

Investigating Contemporary Literary Attributes in Iwan Simatupang's Novel 'Pilgrimage'

Lili Herawati Parapat¹⁾, Eko Purnomo²⁾, Ali Imron Al-Ma'ruf³⁾

¹Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan
email: a319240004@student.ums.ac.id, lili.herawati@um-tapsel.ac.id
phone: 082272989793

²Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
email: ep742@ums.ac.id

³Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
Email: aim268@ums.ac.id

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Abstract

Literary works in the nineties or called the reformation generation are inseparable from the category of modern literature. It can be seen from several examples of poetry, short stories and even novels of reform writers that still exist today. This study is the work of writer Iwan Simatupang entitled "Ziarah". This study aims to analyze elements that are closely related to contemporary literature through descriptive qualitative research methods that use library techniques, word analysis, phrases, sentences and recording to collect data to find absurdity, existentialism, intertextuality, and deconstruction as characteristics of contemporary literature. This can certainly be seen from the results of the study of the characteristics of contemporary literature from the novel "ziarah" by Iwa Simatupang. The findings of the study prove contemporary literature between themes, narrative techniques and character development of characters and current conditions. This "ziarah" novel describes a variety of modern characters, emphasizing self-transformation and existential exploration associated with philosophical, religious and cultural views.

Keywords: Contemporary literary attributes, Ziarah Novel, Absurdity, Existentialism, philosophy.

Corresponding Author:

Lili Herawati Parapat, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
Email: lili.herawati@um-tapsel.ac.id

Abstrak

Karya sastra di tahun Sembilan puluhan atau disebut angkatan reformasi tidak terlepas dari kategori sastra modern. Dapat dilihat dari beberapa contoh karya puisi, cerpen dan bahkan novel sastrawan reformasi yang masih eksis dengan masa kini. Kajian kali ini adalah hasil karya sastrawan Iwan Simatupang yang berjudul "Ziarah". Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis elemen yang berkaitan erat dengan sastra kontemporer melalui metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif yang menggunakan teknik perpustakaan, analisis kata, frasa, kalimat dan pencatatan untuk mengumpulkan data untuk menemukan absurditas, eksistensialisme, intertekstualitas, dan dekonstruksi sebagai ciri sastra kontemporer. Hal tersebut tentunya dapat dilihat dari hasil penelitian ciri sastra kontemporer dari novel "ziarah" karya Iwa Simatupang. Temuan penelitian membuktikan sastra kontemporer antara tema, teknik narasi serta pengembangan karakter tokoh serta kondisi masa kini. Novel "ziarah" ini menggambarkan karakter modern yang bervariasi, dengan menitik beratkan transformasi sendiri dan eksplorasi ekstensial yang dikaitkan dengan pandangan filsafat, agama dan budaya.

Kata kunci: *Atribut sastra kontemporer, Novel Ziarah, Absurditas, Eksistensialisme, filsafat.*

Introduction

Literary creations during the 1990s, often marked by reformist movements, remain closely linked to the realm of modern literature. This relationship is evidenced through various illustrative examples found in poetry, short fiction, and novels of reformist literature that persist in contemporary discourse. This analysis focuses on Iwan Simatupang's literary compositions, especially his work entitled "Ziarah." The purpose of this study is to conduct a thorough examination of elements that are intrinsically linked to contemporary literature, using a descriptive qualitative methodology that combines library research techniques, in addition to lexicon, phrase, and syntactic structure analysis, as well as careful note-taking to collect data aimed at uncovering themes of absurdity, existentialism, intertextuality, and deconstruction as defining characteristics of contemporary literature.

The phenomenon of life covers various dimensions, including social, cultural, political, economic, humanitarian, religious, moral, and gender considerations. Writers use their imagination to select, reflect, and linguistically represent the multifaceted reality of human existence in their literary works (Ma'ruf, 2010:1). Contemporary literary works contain religious, social, political dimensions Alim, et al (2025). According to Mutafsah (2005), exemplary literary works encapsulate the entirety of human experience, including emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions. Contemporary literature, which emerged around the 1970s, represents an innovative deviation from traditional literary norms, characterized by its experimental nature and a reaction to stagnant literary practices. The contemporary literary genre known as the novel is a significant form of fiction. The term "novel", derived from the Italian "novella", denotes a narrative that conveys a broader exploration of human experience, as articulated by Nurgiyantoro (2007:9) and Wellek and Warren (2010:3). The novel *Kado Terbaik* by J.S Khairen was found to have stubborn, selfish, ambitious, emotional attitudes (Athoillah & Al-Ma'ruf, 2023).

