Capitalism Ideology of Islamic Cyber Literature Writers in Wattpad Media in Indonesia

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Abstract. Technological developments also have an impact on the development of literature in the digital realm. One of them is the emergence of applications used by the public to read literary works in the digital world. One application that can be used to read literary works is Wattpad. Through this application, readers can choose the themes they like, for example, the theme of romance, religion, heroism, etc. This research analyzed the author's ideology on Islamic themes in Wattpad. The method used in this research is a qualitative method using Cawelty's literary formula theory and Marxism. The results of the analysis show that writers with Islamic themes on Wattpad media often bring up sexuality in their storytelling. The aim is solely to attract readers' interest in the story he has written. The more writings that readers read, the more writers will benefit. In addition, writings that are widely read will open up the possibility of being filmed (ekranisasi) so that the author will get royalties for the ekranisation of the work he produced. In conclusion, the ideology of Wattpad authors with Islamic themes is capitalism because writers on Wattpad reading media are not concerned with the quality of the stories they produce. However, they are more concerned with financial matters.

Keywords: Wattpad, Fiction formula, ideology, Capitalism

1   Introduction

Technology development willy-nilly affects the development of literary world. Literary products are originally read in physical form (book) only, but these are read through internet or called cyber literature. However, the appearance of cyber literature results in problem to literature lovers because the ideas arising are often not accompanied with the quality of cyber literature's writers. Even, the ideas of cyber literature writers arising tend to be free and lead to sexuality that cannot be consumed by all ages. Cyber literature can be defined as a product made and presented through computer. Cyber literature or electronic literature, according to Rosarion (2011), is the literary work provided in the internet by utilizing ability and contact provided by computer itself or through *Electronic Literature Organization* network (Liu, 2007; Lutfi et al., 2022; Rosarion, 2011; Viires 2005). Cyber literature is then developed into *blog,* forum, website,

and even social media. Internet provides space for literary activities to express borderless and free work. However, the problems arising later is the absence of filter for the works uploaded in the internet. One of applications accommodating the development of cyber literature is *Wattpad*. This application was launched by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in December 2006 in Toronto, Canada. *Wattpad* has had fifteen million users with more than 400 million stories. Lau and Yuen launched this application to amuse and to connect authors' and readers' worlds through a story. *Wattpad* has had more than 90 million monthly users per November 2021. The languages used in *Wattpad* are very varying. It provides not only stories in English but also those in other 50 (fifty) languages with almost 300,000 writers distributed in 35 states later competing for *Watty Awards*. Even the stories in *Wattpad* are often filmed. One of which is an Indonesian novel entitled *Dear Nathan* by Erisca Febriani.

These facts indicate that both authors and readers are highly interested in this application. The readers are presented with several genre options to be read through the application, such as horror, humor, adventure, romance, and spiritual. Closely observed, everyone can be the writer in the application easily. No filter does screen thoroughly the works coming in so that a problem arises related to the works' feasibility. Whether the works are appropriate to be the reference of learning or functions only as an entertainment to the readers, just like the vision assumed by Lau and Yuen.

In 2020, Yusanta and Wati conducted a study entitled *Eksistensi Sastra Siber: Webtoon and Wattpad menjadi Sastra Populer dan Publikasi bagi Pengarang* (the Existence of Cyber Literature: Webtoon and Wattpad as Popular Literature and Publication to the Authors). The result of study showed that cyberspace gives the literary writers a big chance. The writers can express their ideas as creatively as possible without a rigid rule. The media used are *Webtoon* and *Wattpad*. A work's standard of popularity is determined by the number of readers reading it. Another study was conducted by Mawardi (2018), entitled *Komodifikasi Sastra Cyber Wattpad pada Penerbit Indie* (Commodification of *Wattpad* Cyber Literature in Indie Publisher). This study found that the commodification of cyber literature in *Wattpad* is the development pattern of literature world in production division. Commodification is the works transformed into commodity to produce a new commodity that can be sold out in the market through involving Indie publisher that will be the media for creative competition to the authors.

One of genres interesting to observe in reading media *Wattpad* is spiritual one. Spiritual genre in Indonesia tends to present stories from Islam religion perspective. In Wattpad reading application or media, thousands stories with Islamic-themed spiritual genre are found. The stories presented in the novels are usually inseparable from romance wrapped with Islamic nuance. It is interested to study because majority of Indonesian populations are Muslims; thus it is possible for Islamic literature to have a distinctive marketplace within society. This research will see the literary formula in Islamic-themed novels wrapped with romance. Considering the formula analyzed, this research will eventually find out the ideology brought by the authors of (Islamic) spiritual genre in *Wattpad* application.

