Digital Generation, Literary Works and the Spirit of Locality

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ABSTRACT
Digital era provides an opportunity to young writers publish their literary works. In fact, many young writers have achieved their popularity via digital platform, notably by social media (Twitter or Facebook) or personal blog. Hitherto, the existence of young writers or we called them as the digital generation has enriched Indonesian literary world. Their works not only convey new topic or theme but they attract many young readers and followers generally as well. So that, this paper discusses digital platform especially social media as the part of young writers’ marketing strategy. Furthermore, this paper explains relationship between social media and their literary works. Based on interview and literature review, young writers use social media not only to expand their market but also to promote their identity. The writers who are based in the Eastern Indonesia for instance, Makassar and East Nusa Tenggara, they wield social media to signify that Indonesian literature is not only about Jakarta. Digital generation brings new ambience in a literary world nowadays. They write stories about their local culture, history of space they were born and raised as background stories. Local identity has become their identity in the digital world. This promotion strategy is successfully gained the circulation of their works. However, the digital generation has some challenges regarding quality issues from certain circles.

KEYWORDS: literary works, young writers, promotion, locality

Internet users in Indonesia have rapidly increasing. Based on Ministry of Communication and Informatics (2015), to date internet users have reached 82 million people or around 30% of population. Attractively, 95% of them are using internet for social media. Public relation consultant company, Weber Shandwick (2016) revealed Indonesia has firmly established as one of the most active social media nation worldwide. Indonesia takes place as the fourth largest market for Facebook, and the
fifth largest for Twitter. Hence, some people use the social media as a medium to gain popularity. The results study of Bashar et.al (2012), Sisira Neti (2011), Mangold and Faulds (2009) have proven that social media is a powerful and effective new strategy for media campaign.

In a literary world, internet as the medium to display the literary work continues to evolve along with technological development. The emergence of new media on the Internet such as blogs or personal website provides an alternative media for writers to develop their work. Later, the development of social media such as Facebook and Twitter increasingly widespread. The writers can be easier and simpler to share their stories and their ideas generally (Gauntlett, 2011). In the other side, the emergence of new media gives the opportunity to budding writer in showing his work. Because they are mostly young writers who do not have many experiences and opportunities to publish their work in the mainstream media like newspaper, magazine, book, etc.

The young writers using the digital platform as the stepping-stone into the next stride, from digital writer into real writer. For instances, Rio Johan and Bernard Batubara who started publishing their short stories via kemudian.com, a website that accommodate the author to publish their literary works. Presently, they are authors of several books. Besides, Twitter generates some poets and well known as selebtweet (Celebrity Twitter) for example, M Aan Mansyur and Adimas Immanuel. M Aan Mansyur or better known as @hurufkecil is the most successful young poet. The snippet of his poems has been featured on the sequel of remarkable movie Ada Apa Dengan Cinta 2 (What’s Up with Cinta 2). His poetry book entitled Tidak Ada New York Hari Ini (No New York Today) were sold out more than 8.000 copies in the quickly times (The Jakarta Post, 2016).
The resurrection of young writers in the digital age was able to contribute an enormous impact in the literary world. They entice the young readers who are dominating of social media users, in order to be more exploring Indonesian literature. They embrace various circles including young generation to love literary activities such as reading, writing, and discussion. Through social media, they promulgate their works from various themes. Likewise, many of writers from East Indonesia who bring their locality and identity as their main topic. For example, Faisal Oddang, Dicky Senda and M Aan Mansyur as well. They have built a strong literacy community and go viral via digital platform with their own characteristic. They put in cultural identity, tradition, and specific types of East Indonesia.

However, the emergence of young writers in the digital platform remains controversial issues. On the one hand, digital platforms give some chance to the talented Indonesian writers to display their works because the uncertainty from mainstream publishing house. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the convenience offered by digital platform especially social media led the unscrupulous conduct of plagiarism easily. Besides, the simplicity to publish the literary works without editing process, coupled with the presence of self-publishing system, makes some people neglect the quality (see Tuhusetya, 2007 and Herfanda, 2001).

