

A New Horizon of Hyperreality Simulacrum on Film “Memories of My Body” by Garin Nugroho

Puri Kurniasih^{1,*} Bambang Sunarto², Tommy Christomy³

¹Postgraduate Doctoral Program, Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Solo, Indonesia

²Art Study Program, Doctoral Program, Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Solo, Indonesia

³ Cultural Studies, University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: purikurniasih@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

“Memories of My Body”, a Garin Nugroho’s latest film title in 2019, tells about the body’s journey, inspired from Rianto’s life as a *Lengger Lanang* dancer. In this film, Rianto is not as a reference, but as a model to describe simulates feminine and masculine concepts in one body on film as a simulacrum; to produce an image that is completely unrelated to reality. The purpose of this study is to show the form of hyperreality in the film “Memories of My Body”. This study used a philosophical hermeneutic approach for interpreting how hyperreality forms in the film. This study found the simulations of feminine and masculine concepts in the film. So, the result of this research is a new horizon about the concept of hyperreality. The study can be concluded that hyperreality is not only found in a film that has science fiction or virtual reality, but also, in drama films with a local culture representing a form of hyperreality.

Keywords: *Hyperreality, simulation, simulacrum, feminine-masculine, horizon*

1. INTRODUCTION

This research will be the first research on Garin Nugroho's latest film entitled “Memories of My Body”, because so far no one has written scientifically about this film. This film has been considered one of the controversial films in Indonesia, because it brings pros and cons. The cons come from people who have not even watched this film. The controversy has resulted in petitions and official rejection letters from several city governments. Protest for sensitive issues come to this film when it was aired in Indonesia. Garin Nugroho admitted *Memories of My Body* was a film with a sensitive theme. This film also addresses LGBT issues.

However, behind the many cons that have approached this film throughout 2019, it turns out that at the end of 2019 this film was rewarded with the FFI trophy as the best film. That is why this film deserves to be researched for mainly its controversy from the public, but it actually receives appreciation from international artists. This study aims to investigate what has made this this film controversial. From the reality captured by the audience, there is a different horizon. It may not be the reality of this film that is actually a

controversy, but the possibility of this reality turns to be a challenge.

A “Memory of My Body” is a film by Garin Nugroho with the theme of the body, which is the concept of feminine and masculine. This film was inspired by Rianto's journey as a *Lengger Lanang* dancer from Banyumas. The *Lengger Lanang* dancer can represent the fusion of feminine and masculine, this film not just telling about Rianto, but rather telling about the body of the *Lengger Lanang* dancers and more general about the concept of the body from various paradigms (individual body, social body, even body trauma). What is the reality that we will find in this film, this is what we will try to explore in this study, that this film is not just an ordinary simulation, but a simulation that has an impact on the conditions of hyperreality.

Whether our reality is linear and progressive in the future or our reality is an assimilation of the whole that we perceive whether from the past, present, or possibilities in the future. Baudrillard (1981) stated that our current reality is a mixture of reality and imagination -which can either come from the past or predict future conditions or is just a fantasy. The assimilation occurs because of the simulation process.

Film can be a space for simulations of reality. Simulation is an image without reference. Image without reference is a simulacrum. The reproduction of simulacrum objects is a manifestation of the world of hyperreality. This research attempts to show the form of hyperreality in *Memories of My Body* using Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer, 2006).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of the horizon is a further explanation for what has been called the “hermeneutical situation” (Hardiman, 2014). According to Gadamer, the horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a certain point of view. When applied to thinking, we talk about the narrowing of the horizon, about the widening of the horizon, about the opening of a new horizon and so on (Gadamer, 2006). Acquiring a horizon means that people learn to look beyond what is close to the reach of the hand — not to take their eyes off it, but to see it better in a broader whole and in truer proportions (Gadamer, 2006). In this context, the task of interpretation is none other than projecting a historical horizon that is different from the present horizon (Gadamer, 2006). Baudrillard tries to show how today’s culture is the result of a reality constructed or “hyperreality”. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Baudrillard says that the illusion of a system is to provide a perfect explanation despite imperfect reality (Roberto, 2010).