Novels include structured narratives that explore character conflicts and are characterized by intrinsic elements, including theme, plot, and setting. Ultimately, while novels serve educational purposes, their primary function remains to provide entertainment and inner satisfaction to the reader. According to Staton (in Nurgiyantoro 2010:25), a theme encapsulates the essence of a narrative, connecting it to core ideas and goals. The term "figurehead" denotes a character in the narrative, while a character's tendencies reflect the reader's interpretation of the character's disposition rather than their innate nature. Jones (in Nurgiyantoro 2007:165) argues

that a picture represents the living essence of the individual depicted. Plot, as articulated by Stanton (2007:26), is the sequence of events that make up a story, further elaborated by Aminuddin (2012:83) as the development of a structured narrative. Style enhances the aesthetic quality of the narrative, while setting encompasses the contextual background of events, influencing emotional involvement (Aminuddin 2011:67). Point of view articulates the author's perspective on events, while mandate conveys the narrative's overarching message. Understanding the author's context enriches the reader's understanding of thematic nuances and motivations, shaping the storytelling process. Contemporary literary novels are characterized by distinctive features such as antipersonality, antifurization, and mystical essence, reflecting the complex dynamics of modern Indonesian society (Budi Darma in Atilan).

The exploration of contemporary literary attributes in Iwan Simatupang's novel "Ziarah" reveals a complex interaction of psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. The novel not only reflects the personal journeys of its characters but also engages with the broader themes of existentialism and the human condition. The following section examines key aspects of the novel's literary attributes. 1) Psychological Structure: The protagonist's internal struggle is analyzed through a psychoanalytic lens, revealing the conflict between the superego and the id, which shapes his identity as an artist and his response to trauma (Saraswati, 2013). The narrative describes how the character's experience of loss and existential questions influence his artistic expression and personal choices. 2) Theme of Pilgrimage: The concept of pilgrimage in literature often emphasizes the journey beyond the destination, highlighting the transformative power of sacred travel (King, 2023)]. Simatupang's narrative aligns with this idea, depicting pilgrimage as a metaphor for self-discovery and spiritual growth. 3) Cultural Context: The novel reflects nuances of Indonesian culture, paralleling the significance of the hajj pilgrimage in Islamic tradition, which encompasses both social and spiritual dimensions (Bahtiar et al., 2023). This cultural background enriches the narrative, placing the protagonist's journey within a broader social framework.

Pilgrimage has been interpreted in various ways, ranging from language, changes in pilgrimage in religion and the treatment of modern society (Morrison, 2019). Pilgrimage involves transformative experiences through physical and psychological movement. Boundaries and limitations shape the affective and social experiences of pilgrims (Wulandari, 2024). Narrative pilgrimage allows for epistemic movement and justice (Bhaskar, 2022). While "Pilgrimage" showcases the protagonist's search for meaning, it also invites readers to consider the complexities of identity and the impact of cultural heritage on personal journeys. This duality underscores the richness of contemporary literature in addressing existential themes.

Previous studies are:

1. The Struggle to Define Pilgrimage (King, 2023) King's research highlights the importance of emphasizing the foundation for pilgrims related to physical rituals and the purpose of achieving the process. This research also examines it from a contemporary literary perspective.
2. The Meaning of Pilgrimage in the Poem Ziarah by Sapardi Djoko Damono and the Novel Ziarah by Iwan Simatupang (Rahayu, 2024) found the meaning in the novel is the theme of death, the relationship between living humans and the dead.
3. Mobility, space and agency: pilgrimage by humans and others, (Eade, 2023) analyzes the novel with a dominant representational view in the study of pilgrimage by connecting the relational perspective approach.

Although existing scholarship has explored pilgrimage through the lens of ritualistic dimensions, thematic significance in literary contexts, and relational frameworks regarding

spatiality and mobility, there is still a lack of comprehensive analysis that integrates the depiction of pilgrimage in Indonesian literature using a spatial relational perspective within the contemporary framework of identity and spirituality.

