

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY IN THE PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION PROCESS OF POPULAR ROMANCE LITERATURE ON THE WATTPAD APPLICATION

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to examine how Wattpad practices capitalism through romance stories in the production, distribution, and consumption of popular literature. The theory used in this study is Mosco's political economy of media theory, which is about reciprocal social relations that include the production, distribution, and consumption of a product. The results of this study are the discovery of political economic ideologies in the production, distribution, and consumption of popular romance genre literature on the Wattpad application. First, in the process of commodification of romance novel content that is in great demand by readers and users of the Wattpad application, because the stories closely reflect the lives of teenagers today. Second, in the process of audience commodification, the number of readers of romance novels greatly influences the rating that will later be used as a reference for advertisers in placing their ads on the Wattpad application. Third, in the process of spatialization, it can be observed that Wattpad offers features to facilitate its users' writing, reading, rating, and interaction. Finally, the discovery of the process of political economic structuration between readers, writers, and Wattpad that occurs through the production, distribution, and consumption of romance novels. This is because readers highly seek after romance novels, so authors tend to publish in the same genre to attract more readers. Wattpad, of course, benefits from the romance genre's success in dominating the market. Furthermore, it's known that political and economic ideologies significantly influence readers' tastes in Indonesia and the authors' production processes.

Keywords: popular literature, romance, Wattpad

INTRODUCTION

Reading novels is usually an activity undertaken when someone has free time or simply to refresh themselves from piling up assignments or work. Novels that readers read to simply fill their free time are usually novels with light stories and easy-to-understand language. According to Darma (2004), there are two genres in literature: serious literature and entertainment literature. Serious literature is a literary genre that is meant to be interpreted, or literature that tends to stimulate readers to interpret or interpret the meaning of the literary work. In other words, serious literature is a reading that requires deeper understanding and interpretation. Meanwhile, entertainment literature is a literary work used as an 'escape' or escape from boredom, from daily routines, or from difficult problems. If there is serious literature, then it can be said that there is also a type of literature that is not serious or is usually considered popular literature. Popular literature is a form of popular culture. Unlike literary works that prioritize artistic values or elements, popular fiction is more reader-oriented (Adi, 2011). Because of its connection to readers, popular fiction is closely linked to mass culture. Kayam (1981) defines popular literature as literature written to meet the needs of society and then sold as a commodity. Furthermore, popular literature is ephemeral. This temporary nature of popular literature stems from its mere entertainment purpose. As a product of popular culture, popular literature is naturally sought after by the general public. The stories presented are closely related to everyday life, which is one of the attractions of popular literature (Astika, 2014).

In Indonesia, popular fiction began to gain popularity in 1980, following the appearance of a work of fiction entitled "Sobat Anak-Anak" (Children's Friend) by Lie Kim Hok, a man of Chinese-Malay descent. In the work, Hok uses Malay-pasaran language, so the fiction focuses on light stories or those that use easy-to-understand language to simply entertain the reader (Nio Joe Lan in Salam,

2002). Popular fiction is a reading that is easy to understand, does not require serious contemplation, stereotypes, and even, in some cases, exploits sex so that this popular fiction aims to provide entertainment to its readers (Salam, 2002). So, some characteristics of popular fiction writing, such as the use of easy-to-understand language and light story presentation, or the presence of non-complex conflicts, are indeed aimed at entertaining the readers. Popular fiction itself consists of various genres, one of which is romance. According to McMichael (1989), the beginning of the romantic period was at the end of the 18th century, marked by the emergence of literary works that presented many stories about freedom of opinion, expression, and imagination. What makes literature from that period included in the romantic genre is that it focused on issues of feeling and emotion. In Indonesia, the emergence of novels telling stories of teenage romance from high school to college began in the early 2000s. For example, the novel *Dealova* by Dyan Nuranindya has sold more than 30,000 copies and was also adapted into a film of the same name. Even today, romance novels remain popular. These teenage romance stories, with their straightforward and easy-to-understand language, still exist and arguably dominate the market share.

