



Book Review of *Perempuan Jogja* by Achmad Munif

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ABSTRACT

Melalui novel *Perempuan Jogja* yang ditulis dengan indah oleh Achmad Munif, pembaca diajak untuk menyusuri kehidupan seorang perempuan sederhana bernama Rumanti, yang begitu teguh menggenggam erat prinsipnya sebagai perempuan Jawa. Rumanti, perempuan yang ‘nrimo’ dihadapkan dengan kenyataan di mana suaminya memutuskan untuk berpoligami. Dalam novel tersebut diceritakan bagaimana eksistensi nilai budaya Jawa yang dilahirkan dalam sosok Rumanti tetap bertahan di kehidupan masyarakat modern seperti sekarang. Rumanti tetap berbakti kepada suaminya dan menghormati keputusan suaminya meski suaminya bertindak tidak adil terhadapnya. Novel ini mengangkat nilai – nilai moral budaya masyarakat Jawa seperti kesetiaan dan kejujuran yang saat ini mulai dipandang sebelah mata yang dihadirkan dalam sosok Rumanti.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nowadays, Indonesian people have been through globalization in many aspects which drive change in society. Several aspects have arisen dominantly in technology, politics, economics, education, and culture.

One of the aspects the Indonesia people encounter now is related to the culture. Modern women and men forget their culture and their tradition to behave in society. They throw away their *unggah-ungguh* or manner and become free modern citizens. For women, they think about becoming modern career women. They start to behave independently and become ambitious, materialistic and hedonist women. They have left behind honesty and faith relationship even, they are easy to make money instantly. Likewise, men they have become metrosexual and egoistic. They like to make relationship without commitments, feel free to make decisions to find their own satisfaction and prioritize their success only.

However Rumanti, the main character of the novel *Perempuan Jogja* by Achmad Munif is arisen as simple Javanese woman who still hold Javanese traditional values. She is a modest woman who is married to Danu and lives in Jogjakarta.

Modesty of Javanese woman through Rumanti's life story leads the writer to choose the novel as the object of this book review. The author writes Rumanti

as a woman who manages herself to be an obedient wife. After she gets married to Danu, she has two kids, Dani and Ruri. As the time goes by, her husband starts to leave her behind. Danu tells her that he wants to marry his ex-girlfriend, Norma. This caught the writer's attention also whether Rumanti is able to face her husband's betrayal or she will make resistance and rebellion.

1.2 Objective of The Book Review

Studying Indonesian people and culture is important for students. *Perempuan Jogja* by Achmad Munif is a novel which contains cultural traditional values especially Java. The author not only uses Indonesian language but also Javanese language as one of Javanese people's identity. Moreover, by using this novel, he tries to reveal how traditional culture assimilates with modern culture. He illustrates the life of the Javanese woman which is changed and influenced by modernity. Thus the review of this novel is important since it tells about the resistance of culture and traditional values in the middle of modern culture. The resistance in this aspect is represented Rumanti as a symbol of an obedient-Javanese woman.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

2.1 About the Author

The biography of the author is adopted from Sholeh UG, “Membaca Ahmad Munif, Membaca Jogja”.

Achmad Munif is a well-known writer who was born in Jombang, East Java. He studied at Faculty of Philosophy, Gadjah Mada University. He has been a journalist for twenty years. He is known as a humble man around his colleagues. Since he is a Javanese man and lives in Jogjakarta, he often writes stories using the city as his setting of writing. For example, he uses a figure of Javanese woman as the main character of the novel and uses Javanese language in the middle of his narration.

Being a modest man, he writes his characters simple. He sometimes mixes the character with his tight principles. His writing is considered to represent his own character: simple but touching. He sees literature as a reflection of life. He lets his writing flow like water in a river. His love as Javanese then leads his writing to be based on Javanese people and culture. This kind of view derives from how he sees Javanese people live and keep their tradition. He always remembers most Javanese women as a symbol of weakness; their life is just about *kasur*, *sumur*, and *dapur*, which means that their life is under men’s control. The

Javanese women are also symbol of modesty for their obedience to their culture and faithfulness to their husband.

2.2 Summary of the Book

Rumanti, the main character of *Perempuan Jogja* is a humble Javanese woman. One day Rumanti's husband, Danu tells her that he decides to marry his ex-girlfriend, Norma. Next day, Rumanti meets Indri, Danu's younger sister; she is angry at Danu and asks Rumanti to protest him. Rumanti then tells her that she always remembers where she comes from and she realizes because of her husband she can have a better life now. She believes that a wife must be faithful and hold one principle, to support her husband even when his husband forgets his role. But Indri still stands up on her opinion; she thinks women and men have the same rights.

