya Ici).

Tommi's family consumes food not based on reasonable needs. Just to entertain Eko and Claire, they ordered food from the hotel catering. This was done to impress Eko and Claire. Tommi's family consumption motive is to impress and show prestige to Eko and Claire.

Consumption of clothes made, for example, during a visit to the Regent. Tommi is from Jakarta, a tycoon, and businessman who had returned home, desirous of restoring the tomb of his ancestors massively exploited local officials to support the plan. To obtain the support of the authorities, Tommi tries to create an impression and gain sympathy in his first meeting with the dressing (view) luxury.

Tommi came accompanied by Bambang. Both appear in a fancy and expensive suit. Mr. Regent seems very impressed with the appearance of his guests. Gerendeng Regent, a suit crafted by London ... quickly Tommi signaled with head movements to his son to come forward and immediately opened the bag and pulled out the contents. Deftly Bambang issued two big envelopes and thick. Then, two rolls of paper (Kayam, 2002, pp. 143, translated by Aya Ici).

Tommi and Bambang wore no longer a formal requirement for officials facing. They wore expensive suits and bought abroad to create awe in Regent Wanagalih. Tommi and Bambang try to

build their image as rich men or success through clothes. It was successful. Regent showed his admiration for them. That is, the Regent knew or was told that the clothes worn by Tommi and Bambang are made abroad.

Social Background and Author Background

Seen from the time it was written, *Jalan Menikung* can be traced it was written during the period of 1992-1999. Thus the social situation surrounding also the social situation of Indonesian society from 1990-2000. The decades of Indonesian society are in economic transformation, culture, and politics, like most third-world countries. The presence of information technology, especially television has a big impact on the community. Television grew into a force that changed the structure of society, changing values, and ways of thinking society. Private television stations have sprung up in this period. With the proliferation of information technology, there was a change in society. People who had previously lived in a traditional pattern, transformed into a modern, one continue to be postmodern.

As previously explained, the transformation from modern to postmodern occurred as a result of the failure of the ideals of modernity itself, which in its development showed various pathologies. The Renaissance project that was glorified in the ideology of modernism, in the end, has failed to bring humanity towards prosperity as its original purpose. One pathology that appears is consumerism in society.

Jalan Menikung was written by Umar Kayam, an author who is concerned with cultural issues. He was born in Ngawi, East Java, on April 30, 1932, and died in Jakarta on March 16, 2002, at the age of 70 years even. In dialogue with the U.S. Like et al (in

Rahmanto, 2004, pp. 1), Umar Kayam's reading tells a craze that has been conditioned since childhood. He comes from a family of teachers. He then developed into a bureaucrat, academic, and culture. In the world of authorship, he was quite a prolific writer.

His book of fiction is *Seribu Kunang-kunang di Manhattan* (a collection of short stories, 1972) which won the Horizon magazine prize (1966/1967). There are also *Totokdan Toni* (children's stories, 1975), *Sri Sumarah and Bawuk* (1975), and *Sri Sumarah* (a collection of short stories, 1985, also published in the Malaysian edition, 1981). *ParaPriyayi* (novel, 1992) Book Foundation awarded the Main Department of P and K, granted in 1995), *Parta Karma* (a collection of short stories, 1997), and *Jalan Menikung* (novel, 1999). Short stories translated by Harry Aveling and published in the *Sri Sumarah and Other Stories* (1976) and *From Surabaya to Armageddon* (1976). *Seni, Tradisi, Masyarakat* (collection of essays, 1981), *Semangat Indonesia: Suatu Perjalanan Budaya* (along with Henri Peccinotti, 1985). Umar Kayam is also a regular columnist in the *Daily Kedaulatan Rakyat* (Yogyakarta). Columns recorded in a collection of four books, namely *Mangan Ora Mangan Kumpul* (1990), *Sugih Tanpa Banda* (1994), *Madhep Ngakor Sugih Madhep ngidul Sugih* (1996), and *Satrio Piningiting Kampung Pingit* (2001).