Seeing the development of literature in the digital age and the proliferation of young writers, this paper will discuss several things. Firstly, how young writers utilize digital platform as a medium to their literary work? What is the impact of digitizing literature to the digital writer? Then, what kind of challenges faced by the digital writer in the future? By using a qualitative approach, this article tries to analyze the relation between the digitization of literature with young people as actors on the development
of the literary world. The data collecting method of this descriptive analysis paper is interview and literature studies.

**DIGITAL WRITER TO REAL WRITER**

To initiate this discussion, let’s start it with a major question, why young generation takes advantage of digital media as a means to write? Is not there an opportunity for young writers to publish their work in the mainstream media such as newspaper or printed book? Okky Madasari, the winner of Indonesian major literary prize namely Khatulistiwa Awards 2012, in an interview clearly states there is no sufficient media for young writers to publish their work. In fact, there are many potential young writers with fresh ideas that actually deserve a place or stage. Therefore, then Okky Madasari who also acted as director of the ASEAN Literary Festival, in 2015, held the special session to young litterateur who actively work through the digital platform. “Internet is something that cannot be disputed, including in the literary world.” (Okky Madasari, personal communication, February 14, 2016).

Indonesian literary world has entered new trends called digital literature. Lexically, digital literature is literary works written in a standard format (word/power point) or pdf/ Microsoft reader/ adobe reader etc., and published through either blog/website or social media on the internet (Hari, 2012). This new trend offers a large opportunity for the writer in every age and in every region to publish their works. Since becoming a trend in early 2000, digital literature has provoked polemic. This kind of new platform welcomed by young generation. They create digital community with several literary activities. One of the first digital community who appeared in internet is *Sastra Cyber*, initiated by writer and artist, Saut Situmorang. Nevertheless, some writers criticized digital literature, for example Afrizal Malna who has been said that digital literature is just a momentary trend and won’t long last (Supriatin, 2012).
Then how young writers themselves respond about the digitalizing literature? In addition, how they utilize the digital platform as a space to work? For Bernard Batubara, 26 years old, the use of digital media is very helpful to his works. Because at the beginning, it was quite difficult to penetrate the works into mainstream media such as newspapers or printed books. Therefore, Bara who love writing since teenager started to publish their work through kemudian.com website. From these sites, Bara learns to fall up the writing process. He learns from the comments of fellow writers and interacts with readers. It is very helpful for Bara to develop his literary talent. He became known, the type of his writing that readers preferred.

When in the Twitter era, Bara did not hesitate to take advantage of the media to broaden the audience. The author of nine books has designed a strategy to improve his work. Occasionally, Bara consults directly or creates a simple polling about the plot, twist or character in his next projects. In fact, Bara can find a direct response to the followers with only held his teaser. He did not hesitate to retweet each praise words (Bernard Batubara, personal communication, March 21, 2015). It can be regarded as a promotional event for free. So, not surprisingly Bara has thousands of followers and also have loyal readers who gathered in @PembacaBara account. Now, he is not only succeeding in cyberspace, but also in the real world. He has launched nine books and his short stories has been published in the national paper.

While Adimas Immanuel, 25 years old, had the same experience with Bara. He acknowledged the use of social media to help in the introduction of his work. Moreover, communities are fond of poetry is less common than prose. The social media is quite effective especially on introducing literary world into young generation. Thus, he did not deny that social media provide positive impact to introduce workplace literacy. It proved by the increasing number of followers both on Twitter and the reader
on his personal blog. At the same time, he has been published his poems in various
mass media. He argues, although the digital world offers convenience, but in the end
a writer is supposed to produce a book (personal communication, March 21, 2015).

The experience of Rio Johan, 24 years old, looking at the internet as a means
to enrich his writing skill. In fact, Rio admits his short story inspired by the articles
that he read on the website. “To get the inspiration is so easy because you know that
Google has known everything!” (Rio Johan, personal communication, March 21,
2015). He also benefited from the presence of a digital platform because of the digital
platform; he could be a real writer. At the first time, Rio started writing skill raises
from kemudian.com website. After that, he tried to send his work via email to the one
biggest publisher. Until finally he published, books entitled Aksara Amananuna
(Amananuna’s Word). The book was selected as Best Literature Book by Tempo on
2014. Rio Johan is also named as the nominee of 14th Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa
Award.

