



## Faith and fantasy: The interplay of Islam and pop culture in “99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa”

Fadhillah Sri Meutia<sup>1\*</sup>, Hsham Aburghif<sup>2</sup>, Gumilar Rusliwa Somantri<sup>3</sup>, Firdaus Mirza Nusuary<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia, Depok, JawaBarat, Indonesia 16424

<sup>2</sup>Department of Digital Marketing, Victorian Institute of Technology, 123 Queen Street, Melbourne, Australia 300

<sup>4</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Jl. Teuku NyakArief No.441, Kopelma Darussalam, Kec. Syiah Kuala, Kota Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia 2311

\*Corresponding author

E-mail address: fadhillahsrimeutia@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v7i1.23359>

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> critical discourse analysis representations Jean Baudrillard Indonesian cinema young Muslim</p>	<p>This study explores the evolving landscape of Indonesian cinema and its profound societal ramifications, focusing on the film <i>99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa</i> (99 Lights in the European Sky). Using critical discourse analysis and drawing insights from Baudrillard's theoretical framework on simulation, this research systematically unpacks the ideological underpinnings embedded in the film. At the heart of this investigation is the symbiotic relationship between Islam and popular culture as manifested through the film's discursive constructions. The study combines Jäger and Maier's method of critical discourse analysis with Baudrillard's conceptualization of simulacra and simulacrum. It examines how the film's audio-visual elements shape perceptions of Islam within the broader social consciousness. The study brings to light the complex interplay of power dynamics and reveals how societal structures and practices contribute to the formation and perpetuation of these representations. Significantly, the research underscores the transformative potential of popular culture, presented in the film as an imaginative force, to shape the values and perspectives of contemporary young Muslim audiences, providing a new understanding of the role of popular culture in shaping religious identity.</p>

### Citation suggestion:

Meutia, F. S., Aburghif, H., Somantri, G. R., & Nusuary, F. M. (2024). Faith and fantasy: The interplay of Islam and pop culture in “99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa”. *Simulacra*, 7(1), 66–81. <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v7i1.23359>

Received 8 December 2023; Received in revised form 3 June 2024; Accepted 8 June 2024; Published online 25 June 2024.

## Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, societal development is intricately interwoven with technological advancements within the capitalist industry. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Indonesia, where the confluence of religions and media manifests through the fervor surrounding popular religious films. The intersection of Islam-themed films with the burgeoning popular culture reflects a dynamic cultural landscape where traditional beliefs and modern media converge—a pivotal moment in this cultural evolution occurred at the turn of the 21st century, precisely in 2000, as the global landscape embraced a more modern trajectory.

This study focuses on the enduring impact of popular religious films in Indonesia, particularly the resonances of one such film, *"99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa"* (99 Lights in the European Skies), released in 2013. Adapted from the novel by Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra, the film, directed by Guntur Suharjanto and produced by Maxima Pictures, garnered substantial attention. Initially drawing 580,042 spectators, it steadily climbed to an impressive 1.1 million, earning recognition as one of the best-selling Indonesian films in 2013 (Astuti, 2015). Through its Narrative, which intertwines Islam and popular culture, the film endeavors to depict the realities of Islamic teachings within the European context.

As this study traces the film's trajectory, it concurrently explores the transformative journey of Islam as a religion, especially within the context of Indonesia, the world's third-most populous Muslim-majority nation. The allure of popular religion-themed films lies in their portrayal of young adherents navigating obedience while grappling with many cultural values. Reflecting on historical perspectives, this

study contends that the coexistence of observance and entertainment is not recent (Heryanto, 2008).

The study draws on Baudrillard's insights, particularly from "Impossible Exchange" (Baudrillard, 2001), to understand the dynamics of meaning and interpretation in this cultural milieu. Baudrillard's emphasis on language as not merely conveying meaning but also wielding authority in communication is pivotal. The study extends this perspective to objects, as discussed in his book "The System of Objects" (Baudrillard, 2020), where the shift from proper values to a semiotic approach is emphasized.