The success of romance novels in dominating the market is certainly inseparable from the role of publishers. Today, many different media can assist in the publishing process. The media is one result of the cultural revolution, where readers can now access information with just a click of the mouse on a laptop or computer. This ease of access has been widely used by capital owners to create applications with comprehensive features, with the explicit goal of helping people access information and the implicit goal of generating revenue from the applications they access. One such application that is now well-known to the majority of Indonesians is Wattpad, an application that can be used to read and write literary works of various genres. Wattpad is a media platform that can facilitate the process of distributing information without intermediaries (distributors), so that written information can be directly accessed by others in a very short time (Maidatul Lifiani, 2019: 144). The writings or literary works accessible through Wattpad come from various genres, ranging from non-fiction, fiction, poetry, to popular literature. On this platform, there are several features presented to its users, including Home, which is a feature that presents several recommendations for literary works from various genres. The Library, a feature that allows readers to save stories to be read offline. In addition, this feature also includes the Current Read feature, to display recently read literary works, an archive feature for saving literary works, and a Reading List, a feature for recording readers' reading lists. Furthermore, the Notifications feature is to inform you when there are new writings uploaded by the author, and also as a form of important information from Wattpad. There is also a Vote feature, which can be used to give a score to literary works that readers find good and interesting. Not only giving a score, readers can also provide criticism or input through the Comment feature, readers can also share the writings they read to social media through the Share feature, and can also follow authors they like or even fellow readers through the Follow feature.

Based on the description, the researcher used the romance novels entitled “*Mariposa*” and “*Dosenku, Suamiku*”, published through Wattpad as material objects. The reason the researcher chose these two novels is that the romance genre novels are popular novels that have been read by more than a thousand people. The popularity of the “*Mariposa*” novel has even been adapted into a film that has been watched more than five hundred thousand times. “*Mariposa*” is a work by Hidayatul Fajriyah published in 2018. This novel tells the story of a woman named Acha, who falls in love with her friend named Iqbal. Acha tries to approach Iqbal, but Iqbal never responds to Acha and only acts indifferent. However, one day, a man named Juna expresses his feelings for Acha, and Iqbal seems unhappy and persuades Acha to reject Juna's love. In the end, Iqbal accepts Acha's love even though he is still cold towards Acha. Meanwhile, the novel “*Dosenku, Suamiku*”, written by Rahmanida, tells the story of a student who must marry a man chosen by her father, who is none other than a lecturer at her campus. This novel is no less popular than “*Mariposa*”; this is proven by the total number of readers, which is more than 51 million.

To analyze the political and economic ideology in the two romance novels, this study uses Vincent Mosco's theory of political economy. Conceptually, Mosco defines political economy in two senses: narrow and broad. In the narrow sense, political economy emphasizes social relations, particularly power relations, that shape patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of resources such as books, literary works, films, and news. Meanwhile, in the broad sense, political economy focuses on control mechanisms and efforts to maintain social order, where individuals or groups are required

to produce work as a form of adaptation to a social system governed by power. Furthermore, Mosco highlights the exchange value between function and utility that makes media a business arena (Mosco, 2009). According to Mosco (2009), there are three main processes in political economy: commodification, spatialization, and structuration. Commodification is divided into three forms: (1) commodification of content, which relates to media content; (2) commodification of audiences, which relates to audience assessments and ratings for the benefit of advertisers; and (3) commodification of workers, which highlights the exploitation of labor by capitalists. This research focuses on the commodification of content and audience in romance novels published on Wattpad. Furthermore, spatialization focuses on the distribution of media products to the public through the use of technology. Mosco divides spatialization into two types: vertical and horizontal spatialization. Vertical spatialization reflects the expansion of corporate control throughout the production process, even across borders. Horizontal spatialization, on the other hand, emphasizes collaboration between media outlets or the acquisition of other companies to expand resources and production reach (Mosco, 2009). The final process is structuration, which is the reciprocal formation between agents and social structures in the production and reproduction of works. In this context, structures such as gender, class, race, hegemony, and social movements influence social dynamics and change (Mosco, 2009).