The example of hyperreality is Disneyland. For Baudrillard, Disneyland could be a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra. It's first of all a play of illusions and phantasms: the Pirates, the Frontier, the long run World, etc. This imaginary world is meant to make sure of the success of the operation. But what attracts the crowds the foremost is without a doubt the social microcosm, the religious, miniaturized pleasure of real America, of its constraints and joys (Baudrillard, 1981). In Disneyworld, a worker isn't an individual, but a sign. Time is synchronized, space is obliterated and both are represented within the same context. The hegemonic system transforms values by imposing the culture of the simulacrum, during which the meaning of life is unreal and simulated, the reality is lost and meanings are abolished by the saturation of signs. Our reality is modified and fabricated from “passwords”. A worker may be a copy of other workers and a duplicate of himself in time. We are all replicants (Roberto, 2010). In an article about Greenfield Village is considered more realistic than Disneyland, because it presents as form of simulation that comes from history. In Disneyland, huge expense has been applied to making the park’s component worlds “realistic” in the sense of appearing plausible and internally consistent. In Greenfield Village, by contrast, the claim of historical reality is substituted for this expenditure. The village

maintains that its component worlds are real even when both plausibility and consistency are lacking (Horvath & Bin, 2015).

Based on these examples of hyperreality, the film “*Memories of My Body*” provides a new example of the concept of hyperreality. The form of hyperreality is not only Disneyland and Greenfield Village as examples. It turns out that even realistic films are a form of hyperreality. This is indicating that our reality is linear from reality to simulation to hyperreality form. Further examples are in archaeologists. For archaeologists, the past such as images and ideas that interact by perpetuating each other without references to reality or meaning is a form of hyperreality (Custer, 2005). So, hyperreality form is not about virtual world, imagination creation, or science fiction only, but hyperreality is about mixed perspective of horizon of past and present for the archaeologists. Thus, the development of the concept of hyperreality has led to an understanding of the new horizon about hyperreality.

3. METHODS

This study used a hermeneutic approach. Based on the etymology, the word of hermeneutics comes from the Greek, *hermeneuein*, which means interpreting. In Greek mythology, this word is often associated with a character of Hermes, a messenger who has the task of conveying Jupiter's message to humans. The task of conveying messages also meant translating the utterances of the gods into a language that humans could understand. Translation is actually synonymous with interpretation. From there, the meaning of the word hermeneutics has something to do with an exegesis or interpretation. There are many figures in hermeneutics. For example, Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur (Saidi, 2008). This study used Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a method for fuse the horizon. The concept of the horizon in question is a hermeneutical situation. Thus, this research was conducted by giving space to encounter the horizons of understanding.

The analysis in this study includes, first, showing the horizon of Garin Nugroho as the writer and director on the concept of the body (feminine and masculine); second, using Baudrillard’s horizon on the concept of hyperreality in understanding film “*Memories of My Body*”; third, showing the intersection of Garin’s horizon and the one of Baudrillard in film “*Memories of My Body*” to project a new horizon.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part shows the findings and discussion of this study. Crum in film “*Memories of My Body*” as an analysis interpretation; and fourth, the novelty of this

paper is hermeneutical situation about a new horizon concept about what is hyperreality.

Table 1. Masculine and feminine

Masculine and Feminine Role Relation	Scene Visualization
Boxer and Dancer	
Regent and <i>Lengger Lanang</i> Dancer	
Regent's Wife and Personal Assistant	
Warok and Gemblak	

Source: bioskoponline.com, *Print Screen* Puri Kurniasih, Thursday/July 30th 2020

4.1. Masculine and Feminine: the Horizon of Garin Nugroho

The reality that Garin Nugroho wanted to raise is about the body, the concept of feminine and masculine in the body (Murda, 2020). The concept is visualization into objects and relationships between roles as a metaphor for feminine and masculine.

There are many forms of visualization of the relationship between masculine and feminine roles in the film “Memories of My Body” as shown in Table 1. In general, it is clear that masculine and feminine are not about a sexual relationship, but a gender relation, where one takes the role of masculine or feminine. In this context, Juno always takes part in being feminine, especially as clearly reflected in his relationship with boxer and *Warok*. Femininity is usually synonymous with women and masculine and identical with men, but in this film, men cannot only be masculine, but also feminine. This concept is realistically in Rianto’s body as the source of inspiration for this film.



Figure 1 Rianto’s Picture Compilation (Source: BBC News (Pradana & Syavira, 2019), *Repro PrintScreen* Puri Kurniasih, Tuesday/24 March 2020).

Based on the results of the interview, Rianto stated, “If I think that I am only a man, I feel inadequate (right) and unfair to my body, because actually the feminine and masculine side is always present in every human body” (Pradana & Syavira in BBC News Indonesia, 2019). From childhood, Rianto loved listening to music and liked to move his body, while he was a very naughty and different child. Usually boys played in the style of boys in general, while Rianto likes girl’s styles and games, including dancing. Rianto was often bullied by his friends because of his graceful body. This has brought trauma, but Rianto is able to process this trauma into creativity. Muhamad Khan as the actor of Juno said in an interview that “Mas Rianto said that the technique can be learned but the taste must be found, so at that time he told to try. Rianto added, “you are a woman, once you are sure you are a new woman you will dance like that, so it is a very interesting process actually” (AntaraTV, 2019). The fusion of masculine and feminine in a *Lengger Lanang* dancer is a form of perfection.

