

Postmodernism of Remy Sylado's *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne*

Eva Dwi Kurniawan

University of Technology Yogyakarta
eva.dwi.kurniawan@staff.uty.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The tendency of the spirit of postmodernism has led to all walks of life. Various forms and characteristics of postmodernism have also appeared in literary works. The novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado is one of the novels that discusses the tendency of postmodernism in it. This research will set out as a starting point to explore the existence of postmodernism in the novel. The formulation of the problem that will be raised in this research is how are the forms of postmodernism in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado? and how the forms of postmodernism are shown in the novel. The approach used in this study uses a postmodernist literary approach. The findings obtained are 1) enlivening the marginalized; 2) the breakdown of major narratives, 3) the tendency to world folds, and 4) unusual text aesthetics.

Keywords: postmodernism, literary works, and Remy Sylado

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism has become a widely present issue in all fields. Many circles put postmodern as something different from modern. This situation provides an opportunity for many minds to try to find a common thread between the two. However, the figure of Lyotard who is considered to be the pioneer of the idea of postmodernism, said that a work can become modern only if at first it is postmodern (Lyotard, 2009). Postmodern is therefore not automatically placed as an event that is post, or has been, but a state of affairs. This is the idea behind the birth of masterpeace Lyotard, entitled *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. That postmodern becomes something related to the situation. The development of the issue of postmodernism in the end has also infected literary works.

Postmodernism in literature provides many interpretations of the practice of analysis, method, or appreciation carried out. Various opinions have emerged regarding postmodern as a theory or not (Sudarmanto, 2021). Sudarmanto says that modern and postmodernism in literature are related to the characteristics of literary works, as genres, not theories. However, on the other hand, there are opinions that put postmodernism as a theory. This is as stated by Ritzer (Ritzer, 2005) that although

postmodernists reject theory, in practice they do theorizing. Endaswara then explains that postmodernism is not a single understanding of a theory, but rather respects theories (Endaswara, 2016). which are scattered and difficult to find a single common ground. Whatever opinion develops, what is certain is that postmodernism has become a phenomenon in literature. Various forms or symptoms of postmodernism have been detected in Indonesian literature.

One of the Indonesian literary works identified as a literary work of postmodernism is the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado. This novel tells about two people named Mary Jane Strom and Joko Trianto. Mary Jane Strom is Australian, while Joko Trianto is Indonesian. The two of them first met at I Gusti Ngurah Rai Airport, Bali, when they were going to Melbourne. Mary Jane went to Melbourne to return home, while Joko Trianto went to Melbourne to continue his studies. Familiarity exists between the two. This intimacy continues until the two will have sex. However, the sex did not happen because Joko Trianto was a homosexual, while Mary Jane was a lesbian.

Between the closeness of the two of them, there are two angels watching over. In addition to supervising, the two angels, named Laksmi and Miyahira, plan to turn them into heterosexual oriented people. However, the two angels failed to carry out their intentions. Joko Trianto still chooses to be a homosexual, and Mary Jane still chooses to be a lesbian.

The story featured in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* raises interesting issues. Especially in relation to the identity of the character who chooses to be a homosexual and lesbian figure. In postmodernism, this has become one of its characteristics, namely enlivening marginalized groups. In addition, the presence of angels that is displayed outside the norm also identifies the existence of postmodernism in it. Based on this, the formulation of the problem in this research is how is postmodernism in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado? and how is postmodernism imaged?

Several studies on literary postmodernism have been carried out. Among the research found, there is a study conducted by Fitria with the title *Perahu dan Kupu-kupu: Analisis Postmodern Lyotard terhadap Cerpen Karya Seno "Perahu yang Muncul dari Balik Kabut"* (2015). This study uses the theory of Jean-François Lyotard. The findings obtained are in the form of a shift from marker to signified, totality to fragmentation, and from language games and the sublime (Fitria, 2015: 204).