The existence of the publisher's (Wattpad) political economic ideology through romance novels requires further study, considering that the publisher's use of language, vision, mission, and standards play a crucial role in the production, distribution, and consumption of literary works. This publisher's ideology is the focus of this research to see how it represents social phenomena in Indonesian society. Theoretically, this research is also supported by previous studies that are relevant in terms of material objects, theories, and methods.

Apriyanti, Maspuroh, and Rosalina conducted the first study in 2021 with the title "Analisis Nilai Cinta Kasih pada Novel Mariposa Karya Luluk Hidayatul Fajriyah". This study aimed to describe the values of love contained in the novel Mariposa using literature review techniques. Data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that demonstrate the value of love were analyzed through the stages of description, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion. The results showed four forms of love: between parents and children, between men and women, between fellow humans, and between humans and God. The second research was conducted by Lena Pasaribu, titled "Analisis Tindak Tutur dalam Novel Mariposa Karya Luluk HF" (2020). The data collection techniques used were library techniques, reading, and note-taking. The results of the study showed the presence of pragmatic speech acts consisting of 9 locutionary acts, 8 illocutionary acts, and 8 perlocutionary acts, with classifications including 3 representative forms, 6 directives, 3 expressives, 2 commissives, and 2 declaratives. In addition, three forms of direct speech acts and two indirect speech acts were also found. The third study by Intan and Aji (2021) is entitled "Novel Mega Best Seller Berjudul Mariposa Karya Luluk HF." This study aims to describe readers' responses and horizons of expectations towards the novel Mariposa using an aesthetic reception approach. Data were obtained from the responses of twenty respondents on the Goodreads website. The results show that most readers did not fully respond positively to the novel's intrinsic elements, especially the female protagonist character who was considered too aggressive. In addition, there is a mismatch between readers' horizons of expectations and the novel's content, influenced by literary knowledge, reading experience, and the discourse of movie adaptations. Subandi and Sadono conducted further research with the same theory entitled "Komodifikasi, Spasialisasi, dan Strukturasi dalam Media Baru di Indonesia (Ekonomi Politik Komunikasi Vincent Mosco pada LINE Webtoon)" in 2018. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, this study found three forms of commodification: content, audience, and workers. The commodification of content is evident in the unclear boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate content, while the commodification of the audience is evident in the dominance of Indonesian readers as a potential market for advertisers. The commodification of workers is evident in the Webtoon Challenge creators, who do not receive financial compensation. Still within Mosco's theory, Hidayat and Ruslan's research in (2018) entitled "Penerapan Teori Ekonomi Politik Media dalam Program Fashion Heritage di MNC Fashion TV Satelit Indovision" used in-depth interviews and observations. The results showed cultural commodification in the form of content, audiences, and workers, reflecting the dominance of certain groups over others for economic gain. Prasanti's latest research, titled "Studi Kualitatif tentang

Penggunaan Media Komunikasi bagi Remaja Perempuan dalam Pencarian Informasi Kesehatan," in (2018), employed a descriptive qualitative method, employing interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. The results showed that adolescent girls use a variety of communication media to seek health information. Female health students tended to rely on online scientific journals, while non-health students used social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook more frequently.

Based on previous studies, this research begins with the phenomenon of the growth of popular literature in Indonesia through digital platforms like Wattpad. This platform not only provides a space for young writers to express themselves but also reflects how political economic ideology operates within the literary industry. Through the romance genre, works like *Mariposa* and *My "Dosenku, Suamiku"* demonstrate the relationship between creativity, the market, and publishing power. From this context, this research formulates two main questions: (1) how is Wattpad's political economic ideology, through the romance genre in these two novels, reflected in the production, distribution, and consumption of popular literature; and (2) how does publisher ideology reflect social phenomena in Indonesian society?