Kebogiro instrument is loudly played in RM Sudarsanan, Danu's father house where he holds his wedding with Norma. Rumanti is sad, she remembers when the first time RM Sudarsana comes to her home and proposes her as Danu's bride. Some days later, she finds out that her husband is frustrated when he marries her; he almost crazy because his first love, Norma, leaves him and gets married with a US young diplomat. But the reality cannot be a reason for her not to care about her husband. Rumanti is a woman with high dedication and faithfulness even though Danu treats her inappropriately.

After Danu's marriage with Norma, Danu feels bad; Norma actually never cares about him. He starts to distrust Norma after he knows she tells him a lie about cigarette smell on her clothes. He then decides to go to Rumanti's house. He realizes Rumanti is the one he cares about. She is a woman who has high dedication and great faithfulness even though Danu leaves her behind. Finally Danu apologizes to her and makes up their relationship.

REVIEW OF THE BOOK

The writer intends to explain how the novel is presented from its elements of fiction. There are seven elements of fiction (Meyer, 44-230). The elements are theme, setting, character, style and irony, symbolism, point of view, and plot.

3.1 Theme

The theme of *Perempuan Jogja* is Javanese traditional values encounter modern values. The author brings the experience of Javanese people and culture to tell the story. He also gives a light comparison between traditional and modern values in this novel. The following narration can illustrate how Javanese woman with her traditional values of true faithfulness stands against modernism.

“Bagi saya hidup ini adil ko, Dik. Adil, karena mbak selalu teringat darimana asal mbak. Mas Danu telah mengangkat derajat Mbak, memberikan kesenangan hidup, memberikan dua anak yang baik. Kalau toh, kemudian Mas-mu menikah lagi dengan Norma bagi saya hidup masih tetap adil” (Munif, 21).

“Menurut Mbak Rum, tidak semua yang kuno mesti dibuang. Alangkah ironisnya hanya karena ingin disebut modern menganggap kesetiaan seperti barang yang tidak berguna dan harus dilempar jauh-jauh”(Munif, 22).

The first narration tells about Rumanti's explanation to Indri, when Indri asks her to protest her husband. However Rumanti refuses Indri's suggestion. She latter says that life is fair for her although her husband decided to marry another

woman. She thinks she must thank to her husband since he gives her a good life and two nice kids.

The later narration tells Rumanti's opinion about devotion and obedience. She thinks that faithfulness as an old traditional values and it should not be forgotten. Rumanti disagrees if a woman leaves faithfulness to become a modern woman. Rumanti also emphasizes that faithfulness is not an old fashion but it is a great traditional values.

The story written by the author tells the readers about the resistance of Javanese traditional values which faces modern values. The Javanese traditional values are represented by Rumanti, a Javanese woman who holds her devotion and obedience. The author also tells some phenomena of cultural changes in Javanese society. Rumanti is a modest Javanese woman who stands against modernism.

After reading the narration, readers may find irony. They may interpret that an obedient Javanese woman will be loved by her husband because she is not *neko-neko* or demanding and always obeys her husband's rules. In fact, nowadays some husbands tend to pursue an ambitious and energetic woman more than a humble housewife. Because for some husbands, an obedience woman is boring and faithfulness is too old to be held.

Rumanti's true personality and her devotion as an obedient Javanese woman are tested when her husband wants to marry another woman. Some

confrontation then rises in her self. However she proves that obedience and faithfulness are still important to be held for woman. Therefore the theme of this novel is good to give reflection for the readers about their attitude and reminds them to hold the good traditional values: obedience and faithfulness.

3.2 Setting

The setting of the novel can be divided into two, namely geographical setting and psychological setting. The following narration describes the geographical setting in Java, especially Jogjakarta. The author chooses Jogjakarta as the setting of the story. Jogjakarta is well known for its Javanese cultural and traditional values. By selecting Jogjakarta, the author creates an imagination of how Javanese people live and then shapes the image in the character of Rumanti.

“Sore itu suasana pendopo dalam Sudarsanan masih sepi. Anak-anak yang akan latihan tari atau drama belum datang, barangkali setengah atau satu jam lagi baru berdatangan. Di pendopo yang luas itu hanya tampak Pak Min yang sedang membersihkan lantai dengan sapu ijuk. Angina siang berhembus di daun-daun sawo kecil yang menimbulkan suasana gemerisik” (Munif, 64).

The above narration tells the situation of Sudarsanan's *pendopo* in the afternoon, which is still quiet. Children who usually practice in a dancing class or theater do not arrive yet, they may be come in thirty minutes later. In that large *pendopo*, there is only Pak Min, Sudarsanan's servant, he is sweeping the floor. The wind blows moving leaves and produces a sound of rustling.