Alongside individual writers, digital platform also raises community engaged
in the literary world. Their movement mostly utilizes social media to unify their
members. For instances Fiksi Mini, Puisi Malam and so on. They write their poems or
short stories (flash fiction) in Twitter. The communities are not only brimming in the
digital platform but also in the real world. They foster a love of Indonesian literature
through various activities which attractively packaged. Up to know, the communities
have has grown sporadically in many cities in Indonesia. Interestingly, their existence
not only flares on the social media. Fiksi Mini community for example, they have been
published anthology written by the members entitled Dunia Tanpa Mata (World
Without Eyes).
AGAINST JAKARTA-CENTRIC

Jamal T Suryanata (2012) on his essay said, in the past few years seems to have emerged a primordial consciousness among writers and observers of Indonesian literature through a back to the roots movement by lifting the locality as the spirit of literary copyright. In this period, locality is seen as the conspicuous factor to splash out characteristic of Indonesian literature. The writer of prodigious novel *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow Troops), Andrea Hirata could be one exemplary for the young writer who has spirit of locality in his works. However, previously there are many Indonesian author who elevate their own locality for example, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Ahmad Tohari, Kuntowijoyo (Java); Korrie Layun Rampan (Borneo); Gus tf Sakai (Minangkabau); Putu Wijaya and Oka Rusmini (Bali).

In the digital age, the spirit of locality is still a major issue. The writers realize that locality is something intriguing to their reader but also close to them. Furthermore, with the appearance of locality some writers believe that it can escalate their region. It because there is an impression that Indonesian literary world only overpowered by the writers in certain region. The writer from Makassar, Aan Mansyur is one of the writers who criticize massively about this issue. “I take advantage of the existing media to assert that the literary work is not only about Jakarta. Indonesian literature is larger than Jakarta” (personal communication, May 8, 2016).

Aan Mansyur admits the effort through social media is the way to embellish the Indonesian literary world. Even though some people disparaging his work, but the purpose to enliven East Indonesian literary is fiery. He does not want Indonesian literature monopolized by certain groups. So that, he uses Twitter account @hurufkecil to blast his work and to expand his reader. Besides, he oftentimes had collaboration with other artist to expand his reader. His previous work, *Melihat Api Bekerja*
(Looking at The Working Fire) is the working collaboration between him and Muhammad Taufik (Emte), graphic designer. He established public space called *Katakerja* and initiated Makassar International Writers Festival (MIWF). All his effort aimed to grow East Indonesian writer. “Through social media we can to be more intense to our readers. We can communicate to them directly. That’s different with previous author who didn’t live in digital age,” (personal communication, May 8, 2016).

Although not explicitly express its opposition to the Jakarta-centric. Various literary communities from East Indonesia now emerging in social media. The initiator even among young people. They present the results of their literary work through blogs. In fact, they have a community to show their creativity. Dicky Senda for example, said that the work that he is able to launch a broad impact for the reader (personal communication, May 8, 2016). The leader of Blogger community in East Nusa Tenggara said that his literary work affected other young writers to scribe the story about their locality. For information, Dicky Senda has published novel entitled *Kanuku Leon* (2013). The novel holds forth about Mollo’s tribe in East Nusa Tenggara and Dicky Senda dedicate the novel to Mollo’s people.