4.2. Hyperreality: the Horizon of Jean Baudrillard

Hyperreality forms can be found in science fiction or virtual reality films. Hyperreality is easy to be found within a digital technology film. Digital technology within the kind of phantasy do require computer game settings in spatial settings in an electronic culture like Terminator 2 and therefore the Matrix (Spielmann, 2003). The film can easily be called a sort of hyperreality because it's a mix of reality and imagination. Films like Minority Report (2002), Paycheck (2003) and A Scanner Darkly (2006) are considered films having the impact of hyperreality, because they allow us to work out alternative risk management frameworks that ambiguously reflect the horrors and expectations of a justice system, enforcement, and punishment in a risk society (Campbell, 2010). During this case, the simulation isn't almost fantasy or imagination, but can also be within the kind of a conceptual framework regarding various alternative possibilities that may be predicted to occur or are feared to occur. In fact, many films that really originate from historical facts, but are presented in hyperreality, like the 300 films, narrate historical documentation and result in hyperreality which has the potential to become a historical reality (Tyma, 2015). So, the shape of hyperreality in the film is not only in a

very fantasy or computer game, but also stuffed with fantasy or imagination.

Baudrillard proposed a brand-new theory: Integral Reality. There's the less and fewer distance between simulation and the globe. Indeed, there's no relation and no distance between simulation and reality. The simulation doesn't institute the reality homologous to it. Simulation cannot be addressed by looking to linguistics either as a model or method. The matter of signification is not identical as that of simulation. Integral Reality is Baudrillard's name for the idea of the world in its immediacy—without distance—through simulated means. The simulation produces and embeds itself into the “reality” style of a sphere of ever-increasing density where nothing virtual can escape from being realized (Fardy, 2015).

The simulacrum is not what hides the truth - it is the truth that hides the particular undeniable fact that there's none. The simulacrum is true according to “...a simulacrum, that's to say never exchanged for the important, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference”. Simulacrum could be a simulation, insofar because it is against representation.

Something to be the simulacrum is a few things without reference, there's no representation, and there is the only simulation.

4.3. Simulacrum on film “Memories of My Body”: Intersection between the Horizon of Garin Nugroho and Jean Baudrillard

Simulacrum is in the main character and the storyline that tries to describe various paradigms about body; the concept of feminine and masculine. Garin Nugroho made Rianto a place for simulating feminine and masculine concepts in the form of hyperreality (see Figure 2). This film is inspired from Rianto, but the character of Juno did not represent Rianto or the stories of Rianto's life, Juno represents body, that is, a marginal body. The film poster of “Memories of My Body” is as seen in Figure 3.

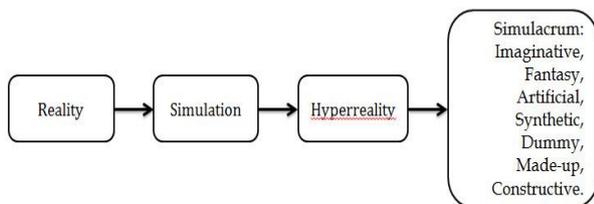


Figure 2 Concept of Hyperreality.



Figure 3 Memories of My Body's film poster.

Juno did not exist in reality, it is a simulacrum. In this film Rianto becomes the narrator. Feminine and masculine fusion in Rianto occur when dancing, while Juno (the main character) is described to occur in various lines of life, including the division of roles such as *Warok* and *Gemblak*.

According to Rianto in his interview with Antara TV, the entire Film “Memories of My Body” is not a story from birth to adulthood, but symbols of the masculine and feminine forms of bodily journey as well as the art forms attached to his body (AntaraTV, 2019). It can be said, even though it is inspired by the story of the journey of a person's body (see Figure 4), this film can be called fiction, it is not clear in terms of who, where, and it is. It turns to be forming the reality that does not exist. It is called hyperreality.

The film “Memories of My Body” is not depicted to whom Juno's heart is tied, but his relationships with several people when he is adult (see Figure 4 and 5).



Figure 4 Rianto Become Juno.