The experience of Javanese people live is told in the existence of *pendopo*. *Pendopo* is a common place in Java where everyone can join together. It is usually used to hold certain activity such as *rembugan* or discussing and meeting, traditional dancing class and *gamelan* performance. Sometimes people stay in *pendopo* to relax and shares story with their friends. *Pendopo* is one of cultural symbol of intimacy and solidarity in Javanese society. Naturally, by reading the setting of Jogjakarta the readers may easily built a context of Javanese people interaction and intimacy.

“Dari kamar kos Ramadan memperhatikan Rumanti yang mengitari kolam renang di taman kecil. Di taman samping rumahnya, ditanam berbagai pohon bunga yang sebagian tampak sedang berkembang. Rumanti memetik beberapa bunga mawar beserta tangkainya, dimasukkan kedalam vas bunga dari porselin warna biru muda” (Munif, 1).

The narration tells about Ramadan’s admiration for Rumanti while he is watching her figure picking flowers. In the narration, Ramadan enjoys Rumanti’s gesture when she picks the flowers. He slowly tells how graceful she is, picking the flowers and puts them into a blue flower vase. Rumanti’s beauty and modesty naturally appears in the gesture. It deepens Ramadan’s impression on Rumanti.

The narration is a psychological setting. The readers can imagine a graceful Javanese woman with hospitality holding traditional values in the character of Rumanti. The author tells Rumanti’s character using imagery: he uses his imagination of nature. He regards Rumanti’s beauty as beautiful as a flower’s bloom. Rumanti’s beauty is also described in her natural gesture while she is

picking flowers, which leads to the image of a calm, simple and elegant Javanese woman.

Rum sangat kecewa. Beberapa hari ini Danu tidak makan dirumah, dengan alasan sudah makan. Rum tidak mempunyai keberanian menanyakan dimana Danu makan. Rum masuk ke kamar tidur. Ia sudah mengantuk namun dicobanya untuk tetap bertahan. Rum tidak mau kalau suaminya masuk dia sudah tertidur pulas. Lama ia menunggu tapi Danu belum masuk kamar. Rum kembali ke kamar kerja suaminya, dilihatnya Danu masih asyik membaca. Rum tidak berani mengganggu (Munif, 7).

The narration above tells about Rumanti's feeling when her husband treats her badly. Danu ignores her these few days; he refuses to have dinner at home and also does not talk to Rumanti as usual. Rumanti is disappointed and sad, because of her husband's behavior. But she does not do anything because she still does her duty as a wife and as a mother. She always respects her husband and keeps her faithfulness to him.

3.3 Character

The author writes Rumanti, a simple Javanese woman, as the main character of *Perempuan Jogja*. He writes Rumanti with her beautiful manner and appearance. She is also described as a strong woman who maintains her dignity as a traditional Javanese woman.

“Dik Indri harus memahami Mbak Rum. Pengabdian kepada suami bagi perempuan seperti Mbak, bukan saja kewajiban tetapi juga keharusan. Dari pengabdian itu tumbuh kesetiaan”(Munif, 21).

The narration tells about Rumanti's tolerance to her husband: she tries to explain her condition to Indri. She emphasizes, for a Javanese woman just like her, a dedication to her husband is a must. She believes that through dedication faithfulness rises.

Rumanti is described as an obedient Javanese woman through her character. The author tells the characteristic of a Javanese woman who is usually considered as old fashioned woman and second priority to a man. Rumanti can be classified as a flat character because she does not make any specific changes in the whole story. It would be more interesting if Rumanti showed her emotion—what she feels and what she expects.

Rumanti is just a simple Javanese woman. She is characterized as a plain woman who follows her husband's rules without any willingness to protest him even though she is treated inappropriately. Moreover, she is also characterized as a strong woman who is patient to face her husband's betrayal. Furthermore she is characterized as a humble and obedient woman. Rumanti however holds the character traits tightly in herself.

3.4 Style and Irony

The author writes the story using style and irony. He intends to write with different style and irony to get many kinds of sensation. The style which is used in the story and also the ironic scene of the novel may be illustrated in the following narration

“Ora perlu dirasakno toh, nduk. Sudah belasan tahun kamu hidup senang bersama Raden Mas Danu. Kamu harus menyadari suamimu kaya tampan, dan punya kedudukan (Munif, 101).