2   METHOD

Data analysis method, according to Faruk (2014), is a set of research methods or techniques, constituting the extension of human thought functioning to investigate the inter-data relation that will actually not be suggested by the corresponding data itself (p. 25). The research method used in this study is a qualitative one. Data used in this research is words or sentences related to the component of formula in *Wattpad* reading media. A qualitative research in popular fiction, according to Adi (2011), is intended to find out the spectators or the readers' interpretation on certain type of popular fiction. Through qualitative research method, the author can see the social reality existing through the consumers of popular fiction (pp. 239).

3   THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

3.1   Popular Literature

Popular culture is a unique culture and it becomes popular because it is understandable and loveable to the people. There are several types of popular literature, according to Adi (2011): essay and fiction. A novel can be said as popular fiction if its sales reach 20,000 copies, according to Gelder (2004). For example, a writer, Austen) could sell his work in more than 20,000 copies and it became best seller. In addition, Bourdieu also states that popular literature/popular fiction should follow the market taste and what the public wants. The language used in popular literature is also relatively easier than that used in high literature. Popular literature is based on large-scale production with broad-base distribution and direct potency (Gelder, 2004). Popular literature and cyber literature are interrelated and inseparable units because both of them assume ideology in popular literature, being readable.

3.2   Formula Sastra (Literary Formula)

Short story/novel is one of popular literatures categorized into several genres: romance, mystery, and detective. Adi (2011) states that a novel work is considered as popular because of, among others: theme, presentation method, language and writing technique following the common pattern becoming the trend among its reading community (pp. 20). Each of novels has its own characteristics. The characteristics can be seen from their respective formulas. Literary formula, according to Cawelti (1975), is a narrative structure or dramatic convention used in many individual works. The term "formula", according to Cawelti (1975), has two functions that can be related to the conception that will be made later. Firstly, it functions simply to point out the conventional way to treat certain people or things. Secondly, it functions to refer to the type of bigger plot. The formula refers to the types of plot representing the types of story. It is these types of stories that are called archetype (pp. 5-6). Cawelti (1976) also states that the formula is more conventional and oriented to the form of escape, and imaginary world creation, the fictive characters of which direct the readers to interest and focus surpassing the border of frustration the readers develop (pp. 38).

This article will analyze the formula in *Wattpad* reading media, particularly in the novels with Islamic themes. The novels with Islamic theme contain romantic elements as well. The authors use romance in Islamic themes to attract the readers' interest. In its analysis, formula theory uses the elements constructing the novel. Adi (2011) states that the approach commonly used to study the popular fiction related to historical factor is the one basically studying sustainability, repetition, duplication, and imitation of a form and an element of popular fiction. Adi (2011) explains that the analysis method using this approach is conducted by comparing other similar fictions based on their similarities and connecting them to the culture to answer a question "why can the works be popular? Using genre approach, the research is conducted to compare other similar fictions based on their similarities and connecting them to the culture so that it can be found the reason of why a genre can be popular (pp.228). Finally, the formulas appearing in *Wattpad* media can lead to the conclusion of ideology in this article.

3.3 Capitalism

As known together, the concept of capitalism departed from Karl Marx's view related to investor and laborer. Marxism perspective, according to Creaven (2015), is divided into critical and scientific Marxism. This research gives emphasis on the second perspective, scientific Marxism. This perspective is not merely a science but a means of criticizing the rationalized, instrumentalized, and objectivized world of bureaucratic capitalism, and positivist sciences naturalizing it. Capitalism, according to Tormey (2004), aims mainly to get profit and to earn money. But, it does not stop there. Not only do the investors need profit to survive. But the profit will be reinvested in their business activity, particularly for buying new technology and equipment to enable them to compete with other capitalism and to survive in maintaining their company (pp. 6-11). Talking about capitalism, we will be inseparable from Karl Marx's basic concept of Marxism. Agreeing Raymond Williams's opinion, Higgin (1996) argues that Marxism and literature are closely related because both of them focusing on politics, cultural politics, and cultural priority (pp. 6). Dewojati (2021) assumes that capitalism is closely related to industrialization because the spearhead of capitalism is industrialization. It is through this industry that the world develops and lead the people from traditional to modern life. He confirms that capitalism is an economic thought or an economic organization characterized with personal ownership on production instrument and its utilization to get profit as much as possible (pp. 14-15). This article will see whether the writers in spiritual-genre *Wattpad* reading media are the extension of capitalism ideology or they are the agents that resist capitalism through the work they write.