The contradiction between the literary works of Jakarta-centric this has happened for a long time. Ariel Heryanto (1994) had been discussed in his essay that local people were “too polite”. The local litterateur critics were not quite sharp. However, what is disclosed Ariel Heryanto seems no longer relevant enough. Nowadays more and more communities and individuals who dare to appear. Noted, some names were able to shine. One of them, a talented young writer Faisal Oddang. The Indonesian literature student of Hasanuddin University has been won the prestigious award best short story of *Kompas*.
TRASHY ROMANCE NOVELS? THE CHALLENGE

Some people state the work that was published in social media is bad work or just trashy romance novels. Budi Darma mentioned digital literature is nothing more than an instant literature, without deposition of thought but only afterthought shortly. Definitely, digital literature is could be a part of literature but according Budi Darma, it will through natural selection. In the end, just a few digital writers who are successful on the real literary world (Kompas, 2015). In addition, many of the writers now trying too hard to running on deadline. They have target how many books or short stories that they have to reach per year. The writers in digital era is vulnerable because they always write based on their followers want. That’s reason why their works won’t be indelible nor memorable.

Regarding medium, Eka Kurniawan (2015) opines that media should be born from a great idea and anxiety. Without it, thousand form of media (journal, magazine, newspaper, blog or whatsoever) will only be display of the works to satisfy the ego of the author only. The nominee of Man Booker International Prize 2016 explained the media may take the form of journals, magazines, newspapers printed or online journals, or as simple as a blog published by individuals, but the important thing is the idea of what was taken. The Internet itself is a medium widely. For instance, the writer from Iraq Hassan Blasim who writes his short story via internet because the condition of the country has ruined by war and protracted conflicts. Now, Hassan Blasim is one of influential writer in Iraq or probably in the literary world generally because he has a new viewpoint.

As the proposition, Eka Kurniawan suggests about three basic ideas for digital writer and writer generally. The first is the writer should make sure that the media that has been existing is not adequate. Second, if the writer tries to write in the new
medium, they have to understand what will distinguish between the works in new media and in another media. And the last is the writer should ask himself about what kind of literature do they want to strive so that they need to create new media. It is intended to prevent accusations that the digital literature is just a trash and represent the ego of the writer. Because normally there are many digital writers who claimed themselves as real writer although they only publish their works on the blog, without selection and editing procedure.

Minor opinion about the digital writer like imputation of trashy romance cannot be denied. In the Twitter, one of controversial writers, Dwitasari is always in the line between love or hate. The writer of Raksasa Dari Jogja (The Giant from Jogja) has been in a trouble because she has sung musical poetry without write the author of the poetry. She sung poetry by another poet Khrisna Pabichara without mention it. Nevertheless, with her galau (confusion) topic of the story, make it her so loveable. She has been reached million followers and her novel has been filmed. That was also happen to Zarry Hendrik, the guy who love to write poems and published poetry book entitled Dear Zarry’s. Actually, that is nothing problem with the writers because they wrote something that their followers love, confusion topic. This is what also made a trigger to certain people that poetry is just the series of confusion word. Finally, there are many people consider the digital writers only wrote a kind of trashy romance novels.

However, according the digital writer actually they write something in social media or digital platform is intended to wield their reader. Aan Mansyur totally disagree if his poems have been associated as trashy romance novel. The effort to promote his works through social media is the way to make Indonesian literature to be more popular. It because he thought that literature should be read by all levels of
society. Previously, literary works only enjoyed by certain groups and only at the certain moments. And as the author, he thought it would be great if his works appreciated by many people. “The poet only create poetry for the poet as well. That’s reason why their poems only enjoyed by certain circles,” (Aan Mansyur, personal communication, May 8, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The existence of young writers who use the Internet as a medium for work is increasing. The digital platforms such as social media and blogs could become a new medium that offers the opportunity for those who struggle to penetrate the existing literature media. In fact, several writers began to publish his work on the digital platform. After that, they could reach their dream to publish their books via renowned publisher. Several writers contend that even though the medium of literature has increasing, but publishing the book or printed platform is the most important thing on their literary career. Interestingly, to date there are more and more digital writers who insinuated the locality as the main topic. The aim is to broach their region because in the reality, certain groups had monopolized Indonesian literary world. However, in the implementation there were also some critics regarding digital writers. It because several digital writers just write their stories based on their followers wish. Sometimes, they also work on the deadline. So that, their works have small chances to be classical. The digital writers should be pay more attention to the big ideas and the novelty than focus on how to promote their literary works.

REFERENCES