The narration tells about the condition of Rumanti’s family. Rumanti’s mother asks her to be patient to face her husband’s second marriage. She also tells Rumanti that she does not need to be sad but she wants Rumanti to be strong and to be grateful for her current marriage. Rumanti’s mother thinks Rumanti is still lucky since Danu always fulfills everything she needs.

The author occasionally uses Javanese language in this point of story. He tries to describe how Javanese family in Rumanti’s house communicates. The author does not eliminate Javanese language as the identity of Javanese people. He uses Javanese utterances to say something in certain situation; it automatically helps the reader’s context to form Javanese people intimacy through Javanese language. Moreover, the author’s diction is also important to give a twist effect to the readers.

“Aku kasian. Mbak Rum selama bertahun-tahun mengabdikan kepada Mas Danu. Apakah adil kalau kemudian Mas Danu bercintaan kembali dengan bekas pacarnya? Tidak adil mbak, tidak adil sama sekali, mbak tahu siapa

Norma itu. Perempuan itu pernah membuat Mas Danu frustrasi dan hampir gendheng, karena ditinggal kawin dengan orang lain. Lha kok sekarang, ia kembali kepada Mas Danu. Punya malu nggak sih perempuan itu? Ini sungguh tidak adil bagi Mbak Rum. Lalu bagaimana Mas Danu mengawini perempuan itu. Itulah yang saya khawatirkan mbak” (Munif, 20).

Indri Astuti is disappointed of Danu’s decision. She is completely fed up when Danu wants to marry another woman. She cannot imagine why Danu does that to Rumanti. Whereas Rumanti is known as an obedience and faithful wife who is patiently taking care of her husband and her family. In fact, Danu still stands up his principle to marry Norma, a woman who one abandoned him away and made him frustrated.

The irony of the novel arises in the above narration. A dozen years of Rumanti’s dedication and faithfulness to her husband results in betrayal. Rumanti’s dedication should be rewarded with love and care. Otherwise, she gets miserable treatment from her husband.

In this narration author’s diction also can be seen. *Gendheng* is a Javanese language; it means crazy, but to give special effect to the readers, the author prefers to use the word *gendheng*. This *gendheng* utterance delivered by Indri Astuti to show her boredom and her disappointment of Danu’s decision. It gives different sensation to the readers than the plain ‘crazy’ word.

“Di luar, cahaya keemasan matahari sudah sirna dan senjapun berubah menjadi temaram. Angina menggoyang ranting-ranting dan mengelus daun-daun menimbulkan suara gemerisik. Ramadan menutup jendela

kamar karna diluar sana sudah tidak ada Rumanti – yang kata Gilang hari itu diciptakan Tuhan hanya untuknya. Ramadan tersenyum sendiri” (Munif, 5).

The narration tells the atmosphere of the afternoon after Ramadan enjoys Rumanti’s activity. In the narration, the author describes how the color of the sky turns from blue to gold orange which is signed as the end of the twilight. He also tells how the wind swings branches of leaves. Ramadan then smiling, he remembers the figures of Rumanti whom he admires.

Since the author is a journalist, he uses imagery in order to evoke the reader’s imagination. The readers do not only read verbally the story but they also imagine the situation; they can feel the story as though they became a part of the story. By reading the detailed description which is written by the author, they can feel what exactly Rumanti’s feeling. It is one of good effects of literariness; it tells something in detailed and sharp narration for a vivid presentation, which takes the readers to come into the story and become a reflection for them.

3.5 Symbolism

The following narration contains symbolism: which is represented with Javanese woman. Achmad Munif, the author, chooses Rumanti, a Javanese woman as the symbol of obedience and faithfulness in *Perempuan Jogja*. Since the author is a Javanese man; he knows Javanese people’s culture and tradition.

“Dik Indri, adakalanya seorang istri mendapatkan cobaan berat, tidak hanya karena ditinggal mati suaminya secara fisik. Tapi mati dalam cerita Sawitri bisa saja merupakan sindiran bagi kita. Seorang istri harus selalu siap mengalami kesulitan, karena suaminya kepaten sandang pangan, misalnya kehilangan pekerjaan, sehingga semangat hidup dan kepercayaan diri sendiri hilang. Disinilah kesetiaan kita diuji, sanggupkah kita menghidupkan kembali semangat dan kepercayaan diri suami kita. Atau apakah kita justru meninggalkannya?” (Munif, 24).

The narration tells about Rumanti’s explanation to Indri. She explains how a woman should behave and maintain her manner as a wife in every condition. She also gives an example, if her husband gets some trouble of his work, she must accompany him and strengthen him. This is the part how Rumanti is known as a faithful woman.