Method

To examine the contemporary literary characteristics present in Iwan Simatupang's novel "Ziarah," various multifaceted research methodologies can be used, including qualitative analysis, narrative techniques, and thematic inquiry. This methodological framework will allow for a thorough understanding of the novel's literary import. Qualitative Analysis Descriptive Qualitative Method: Using a descriptive qualitative framework to examine the components inherent in the novel, concentrating on motifs such as death, psychological conditions, and the idea of pilgrimage as depicted in the text (Rahayu, 2024). Comparative Literature: Conducting a comparative analysis of "Ziarah" with other literary works centered on pilgrimage to describe distinctive characteristics and parallels, utilizing insights from various literary genres. Narrative Technique Narrative Focalization: Investigating the narrative architecture and focalization strategies used in "Ziarah," evaluating how character consciousness influences the reader's perception of the protagonist's odyssey (Dan, n.d.). Thematic Exploration of Sacralization and Space: Explore how the novel depicts the metamorphosis of space through the lens of pilgrimage, considering the human and non-human elements that shape the narrative. Cultural Context: Place themes within the framework of contemporary sacred culture, examining their resonance with modern audiences and reflection of their society's values. While this methodological approach underscores careful literary analysis, it is important to recognize that interpretations may differ based on individual readers' experiences and cultural backgrounds, which may result in varying understandings of the text's attributes.

Result and Discussion

Findings in the Research of Contemporary Literary Attributes in Iwan Simatupang's Novel "Pilgrimage".

Characters

Because in the novel "pilgrimage" describes the first person plural, with the category "we". This character is a character who can be interpreted as a painter with a character character that adapts to the context. The character "we" in this story is a character who only exists in imagination; not a concrete character that must be recognized. Furthermore, there is a character called "a foreign woman." There is no physical or psychological explanation for the characters mentioned above. In more detail, the clarity of the character's name is not written in the story, the nature, and physical attributes of "tourists" and "cemetery guards."

The character in the novel "pilgrimage" by Iwan Simatupang is interpreted as a "painter" with the meaning of "our character" in the character describing our context. The character is the center of the novel's narrative as an alumnus of artists, or better understood as a former painter who experiences significant inner turmoil and struggles in terms of existence after the death of his wife. This novel also explores his psychological journey and the dynamics of his personality through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, with a scope that focuses on the theme of life and death instincts and chaos of feelings/anxiety. (Rahayu et al., 2024)] (Apriliana et al., 2023) The description of "pilgrimage" as contemporary literature often collaborates sacred and secular elements by describing new forms of spirituality and tourism (Nilsson, 2018). Every character depicted in contemporary literature will be written abstractly, even formed from violence, similar

to the results of research embedded in the characters of the novel Cermin Lara. Bahrudin, et al. (2024).

Novel Plot

The researcher feels a little overwhelmed in understanding the outline of the entire novel "pilgrimage" but on this occasion social cognition, rejection in the flesh and soul and philosophical perspectives on life and individual human well-being to understand it. The analysis shows that the text deviates from the established narrative norms that are usually associated with the novel form. An individual who aspires to avoid being conquered by bureaucratic constraints engages in literary rebellion through the author's voice. The absence of one's authentic identity is not widely recognized, in a literal interpretation. The concept of marriage and temporal considerations are only symbols.

The word "flashback" as the plot of the novel "pilgrimage" can be seen from the narrative structure of the novel ultimately reducing the reader's experience, as used by the author. The initial narrative does not inherently represent the narrative arc of the novel; instead, it introduces the novel's storyline that is revealed at the end of the text, making it difficult for the reader to engage with it. The author's previous pseudonym was established through a very interesting and coherent philosophical framework. The beginning of the novel explains this idea by asserting that the painter experienced a decline in his abilities when his partner became an adult. However, in conclusion, the audience has examined the dynamics of the painter's relationship with his wife, which often causes complications in their daily existence. In the end, the painter advises students to immerse themselves in the life of the composer before taking on the role of an agent.