Society Construction of Consumption in the novel *Jalan Menikung*

The novel was written against a backdrop of consumption phenomena in contemporary Indonesian society in the 1990-the 2000s, when mass media, both electronic and print, were growing rapidly in Indonesia. There was a change in the social structure of society from modern society to postmodern society. These changes can be seen in changes in

consumption patterns in society. Previously, people used consumption to fulfill their needs by relying on values, then changed to relying on prestige and image. Society becomes a society that lives in consumerism.

What Umar Kayam reveals in the novel *Jalan Menikung* is the world of construction which contains fictional facts. These facts are creations that are not referred to by most of the writers in the world of reality. That's just a description of the author only. These facts are intertwined with reality facts included by the author and can also be understood by the reader. Due to the mixing of fictional facts and real facts, a pseudo-reality is formed that cannot be distinguished between facts or reality (original) and fictional facts.

The forms of consumerism in contemporary society are physical and non-physical. Physical consumerism consumption of tangible physical objects includes consumption of clothing, consumption of food or drinks, consumption of certain buildings, and consumption of certain luxury goods. Non-physical consumerism is associated with the consumption of debauchery, the consumption of the use of power, and the consumption of the socially upper class. The simulation process behind contemporary societal consumption operates on technological developments, particularly information technology and language games/markers. *Jalan Menikung* depicts the consumption society conveyed by the author in a complex interwoven cultural web.

Reading the novel *Jalan Menikung*, it was found that consumption by the characters in the novel is based on the value of the sign motive and the value of the image. Use value and function value have been abandoned or are no longer the main motive. This can be seen in the consumerism carried out by figures

consisting of physical and non-physical consumerism.

Consumerism hyperreality creates conditions for the characters who are formed from a simulation through photographs or pictures, magazines, and stories. In his, *Jalan Menikung* has reflected facts fiction that depicts the world as it is said, Baudrillard. The world in question is a simulated and simulacra world, which forms hyperreality. The fictional facts conveyed in the net culture complex are intertwined. Readers who described the world can simulate what affects the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the reader in addressing matters related to culture. Umar Kayam in this case illustrates the postmodern world to criticize the world.

Complexity in *Jalan Menikung* is dominant in culture than other works of Umar Kayam, especially regarding cultural shift, deliberately used to banging realities, which are not given an answer by the author but must be decided by readers. In this way, the reader is forced to reflect on the cultural issues that occur and may occur in the vicinity. The issues are consumerism, marriage between religions, races and different ethnicities, status, value, and prestige. The theme of the author is drawn to the most extreme point so that it touches on the most fundamental issues.

Problems that arise as a result of contact or interaction with different cultures affect not only the characters themselves but also their families and the culture around them. The meaning of things that were originally described in a well-established way, in the novel *Para Priyayi*, *Jalan Menikung* was deconstructed by the author himself.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, we can conclude that the literary work is a manifestation

of knowledge and experience of the author's creation and constructed into a medium that can influence society. In *Jalan Menikung*, Umar Kayam used postmodern knowledge and experiences in the life of the community to create a literary work. The literary work depicts a postmodern world that is changing values as expressed in the concept of Baudrillard.

From the previous description, it can be concluded that there is a close relationship between literature, the author, and the social situation surrounding the author. The author captures social phenomena postmodern, capture and creation with imagination, then bring it to the reader, so that readers can "*Eling lan waspodo*" in the face of the transition era, modern culture transition to postmodern. The culture which is currently underway is experienced by everyone, everyone is formed either consciously or unconsciously.

Research on cultural transformation is very important to remember nothing is eternal in life other than the change itself. Individuals, communities, nations, and the state will continue to change with the progress of time. *Jalan Menikung* this novel research has presented one important aspect, namely the transformation of value particularly about the consumption patterns of society, many other aspects can be explored to expand knowledge. Therefore, further research needs to be done to see other sides of the novel that the reader or the public benefit from greater than the existence of a literary work.

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