The author through the narration says that a Javanese woman is recognizable as a symbol of Javanese modesty, who maintains her cultural and traditional values. The Javanese woman represented by Rumanti is also a symbol of devotion or faithfulness, she is described as *kalem* (graceful), *gemi* (humble) and *manutan* (obedience), which her gracefulness, humbleness and obedience cannot be compared to anyone else’s in the novel.

From the narration above, the readers may interpret that Rumanti is a Javanese woman who keeps her faithfulness and obedience to her husband. Her respect for her husband will not decrease even when her husband betrays their marriage. The author’s use of the Javanese woman as a symbol of modesty and

faithfulness is therefore right. The readers find it easy to build their imagination of a graceful Javanese woman like Rumanti.

3.6 Point of View

The following element of *Perempuan Jogja* is the point of view of the author. The point of view is important to know the author's role position of the story and how the author presents the story. The narration below will illustrate the point of view of the story.

“Tanpa memberikan kesempatan Rumanti bicara, Danu beranjak dari kursi meninggalkan Rumanti di ruang tengah menuju kamar kerjanya. Walaupun kalau ada kesempatan untuk bicara, Rumanti tidak akan mampu berbicara. Dadanya terasa sesak ia hanya bisa menangis. Saputangnya tidak mampu membendung air mata yang terus mengalir, walaupun berulang kali diusapkan. Itulah vonis terberat yang dijatuhkan oleh suaminya. Rumanti bangkit dari sofa melangkah ke kamar. Dipandanginya ranjang yang tertata rapi dan bersih” (Munif, 99).

The narration tells about Danu's improper behavior to Rumanti. He tells his decision to marry Norma without considering Rumanti's opinion or her feeling. On the other hand, Rumanti just cries whole night because of the decision. She has no courage to question her husband's decision.

The author tells the story using the third person narrator or non-participant narrator. The narrator does not appear as a character in his story. The narrator is the omniscient narrator: all knowing. The author uses *she*, *he*, or *they* to tell the

story. The narrator can enter throughout the character's feeling, thought and action and also has an ability to move from one character to another character.

In this narration, he tells Rumanti's situation in the evening when Danu decides to marry Norma. The author describes how hard that decision; he knows the whole conditions and understands Rumanti's feeling. He lets the readers join his story. By telling what happens to the character and the situation around them. The ability of the author to move from one character to another and know everything makes the readers understand the whole story and character's feeling.

3.7 Plot

The narration below is the plot for minor story of *Perempuan Jogja*. The author tells about Indri's life story. Indri is Danu's younger sister; she is described as a strong and feminist woman in the story. She is also a protagonist character who stays beside Rumanti, she disagrees to Danu's decision to marry another woman.

Didit yang bertubuh gempal itu cepat turun, diikuti Ramadan, Gilang, dan Airin. Ibram sama sekali tidak menyangka terjadi penghadangan seperti itu. Ia terkejut, terkesima dan bengong. Tapi serentak sadar, ia marah sekali, namun tidak bisa berbuat apa-apa. Ketika keluar mobil, Didit sudah menghadangnya. Ibram terkejut saat muncul Ramadan dan Gilang (Munif, 223).

The narration tells about Ibram who thinks he falls in love with Indri. He does not realize that it is only his arrogance to prove his power beyond other

students in his college. He then kidnaps Indri. However, the readers know that Indri is a protagonist character and she will be easily saved by her boyfriend, Ramadan.

The major story of *Perempuan Jogja* actually tells about Rumanti's life story but it is accompanied by a number minor stories. Another minor story indicates a minor conflict which happens during the major conflict. The minor story does not reach the climax when conflict falls. It influences the readers to guess the following story. However the author needs to write a minor story with specific purpose: he needs to direct the readers from Rumanti's life story to enjoy other simple story as an intermezzo of the major story.

CONCLUSION

The writer would try to concludes the previous chapter in this chapter. The book review of *Perempuan Jogja* by Ahmad Munif tells about the resistance of Javanese traditional values encounter modern values. The Javanese traditional is represented by Rumanti, a Jogjanese woman. The author chooses Rumanti, a Jogjanese woman since she represents the values of common Jogjanese people which is identical with traditional values. A Jogjanese woman also known as an obedient and faithful woman. Based on the story, Rumanti, a modest Javanese woman, is raised with her humbleness and gracefulness stands againt modernism. Rumanti's dedication to her husband does not decrease even though she is abandoned by her husband. She still holds tightly traditional values of Javanese woman: obedience and faithfulness. Her life story then proves that obedience and faithfulness for women are everlasting values to be held.

In brief, the writer states that *Perempuan Jogja* by Ahmad Munif is recomended for reading by any readers.

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