The narrative structure of the literary work "Pilgrimage" is captivating and cryptic. In addition, the storyline depicts humanity as existing within and enveloped by an ontological realm characterized by existentialist themes, supported by an idealism so intrinsic that it has no structural basis. The elements that make up the novel "Pilgrimage" The presence of the artist's previous spouse or the in-laws of various painters, who are characterized by mysterious qualities, are shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery and occultism due to the absence of explicit references to the background of these two demographics.

Disagreement with Logic

Through the skillful narrative and intricate storyline embedded in the text, the author of "Pilgrimage" managed to turn the substantive audience into a state of confusion. The literary work "Pilgrimage" includes a series of antilogical quotes, some of which are described below.

1. "Emptiness according to this bend suddenly causes the evening to come too quickly."
"Kekosongan menurut tikungan ini menimbulkan tiba-tiba terlalu cepat petang-petangnya."

Analysis: from the sentence structure that states emptiness, but provides a statement of a bend that appears suddenly and connects it to the evening situation, of course it does not provide a logical sentence structure and cannot be accepted by common sense. The sentence structure is contrary to the situation and conditions that occur.

2. "He stood on the sidewalk for a long time, perpendicular to the sky that was too clear."
"Lama juga dia berdiri di kaki lima itu, tegak lurus di langit yang kelewat bening."

Analysis: perpendicular to the sky that was too clear. Of course the sky cannot be measured straight, long, or circular. Because it is often described that the sky is blue, cloudy and so on. This is contrary to human conditions and common sense.

3. "Now what he doesn't care about is because everything in the past is just a black lump."
"Kini yang menjadi tak dhiraukannya karena segala yang lampau hanyalah gumpalan hitam."

Analysis: the word past is interpreted as passing, but in this quote it is interpreted as the past that has become a black lump. Philosophically, a black lump means disappointment or bad behavior that has become one in a lump.

4. "Hard and bitter lines circle the corners of the mouth."
"Garis-garis keras dan getir melingkari ujung-ujung mulut."

Analysis: lines mean writing, a discrepancy with logic because the lines become hard, and bitterness circles the corners of the mouth which is clear that fear actually decorates the corners of the mouth.

5. "A smile curled up on his lips."
"Senyum menggulung dibibirnya."

Analysis: the word roll up should be for equipment such as mats and others. However, in this quote, it is called lips that curl up in a smile.

Not based on reasoning

In accordance with conventional reasoning, literary works show characteristics such as difficult to understand narratives and illogical reasoning. These, among other elements, can be identified in the following segment of the text "Pilgrimage".

"In one day, we want to be able to do the following: not running anymore, not screaming anymore, not sobbing anymore."

"Dalam satu hari, kami ingin dapat melakukan hal-hal berikut: tak berlari-lari lagi, tak berteriak-teriak lagi, tak tersedu-sedu lagi."

Analysis: one day is not clear for the determination of the day. So it could be interpreted as yesterday, today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or with an unspecified day.

- a. Not running anymore: the interpretation could be that he has lost his leg, or his leg is sore, so he can't run.
- b. Not screaming anymore: the interpretation could be that he has kept everything in his heart, or has a sore throat, or even has expressed his thoughts and feelings through writing.
- c. Not sobbing anymore: the interpretation is that he is no longer able to express his feelings, or he could be numb.

"Nights like this are so small that they can reduce the amount of great hope on the road, no matter which bend."

Analysis: the night situation is calculated in small sizes, logically it is impossible for the night to be big and small.

Complex and Multifaceted Terrace

The narrative framework of the literary work “Ziarah,” which is the focus of this discourse, is very interesting. As a result, this particular work is located in the realm of contemporary literature. This literary work, titled ‘Ziarah,’ inspires a substantive philosophical dimension throughout its narrative. Using a diverse plot structure, it captivates readers by compelling them to explore the protagonist’s existence both before and after the death of her partner. The novel that deals with themes of death, societal consciousness, isolation, rebellion, and tragedy masterfully navigates this complex subject. The narrative is filled with characters who do not have distinct identities and defined arcs. Each character manifests a unique disposition, which can be interpreted as either virtuous or morally ambiguous, thus conveying a moral lesson. The novel combines interesting yet straightforward intrinsic components, and through an impartial examination, one can discern the underlying thematic series embedded in the text, (Wulandari, 2024).