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the method used is a qualitative descriptive method. A descriptive method is a method for examining groups of people, conditions, objects, systems of thought, or events in the present (Nazir, 1998). Meanwhile, according to Sugiyono (2013), the descriptive method is a method used to analyze or describe research results but not to draw broader conclusions. Therefore, it can be said that this descriptive method aims to explain, interpret, or describe data related to actual phenomena or situations, prevailing views in society, and conflicts within certain conditions, thus producing factual and up-to-date research. The focus of this qualitative descriptive research is to examine a phenomenon or condition without any changes, manipulations, or additions to existing variables, so that the results are a straightforward description or depiction. In this research, the data sources were the Wattpad romance novel "*Mariposa*" and the novel "*Dosenku, Suamiku*". The data analysis process consisted of collecting data, describing it, and then analyzing it. The collected data will be analyzed and interpreted using Mosco's political economy theory, and then conclusions will be drawn based on the results of the research.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. Commodification

1.1. Content Commodification



Fig. 1. *Mariposa*

The novel "*Mariposa*" by Hidayatul Fajriyah, better known as Luluk HF, has been read 133 million times. This romantic-comedy novel tells the life story of Acha, a beautiful, cheerful, and slightly spoiled girl who falls in love with her very indifferent friend, Iqbal. Iqbal's indifferent attitude doesn't make Acha give up easily in breaking down Iqbal's defenses, who has never been in a relationship before. But in the end, Acha succeeds in making Iqbal melt until he accepts Acha as his girlfriend.

This kind of high school romance story is popular among readers on Wattpad, which is dominated by teenagers. The existence of this kind of love story is considered more relatable to their lives. That is one of the factors that makes this romance genre novel widely read by Wattpad users. The many fans of the novel “Mariposa” made the novel win an award as a mega bestseller. Not only that, the novel “Mariposa” was also adapted into a film that also received quite a lot of attention from the public.

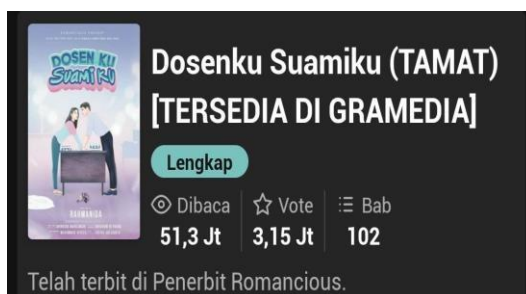


Fig. 2. Dosenku, Suamiku

Besides “Mariposa”, another romance novel published on Wattpad has garnered significant reader attention. Rahmanida's novel, “Dosenku, Suamiku”, tells the story of a student named Dira whose father asks her to marry a lecturer named Rey. This request is a condition for Dira's father to replace her damaged cell phone, which she accidentally dropped when she bumped into Rey. These types of romance stories are indeed popular with readers. In fact, Rahmanida's novel has reached 51.3 million readers. Due to this high level of reader interest, it was eventually published in print.

Based on Mosco's theory on the commodification of content, which focuses on the process of converting use value into exchange value, the novels “Mariposa” and “Dosenku, Suamiku”, published on Wattpad, demonstrate this shift. The commodification of content, which tells the story of a couple's romance, has garnered significant reader attention, resulting in millions of readers reading the novels. The novels “Mariposa” and “Dosenku, Suamiku”, published on Wattpad, are not only valuable as entertainment for readers but also as a source of income for authors. Mosco (2009) stated that the commodification of content is related to the content of a literary work through media. Based on this data, it can be concluded that romance novels published on Wattpad are not only published for entertainment for readers, but also to generate income from the sales of these romance novels.

1.2. Audience Commodification

Audience commodification relates to audience assessments and ratings for the benefit of advertisers who will display ads in the media. Below are the total number of readers, voters, and commenters for the novel “Mariposa”, part 4, and the novel “Dosenku, Suamiku”, part 1, as of May 5, 2022.