The next research conducted by Irma Satriani entitled *Postmodernisme dalam Novel Bilangan Fu karya Ayu Utami* (2016). The method used in this research focuses on the ontological aspect of the work. Satriani says that the ontology of postmodernism fiction explains three aspects, namely worlds, words, and constructions (Satriani, 2016). historical. In contrast to the two studies presented above, this study will describe postmodernism in the material object of the novel *Menunggu*

Matahari Melbourne, in Remy Sylado.

Postmodernism is the name of the movement in advanced capitalist culture, especially in the arts (Sarup, 2011). According to Faruk literary works of postmodernism have four characteristics (Faruk, 2021). First, the tendency to lose the boundaries between short stories and novels, secondly, narrative patterns or focalizations that resemble storytellers or self-reflective, third, a tendency to refer to myths, and fourth, the existence of language games. These four characteristics are allegedly contained in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado. In relation to postmodernism aesthetics in literary works, Faruk further conveys that there are four distinctive techniques of postmodernism, namely micronarrative techniques, development of unstable and incoherent character identities, metafiction techniques and the use of images and stories from popular literature (2018:45).

METHOD

The method used in this study uses a literary postmodernism approach. The steps taken are by reading and taking notes. The text of the novel is read holistically. Texts that have relevance to the formulation of the problem are then recorded to be used as a source of research data. Analysis of data sources was carried out using a literary postmodern approach. The analysis was carried out in an analytical descriptive manner, namely analyzing data sources in the form of descriptive text.

The material object in this research is the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado. This novel was published by the Perpustakaan Popular Gramedia in 2004. The thickness of the pages of this novel is iv + 202 pages with a paper size of 14 cm x 21 cm. The formal object of this research is postmodernism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four forms of postmodernism are found in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne*. The four forms are 1) enlivening the marginalized, 2) breaking down major narratives, 3) the tendency to world folding, and 4) unusual text aesthetics. Further explanation of the four forms of postmodernism will be described in the following subsection.

Enlightenment of the Marginal

Among the key concepts of postmodernism is the presence of a spirit to enliven marginal, marginal and minority groups. This spirit is more directed to the celebration of pluralism. Everything that was seen in the past as marginal, out of focus, marginal, or weak, is then seen as something different. These groups then get a place in the postmodernist lens to be seen more deeply in their existence.

The novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* shows that there is room to raise marginalized groups. Postmodern is deliberately present to complement the matters of literary research from the modern side which often overrides the small things (Endraswara, 2004: 168). The terms include minority, marginalized, and marginalized groups. These groups are homosexuals and lesbians. In the novel, the story that is lifted, ultimately revolves around the lives of homosexual and lesbian groups.

Don't be sorry, Joko. We both represent our world. I also can't have sex with men. Because I'm actually a lesbian myself. (Sylado, 2004: 202).

Jangan bermaaf, Joko. Kita sama-sama mewakili dunia kita. Saya juga tidak sanggup melakukan seks dengan lelaki. Sebab sesungguhnya saya sendiri pun seorang lesbian. (Sylado, 2004: 202).

Homosexuals are represented by a character named Joko Trianto, while the lesbian group is represented by a character named Mary Jane Strom. With the story that raises about minority groups, or those who are marginalized, this novel is a form of novel which contains elements of postmodernism. Hutcheon (2004: 273) says that postmodernism inevitably involves representational ideology, including self-representation. The presence of homosexual and lesbian figures is a form of representational political presence regarding the existence of minority groups.

Big Narrative Breakdown

Big narratives often provide a basis for the perspectives that develop in society. The presence of postmodernism provides an open space to dismantle the existence of a grand narrative. Various things related to the grand narrative, in reality are just an image or construction. For that reason, what is milling around are only efforts to fight construction. There is no such thing as a big or small narrative, everything is a narrative.

Among the big narratives that want to be broken down in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* are the presence of two angels named Laksmi and Miyahira. The presence of the two angels is shown explicitly to destroy the concept of narrative that has been the guideline for the audience.

However, in this offer to believe, if you are accustomed to believing in angels based on figures painted by Western painters from the Renaissance and Baroque gates, which display their angels in a Western way and seem to have wings like eagles, so that your insight is framed, died there, so from now on, by believing in the angelic characters in this story named Miyahira and Lakshmi, then you must refuse and say boldly and confidently, at least for the time being as this story progresses, that angels are neither winged nor Western-typed. (Sylado, 2004: 15-16).