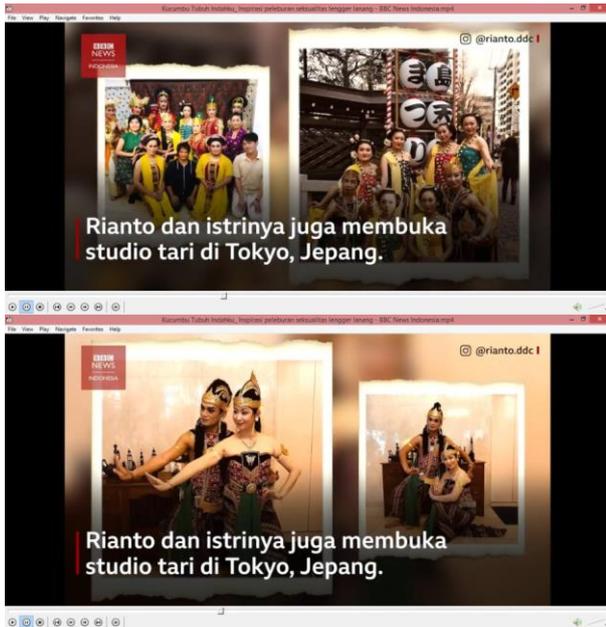


Figure 5 Rianto and His Wife.

In Rianto, trauma is processed in such a way as to give birth to creativity. This creativity produces achievement, and this achievement can be a source of inspiration that gives birth to new creativities. Juno is a form of creativity from inspiration. Juno does not represent Rianto, Juno may represent many bodies of art, bodies that are diverse, different, and cannot be judged as being true or false. Juno does not hide the truth from that body. Juno is a simulacrum, without reference. It looks real but not a reality.

4.4. A New Horizon of Hyperreality

In science fiction or this film, hyperreality is made based on references from reality or imagination, but we find other kinds of reality. This film is not about linearity from reality to hyperreality, which is about blurry condition on our reality. Reality or hyperreality is the same in this case, so we can see the simulation in our reality as a gradation. The new horizon about the concept of hyperreality is about reality in the contemporary/postmodern era/electronic culture/internet technology/virtual world/globalization or whatever it is called for nowadays. Our current reality is hyperreality in which there is a reality that is getting closer to reality and there is a reality that is getting away from reality.

The problem of simulation is in the gradation of the impact of hyperreality, not about which is more correct, but which is more real with the increasing hyperreal gradation. Thus, simulations can make the polarization of reality that is increasingly real reality or increasingly real hyperreality (as described in Figure 6).

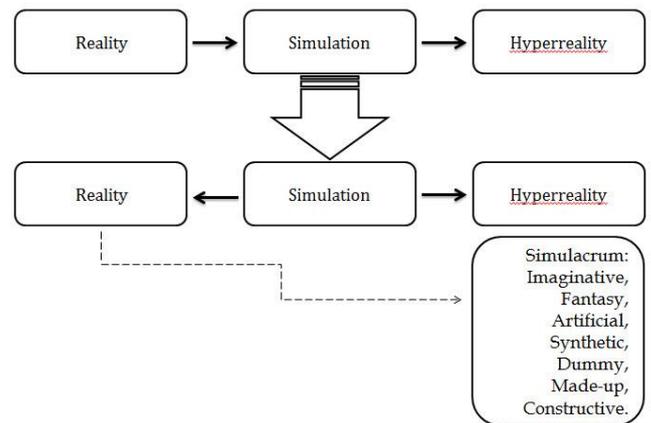


Figure 6 New horizon of hyperreality.

Film “Memories of My Body” and also other drama films actually contain hyperreality, so if previously it can be simply concluded that hyperreality is a simulation of reality, we find a new horizon that hyperreality is the gradation from a simulation, closer to reality. Then it turns to be a simulacrum, that is, the reality moves further away from real. The character of Juno is a form of simulacrum, which is a simulation of reality; this simulation gives birth to hyperreality, which is a condition where we can no longer point to its reference (reality). Reality that is processed into creativity will give birth to a form of hyperreality.

5. CONCLUSION

Body is our medium for contact with the world, a medium to absorb knowledge, a medium to transformation of the knowledge, and a medium for our memories. A body carries trauma, is injured, but is often ignored. Film “Memories of My Body” makes us aware of the existence of the body. There are still few films that view that the body is something important to discuss.

Film “Memories of My Body” is a controversial film because the impact of hyperreality. The reality construction by Garin Nugroho has been successfully created to disturb people’s minds, giving rise to dialogue on feminine and masculine issues. Sometimes, people do not need a theory to understand the issue, but only need to enjoy a creation of art.

Hyperreality is not only found in science-fiction or virtual-reality films, but also in drama films with local culture content. The film “Memories of My Body” is not just a film inspired by the story of one’s body’s journey, but a simulation forms full of simulacrums to present feminine and masculine concepts into a form of hyperreality. Our today reality is a construction of reality, Local culture or tradition art is something more contemporary because it is more adaptive than other forms of art in a modern means. Traditional arts with a new packaging will be a contemporary art. Film can be

a medium for a new packaging of a tradition art although this art displays traditionally. The More traditional, the more global.

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