Table 1. Number of readers, voters, and commenters in the novel

2,93 Jt 112 Rb 19,9 Rb	2,07 Jt 58 Rb 15,5 Rb
Number of readers, voters, and commenters on the novel "Mariposa"	Number of readers, voters, and commenters on the novel "Dosenku, Suamiku"

According to Smythe (Mosco, 2009), for media, the audience is the primary commodity. Audience commodification is related to the rating of content within a medium. A novel's rating on Wattpad can be viewed through the feature I mentioned above, which then serves as a basis for measuring and monitoring reader preferences. This digital system will facilitate the process of reviewing ratings from readers of romance novels on Wattpad, which will then be conveyed to advertisers, allowing advertisers to consider whether or not to place ads on the medium.

Table 2. Advertisement in the novel

Iqbal memasukkan seregamnya ke dalam loker, jam pertama hari ini adalah olahraga dan Iqbal sangat semangat untuk berlari pagi. Ia melangkah ke arah lapangan, menyusul beberapa temanya yang sudah berbaris disana. "Bal, jangan diemin kita kek! Sorry banget!" ucap Glen men-sejajarkan langkahnya. "Bal jangan marah kek! Kayak cewek PMS lo!" sahut Rian di sisi kanan Iqbal. Iqbal menghela berat, "Dia sogok pakek apa lo berdua?" tanya Iqbal dingin. "Bolpoin satu pack!" serempak Glen dan Rian. Langkah Iqbal langsung terhenti,  Lihat apa yang dilakukan temanmu dan tetap terhubung dengan Instagram. Buka aplikasinya. Use app	ucapnya dan langsung berlari Riza melotot, "Dira!" panggilnya dan berlari menyusul Dira "Eh? Itu kak Riza ngapain ngejar Dira?" - Dira masih berlari menelusuri koridor. Entah sudah berapa mahasiswa/i yang hampir ia tabrak. "Dira!" panggil Riza Dira tak memperdulikannya, ia masih berlari tanpa arah. Yang ada difikirannya hanya menjauh dari Riza. Ciitt.. Dira berhenti tepat didepan toilet pria. Astagaa! Dira salah jalan! Bagaimana ini? Riza semakin dekat. Dengan sangat terpaksa, Dira langsung menerobos masuk ke dalam toilet pria. "Aaaaaaaa!"  Traveloka Lifestyle Sup... FREE · Open in app Book now
Advertisement in the novel "Mariposa"	Advertisement in the novel "Dosenku, Suamiku"

Based on the data above, it can be seen that on a page in the novels "Mariposa" and "Dosenku, Suamiku", there are pop-up ads from the Instagram and Traveloka apps. Advertisers use the ratings of these romance novels as a benchmark for placing ads in the Wattpad app. The large number of readers of both romance novels is what increases the ratings of the novels, so advertisers are interested in filling ad space in the novels. This is considered very profitable for Wattpad, because one of their revenues comes from advertising. So, in this phenomenon, the role of the audience is very important in contributing to Wattpad, so that advertisers are willing to place their ads.

2. Spatialization of Romance Novels in Wattpad

In the media realm, spatialization exists to overcome barriers to information distribution caused by distance and time. Utilizing the internet will make it easier for readers to access romance novels on Wattpad, anytime and anywhere. Readers can write and read novels without being limited by space and time. Readers can also access novels published in other countries with great ease, and readers can also publish their writings so that they can be read by readers from various countries. Within Wattpad, spatialization is achieved by offering ease of writing and reading novels, especially romance novels, which have a large fan base. The many features offered in Wattpad also make it easier for readers to interact with authors and fellow readers. However, in reality, this ease of information distribution is not simply provided by capital owners. They also have an interest in expanding their power networks so they can control the production, distribution, and consumption of a novel.