4   Result and Discussion

4.1   Literary Formula: Story Representation Pattern

Wattpad provides several themes for the readers according to the readers' interest, for horror, romance, comedy, and even spiritual, as aforementioned. This research focuses on spiritual genre. The titles appearing in spiritual genre are, among others: *Suami Rahasia* (My Secret Husband)*, Hamasah Cinta* (Spirit of Love)*, Astagfirullah, Sabrina,*

Atthara: my Personal Doctor, Pinangan Gus (Gus' Proposal)*, Gus Duda is my Husband, Asslamualaikum My Destiny, Halal Bersama (*Halal Together)*, Imamku Gus Alvan* (Gus Alvan is My *Imam*)*, Mahram untuk Najwa* (Mahram for Najwa) and so on. The people's reading interest in *Wattpad* application is very high, as indicated with 133,000 application downloads per April 2023.

Considering the problem existing, the story representation pattern in Islamic-themed spiritual genre only reveals (Islam) religious aspect in verbal or spoken form. For example, the appearance of words *Alhamdulillah, Masyallah, Astagfirullah, Insyallah* and the terms existing in Islamic variety of language. However, closely observed the spiritual-genre story in *Wattpad* application is far from Islamic.

Overall, the writers indeed feature setting in Islamic environment such as mosque (*masjid*), Islamic boarding school etc. However, the stories presented generally present youths' love wrapped with sexuality issue that can be said as very vulgar. The works uploaded in *Wattpad* often tell vulgar writing inappropriate to be consumed by the public. For example, in a story entitled *Suami Rahasia* by Fiah Handayani telling the mating between a female character named Alea who is still studying in a university and a man graduated from Islamic boarding school named Gus Alif. Although this story is packaged using the verbal form of religious narration, it tells an intimate relation between husband and wife.

> *"Ini baju apa, Alea? ..." tanya Gus Alif. "Mana bau parfumnya nyengat banget" lanjutnya* ("What kind of clothes is these, Alea? …" asks Gus Alif. "The perfume also smells so strong" he says further)
>   *"Fathul Izar lah, masa praktek bikin kue. Kita bikin anak. Ayo," ajak Alea membuat Gus Alif terus beristigfar* ("We will make love rather than make a cake. We will make children. Let's go" Alea invites, making Gus Alif says *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from Allah)
>   *"Astagfirullahadzim, ya Allah… Gus Alif mengelus dadanya (Astagfirullahadzim, oh Allah...* Gus Alif strokes his chest)
>   *Mau ga Gus*? (Do you want to or not, Gus?) (By Fiah Handayani uploaded since 01/03/2023).

The stories in *Wattpad* reading media have similar style, featuring vulgar sexual act. To attract the followers' interest, the authors of Wattpad are competing for writing stories with sexual act. As suggested by Mawardi (2018), many writers follow slavishly the conception that sexual act is not merely an excitement but it is the core component that should be present in and dominate the story. They even do not care about the plot and context of story. What they consider important is the hot sexual act (p.79). It is in line with Ahmadun Yosi Herfanda, an editor of Republika daily, in his article entitled "*Puisi Cyber, Genre atau Tong Sampah* (Cyber Poem, Genre or Trash Can)" considering that cyber literature is the literary work not qualified for printing (Situmorang, 2001).

Source: *https://www.wattpad.com*
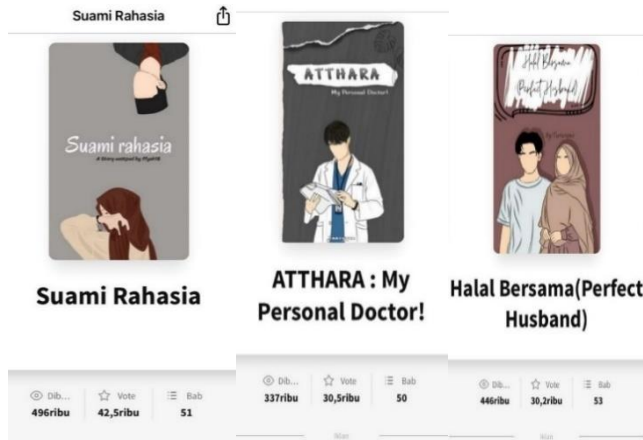
4.2   Authors' Ideology

Ideology, according to William (1977), has three definitions: a characteristic belief system of a certain class or group, illusionary belief system, counterfeit ideas or counterfeit consciousness that can be contrasted to the actual or scientific knowledge, and general process of producing meaning and idea (1977: 50). Meanwhile, Barker and Jane (2021) states that in Gramscian analysis, ideology can be defined as ideas, meanings, and practices intended to be universal truth, the map of meanings perpetuating the ruling social groups (pp. 123-124). The concept of ideology limits its use to the interrelated ideas by perpetuating the domination of dominant class. It is closely related to capitalism issue emphasizing the class with power such as investor.