Hanya saja, dalam tawaran untuk percaya ini, jika Anda sudah terbiasa memercayai malaikat berdasarkan sosok yang dilukis oleh pelukis-pelukis Barat dari gerbang Renaissance dan Baroque, yang menampilkan malaikat-malaikatnya secara Barat dan seakan-akan bersayap seperti burung rajawali, sehingga wawasan Anda terbingkai mati di situ, maka mulai saat ini, dengan memercayai tokoh malaikat dalam cerita ini yang bernama Miyahira dan Lakshmi, maka Anda harus menolak dan berkata dengan berani dan yakin, setidaknya sementara selama cerita ini berlangsung, bahwa malaikat tidaklah bersayap dan tidaklah pula bertipe Barat. (Sylado, 2004: 15—16).

The text quote above has attempted to dismantle the concept or perspective on the existence of angels. The existence of an angel who has been narrated as a figure with wings and is similar to Western paintings, is not portrayed as such. The concept of angels is dismantled by being imaged as a wingless and western-type figure. This kind of thing has become a hallmark of postmodernism. Concepts that have often been held and used as guidelines are then dismantled by showing them as opposite or different figures or images.

Tendency to the Folding of the World

The idea of the folding of the world identifies the existence of a compression of space and time. This concept borrows a term from Piliang (2006: 48), which defines folding the world as a general term to describe various phenomena of compression, abbreviation, compaction, reductionism, and simulation. The concept used by Piliang basically adopts the concepts presented by Piliang. Heidegger on image ontology, Baudrillard on world miniaturization and imagology, Wertheim on cyberspace, Ritzer on McDonalozation, Virlio on dromology and chronopolitics, Giddens on hedging, Mihaly on the colonialization of memes, and Potsman on technopoly. All these concepts identify to a very complex form.

The folding of the world seen in *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* manifests itself in the presence of a small distance space. The world is seen as something like a village. No longer are the spaces wide and unreachable. The distance seemed to be shortened or folded with the appearance of information about countries and ethnic groups that were brought together without any significant obstacles.

Two pairs of eyes watched seriously.

The one

Japanese eyes.

The one

Indian eyes.

What India can do

 speak Makassar.

 What Japan can do

 speak Batak. (Sylado, 2004: 14).

Dua pasang mata memperhatikan dengan serius.
Yang satu
mata orang Jepang.
Yang satu
mata orang India.
Yang India bisa
bercakap Makasar.
Yang Jepang bisa
bercakap Batak. (Sylado, 2004: 14).

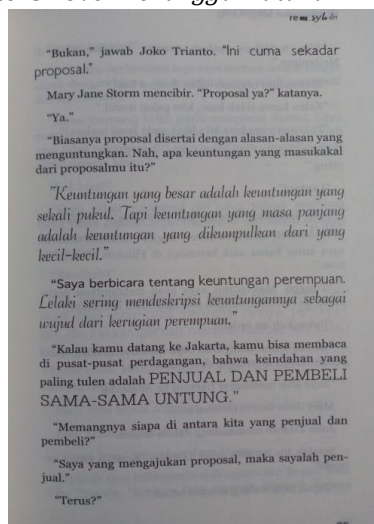
The text excerpt above shows the existence of a space that is put together. National, linguistic and physical identity, displayed without any boundaries that seem remote and strictly dichotomous. Physical eyes that are Japanese with Batak language, and physical eyes of India with Makassar language, become an identity that space becomes smaller or folded. The identity of the country, even though it is displayed physically, still gives the image that different ethnic groups can be combined and unified in the novel. The novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* shows this. Postmodernism is shown by folding the presence of ethnic groups that seem distant and different, into a unified identity, and not far apart.