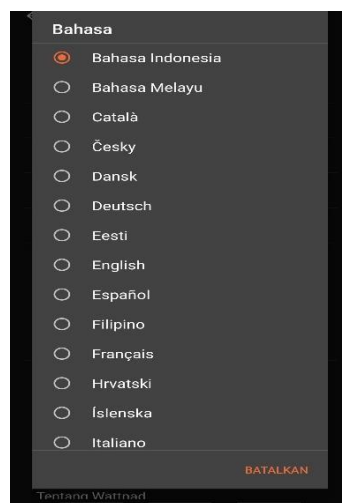


Fig. 2. Language selection feature in Wattpad

Wattpad, a platform for writing and reading novels, offers features that make it easy for users to enjoy and publish literary works without language barriers. The settings menu offers a variety of language options, allowing users to choose their preferred language. If readers change their language, the novel recommendations will change accordingly. This feature allows Wattpad to profit from advertisers in various countries who advertise on romance novels with the highest readership.

Furthermore, Wattpad also has a comments feature, allowing readers to interact with authors and fellow readers. This feature can also be used as a benchmark for advertisers when considering placing ads on a novel. The more readers interact through the comments section, the more people will see the ads. Therefore, it can be said that the explicit purpose of Wattpad's features is to facilitate user access to a wide variety of novels, while the implicit purpose is to profit from readers and authors on Wattpad.

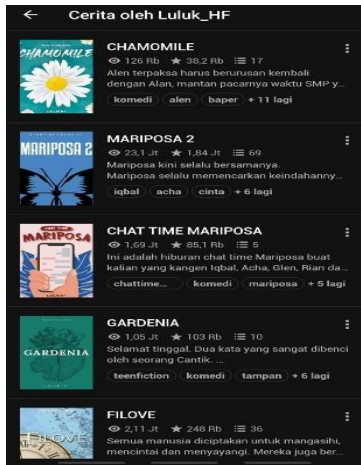
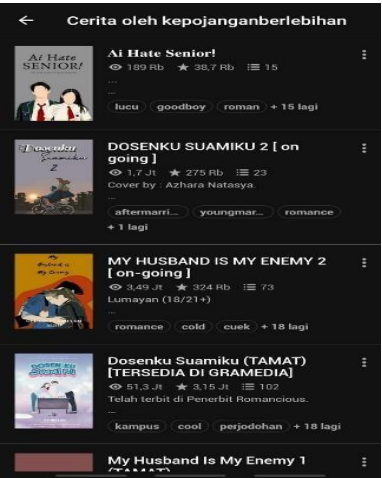
Table 3. Comment feature in the novel

Comment feature in the Novel "Mariposa"	Comment feature in the Novel "Dosenku, Suamiku"

3. Structuring Romance Novels on Wattpad

Based on Mosco's political economic theory, structuration is a process that focuses on the formation of structures by agents and the structures that shape agents, thus creating a relational relationship between the production and reproduction of a work. Consequently, a social process occurs between agents as they exchange ideas. This exchange of ideas ultimately influences the production of a novel.

Table 4. Influenced novels

	
Novel by Fajriyah	Novel by Rahmanida

The high demand for romance novels on Wattpad influences the production process of these authors. This can be seen in several of the works published by Fajriyah and Rahmanida, mentioned above. The success of their romance novels has significantly influenced the production process of subsequent novels. Because these authors already have their own audience, romance novel fans, they will also consider publishing works in different genres.

The political-economic structuring process between readers, authors, and Wattpad occurs through the production, distribution, and consumption of romance novels. Because romance novels are highly sought after by readers, authors tend to publish works in similar genres to gain wider readership, while Wattpad naturally benefits from the romance genre's dominance in the market. In this case, Wattpad, as a platform that provides features to facilitate access for its users in writing or reading novels, benefits significantly. Through the number of votes and readers, it can be determined that a novel in a particular genre is popular. Therefore, Wattpad can recommend advertisers to place ads on romance novels with the highest readership.