Consciously, it can be said that the authors/the writers in *Wattpad* reading media perpetuate capitalism. The writings they present are generally meaningless. They ignore esthetics and moral message in literary work. Sexuality becomes a magnet to attract the readers because the more the readers who read their work, the more the money they obtain.

Originally, *Wattpad* is one of arenas to resist the publisher unconsciously considered as 'capitalist", but in its development, the ideology appearing in this application of *Wattpad* reading media also leading to the principle of capitalism. The publishers need the authors who exist in real world and cyberspace. The more the followers of the writers in cyber world, the more possible will the publishers be interested in recruiting them. The popularity of writers in cyberspace, the more possible can the publisher minimize their loss because their potential writes have had a distinctive marketplace. This makes the authors of *Wattpad* compete with each other for the large number of followers. The fame they get then makes them publish their work vigorously and get ISBN. In addition, they also compete each other for making their works filmed (e.g. Novel *Dear Nathan*). If the novels are filmed, they will get royalty and be more popular.

The existence of *Wattpad* writers is dependent on the number of followers and of comment they get. *Wattpad* application provide a feature to calculate the number of comments, likes, followers, etc. that can facilitate the writers to see the readers'

response to their work. The fame they get generally can improve their passion to write more and more. Thus, they do not care whether or not the work they produce is feasible to consume by the public. Most of *Wattpad*'s writers are the beginners who only want their works read by the public so that they can publish them in printed version.

Sources: *https://www/wattpad.com*
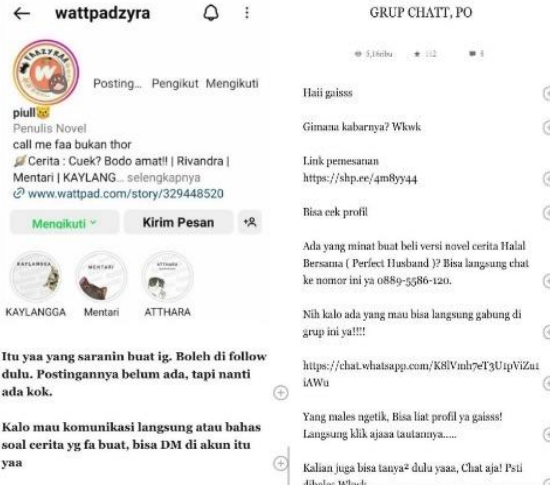
The writers are competing with each other for promoting themselves. As shown in the Figure above, they often promote their social media accounts such as *Instagram, tiktok*, and *Whatsapp*. Therefore, as explained in the story representation pattern section, the *Wattpad*'s writers are competing with each other for making story containing sexual act even in the spiritual genre. They follow slavishly an assumption that sex is the dominant core of story. They should understand that sexuality is merely an additional component to flavor the story rather than the basic component. It is because their ambition to be popular and to get more income.

Thus, their works can be categorized into popular work. Popular works are the ones created by those affected by democracy. Popular culture is created is created spontaneously by lower-class of society. Popular culture or called pop culture is coarse and sometimes vulgar in nature. Popular culture is often considered as the lower-taste culture and the remnants of higher culture. There is an assumption that, popular culture is intended only to get profit as much as possible (commercial). Therefore, popular culture is often called mass culture emphasizing only its packaging aspect regardless its content. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that ideology raised by the spiritual-genre *Wattpad* writers is to perpetuate capitalism. They are entrapped into their own ambition to be well-known by the public. They are the extension of investors (application owner). Although, they seem to present Islamic works, the story they carry are very vulgar and tell sexuality. On the other hand, there are religious-genre writes not featuring sexuality aspect too much. But they are found very rarely.

5   Conclusion

Technology development of course has positive impact on the development of literaturs in Indonesia. The witers of literature have many spaces to express their ideas in the presence of internet. They also can introduce the works they write through blog, application, and even social media they have. One of favorite reading application media to Indonesian readers is *Wattpad*. This application is used widely by beginner writers to upload their works. The genres presented in the application are so varying that enable the readers to select the works in which they are interested. Initially, *Wattpad* was a resisting media for the beginner writers who could not publish their work in both minor and major publishers. However, in its development this application become business media for the writers. For example, in spiritual genre, the output of works produced are far from Islamic values. The stories presented are around sexuality and often feature vulgarity. Islamic aspect is shown only superficially through the words appearing such as *Alhamdulillah, Astagfirullah*, etc.

Wattpad writers are competing for fame. The more famous they are, the bigger will be their opportunity of publishing their work and getting ISBN. They often ignore the quality of the work they produce. If their work can be published, they will get profit as much as possible. Thus, it can be concluded that the ideology they bring is capitalism.

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