Unusual Text Aesthetics

Experimentation is one of the characteristics of postmodern art. Various unusual things, centered as a form of novelty. Among the novelties that have been carried out are using different text forms that are commonly used. Whereas in the general novel text, there is consistency in the type and form of the letters, in *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* that consistency is intentionally omitted. What is more displayed is the diversity of types and sizes of letters. Regarding this, it can be seen in the layout image of the novel text *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* below:

Picture 1:

Lay out teks novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne*



Source: *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne*, page 65

Picture. 1 above shows a different layout from the usual novels. Irregularity as a feature of postmodernism is shown in this novel. Inconsistency becomes consistent. Various forms of fonts and sizes, displayed scattered. This has become a form of postmodernism.

Another thing to note is what Pujiharto (2010) refers to as worlds on paper. In postmodern Indonesian fiction there is a displacement of the space of words so that there is an emphasis on empty space (Pujiharto, 2010: 410). The empty space in the novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* can be seen from the presence of different types of text and letters. This is one of the characteristics of postmodern works.

CONCLUSION

Postmodernism has become a form that is present in literary works. The novel *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne* by Remy Sylado is one of the novels that elevates the spirit of postmodernism. This can be seen through the four forms presented in it. First, there is the enrichment of the marginalized. This is marked by the appearance of figures who have homosexual and lesbian orientations. Through characters who have such an orientation, it can be said that this novel lifts the spirit of postmodernism which seeks to uplift marginal groups. Second, the breakdown of the big narrative. This is shown by portraying angels that are different from the norm. If the concept of an angel is often depicted as a winged and similar figure in Renaissance and Baroque images, in this novel the image is torn down and replaced with a wingless and non-Western-type figure.

Third, the tendency to world folding. This can be seen from the ethnic identity which is then shown as something that is not distant. Japan, India, Makassar, and Batak, are shown as a unity that is not distant, but becomes a unity that is seen as unlimited by space and distance. And fourth, there is an aesthetic that is commonplace. This is indicated by the appearance of the text or the layout of the novel that enlivens the use of different types and sizes of letters. In this way, the spirit of postmodernism has been displayed.

REFERENCES

- Endraswara, Suwardi. (2004). *Metodelogi Penelitian Sastra: Epistemologi, Model, Teori, dan Aplikasi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Widyatama.
- Endraswara, Suwardi. (2016). *Metodelogi Penelitian Postmodernisme Sastra: Penafsiran, Pengejaran, dan Permainan Makna*. Yogyakarta: CAPS.
- Faruk. (2018). *Nasionalisme Puitis: Sastra, Politik, dan Kajian Budaya*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

- Faruk (2021). *Politik dan Poetik: dalam Sastra dan Film*. Yogyakarta: JBS.
- Fitria. (2015). Perahu dan Kupu-kupu: Analisis Postmodern Lyotard terhadap Cerpen Karya Seno “Perahu yang Muncul dari Balik Kabut”, *Jurnal Kandai Vol. 11, No.2, November, page 189—205*.
- Hutcheon, Linda. (2004). *Politik Postmodernisme*. Translated by Apri Danarto. Yogyakarta: Jendela.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. (2009). *Kondisi Postmodern: Suatu Laporan mengenai Pengetahuan*. Translated by Dian Vita Ellyati. Surabaya: Selasar.
- Piliang, Yasraf Amir. (2006). *Dunia yang Dilipat*, Second edition. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Pujiharto. (2010). *Perubahan Puitika dalam Fiksi Indonesia: dari Modernisme ke Pascamodernisme*. Yogyakarta: Elmatara.
- Ritzer, George. (2015). *Teori Sosial Postmodern*. Translated by Muhammad Taufik. Yogyakarta: Juxtapose.
- Sarup, Madam. (2011). *Poststrukturalisme & Posmodernisme*. Translated by Medhy Aginta Hidayat, Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Satriani, Irma. (2016). Postmodernisme dalam Novel Bilangan Fu Karya Ayu Utami, *Jurnal Retorika, Volume 9, No. 1, Februari, page 25—32*.
- Sudarmanto, Budi Agung. (2021). “Postmodernisme Sastra” in *Teori Sastra Masa Depan*. Edited by Suwardi Endraswara. Yogyakarta: Beranda.
- Sylado, Remy. (2004). *Menunggu Matahari Melbourne*. Jakarta: KPG.