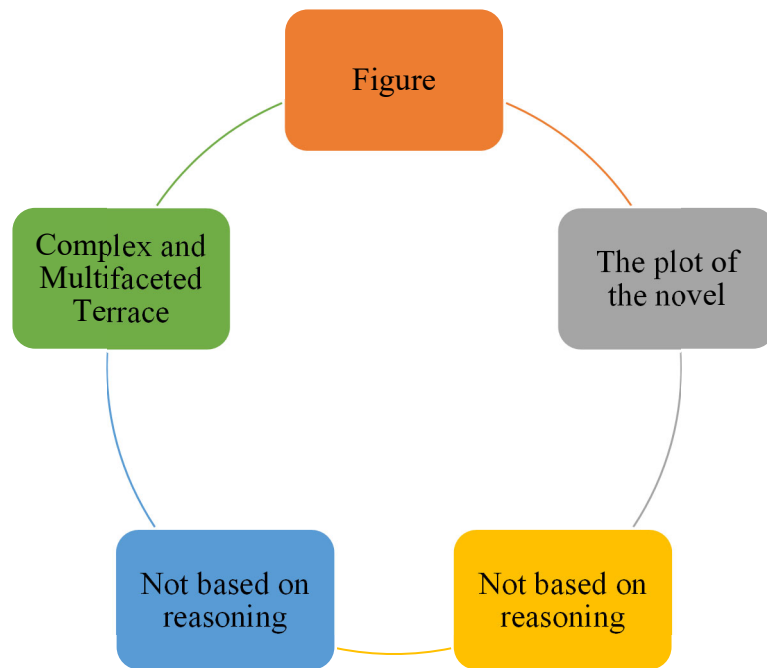


Figure 1. Contemporary Literary Attributes in the Novel "Pilgrimage" by Iwan Simatupang

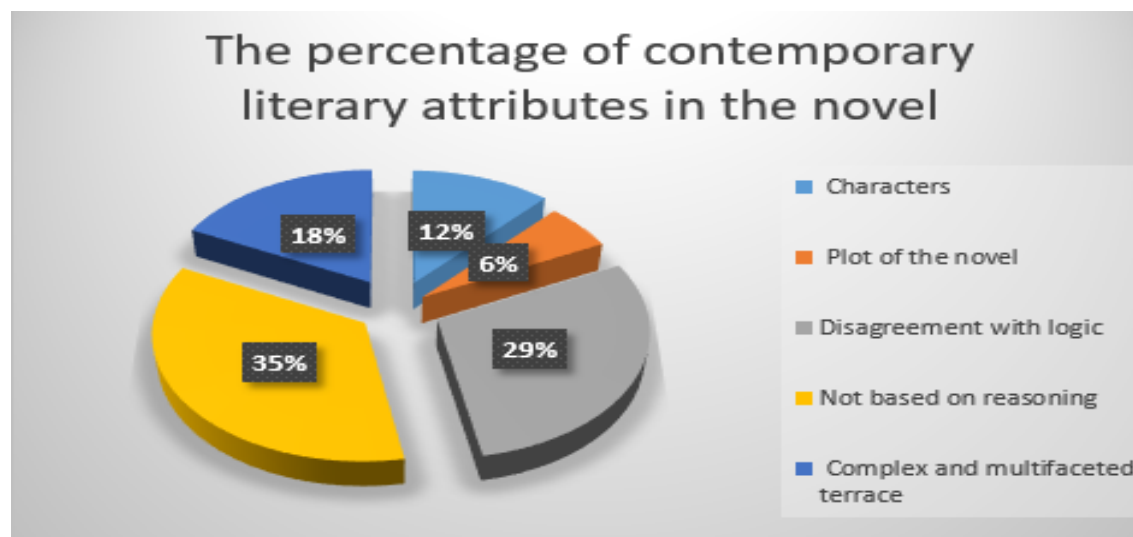


Diagram 1. Percentage of Contemporary Literary Attributes in the Novel "Pilgrimage" by Iwan Simatupang

Conclusion

The findings of this study support the interaction of contemporary literary elements, including thematic content, narrative strategies, and character evolution in relation to prevailing societal conditions. The novel "Ziarah" presents a variety of modern characterizations, offering a unique narrative of transformation and extensive exploration involving philosophical, religious, and cultural perspectives.

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