4. The Influence of Wattpad's Political and Economic Ideology in Indonesia

Based on the discussion of the first research problem, it can be seen that as a publishing media, Wattpad practices a political economic ideology. This is because as a publisher, they want to gain profit from the production, distribution, and consumption of literary works. As Mosco said, that to survive, every individual or group must produce a work; this is where control plays a role in regulating individuals or groups so that they can survive by producing something that society needs. In addition, political economy also focuses its study on the exchange value between function and utility that will later be used by the media as a business field (Mosco, 2009). In this context, Wattpad, as a media that also publishes literary works, of course, takes advantage of this opportunity to exercise control over society. Based on the discussion of the first research problem, it can be seen that the practice of political economic ideology from the publisher (Wattpad) plays a very important role and influence on Indonesian society. The influence of the practice of political economic ideology on Wattpad includes:

4.1. Determining Readers' Tastes

The rise of popular romance fiction has significantly influenced the tastes of Indonesian readers. For example, the novels "Mariposa" and "Dosenku, Suamiku", have been read thousands of times, making their presence felt. In this context, Wattpad, as a publisher producing literary works, can influence the tastes of Indonesian readers, who are particularly fond of teenage romance stories. Therefore, Wattpad, as a publishing platform, utilizes this opportunity to present stories in an

accessible language with relatable romances. This makes romance novels a highly popular genre among Indonesian readers.

4.2. Genre Determination for Writers

When a writer sees the phenomenon that romance fiction is very popular and loved by the Indonesian public, that creates an opportunity that the writer ultimately exploits. For example, Luluk Hf's success with "Mariposa", a teenage romance story that is very relatable to readers in Indonesia. Not wanting to waste the opportunity, Luluk again wrote romance novels that were also published through Wattpad, such as "Mariposa 2", "EL", "Gardenia", and others. From this phenomenon, it can be concluded that political and economic ideology also influences writers in the production process of subsequent works to generate profits.

CONCLUSION

Romance novels published on Wattpad are not only intended for entertainment or to meet reader demand, but there is a political economy of publishing romance novels on the Wattpad app. First, from the commodification of content, where romance novels that have been read millions of times, such as "Mariposa" and "Dosenku, Suamiku", share a common story about teenage love that is closely related to the lives of teenagers today. Therefore, such love stories are widely sought after by readers and users of the Wattpad app. Furthermore, in the process of audience commodification, the large number of readers of "Mariposa" and "Dosenku, Suamiku" novels significantly influenced the rating increase, so that advertisers are interested in filling ad slots on the novels. This is very profitable for Wattpad, because one of their revenues comes from advertising. Furthermore, in the spatialization process, it can be seen that the features offered by Wattpad to make it easier for its users to write, read, give ratings, and interact are an explicit goal of Wattpad. The implicit goal is to profit from Wattpad's readers and novel writers through user interaction, which will provide valuable insights into the advertisements displayed on romance novel pages. The greater the interaction between Wattpad users, the greater the profits Wattpad generates through the published romance content. Finally, a process of political-economic structuring between readers, writers, and Wattpad is evident through the production, distribution, and consumption of romance novels.

This is because romance novels are highly sought after by readers, leading authors to tend to publish works in the same genre to attract more readers, while Wattpad profits from the romance genre's success in dominating the market. Furthermore, the practice of Wattpad's political-economic ideology as a publishing medium has a significant impact on Indonesian society. First, from the reader's perspective, political-economic ideology can be used to control the tastes of Indonesian literary readers. Therefore, the tastes of Indonesian readers can be seen through the abundance of romance fiction published on Wattpad. Second, from the author's perspective, a writer who is successful with their first romance work tends to write subsequent works in the same genre after learning about the reader euphoria stemming from the success of their previous work. Therefore, it can be concluded that the practice of political and economic ideology influences the tastes of readers in Indonesia and the literary production process for authors.

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