Central to this investigation is exploring the ideologies embedded in the signs portrayed in the film, subtly influencing contemporary society's values and self-perception. This spiritual process, exercising hegemonic control over media and entertainment discourse, unfolds through the film's various elements—images, sound, music, cues, and camera effects—shaping the audience's understanding and interpretation. Furthermore, the film contributes to a discourse that continually produces meaning, marking a new era for the Indonesian public. Despite potential critiques of the depth of their engagement, the younger generation of Muslims finds a meaningful bridge between traditionally perceived opposing forces—religion and popular culture. The film and the ensuing debates surrounding it signify a transformative chapter in the Indonesian cultural landscape.

## Method

This is a critical discourse analysis study incorporating the method formulated by S. Jäger dan Maier and that of Baudrillard on simulacra and simulacrum to see how the construction of reality works in the film. Jäger and Maier proposes that critical discourse analysis is a dialectic relationship

between discourse and object or others, including analysis of the internal relations of discourse (Jäger & Maier, 2009). Also covered in the domain are ideological questions and the understanding of bearing “meaning in power” in identity building (Fairclough, 2010). Discourse does not exist independently; it is a collection of dispositive elements (Jäger & Maier, 2009). The dispositive concept can be visualized as a triangle, or rather a rotating circle, with three points, including discursive practice (language and reasoning), non-discursive practice (action), and materialization (created through non-discrete practices).

Synchronics analysis serves to identify the current dispositive status. This dismissive concept includes discursive practices, non-discursive practices, and materialization (Jäger & Maier, 2009). To reveal the meaning of the message of a discourse of identity regarding popular culture and religion, one can see the construction of reality by the religious film using a simulation theory of (Baudrillard, 1983b).

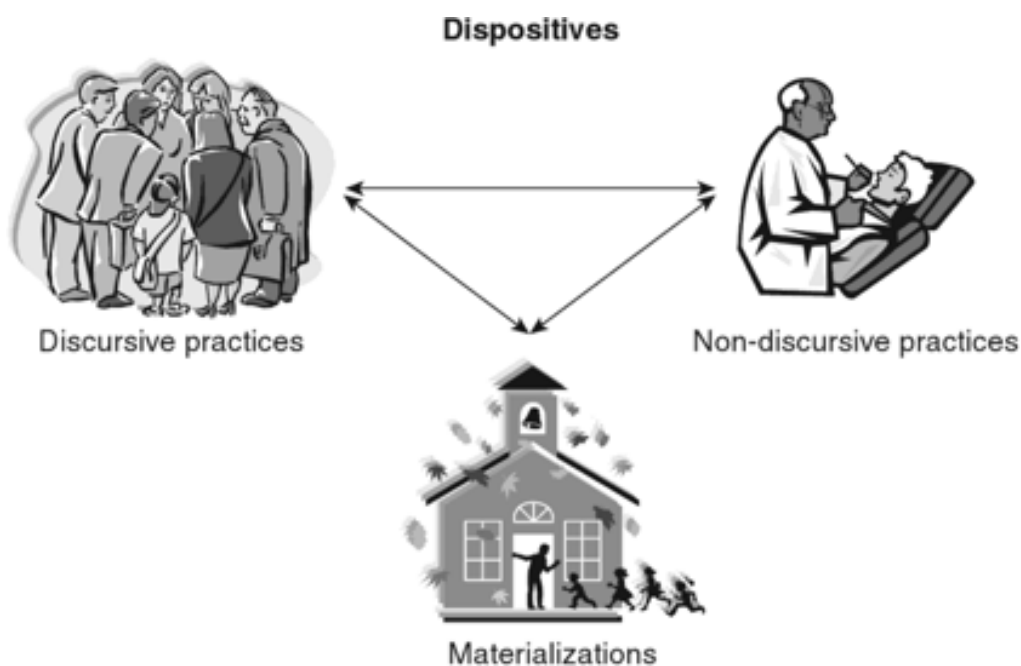
## Results and Discussion

### *The representation in the film “99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa”*

Through a comprehensive exploration of the film '99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa', this analysis delves into its cultural, thematic, and cinematic dimensions, providing a thorough understanding of their role in shaping cultural discourse within a globalized context through discussing four primary elements and their effects on the Identity Politics of Young Muslims: a) The Reflection of Basic Reality, b) The Covering and Changing of The Basic Reality c) The Missing of the Basic Reality. d) The Rise of Pseudo-reality (Jäger & Maier, 2009).

This study delves into the pivotal theme of this film representation and its role in shaping cultural perceptions and meanings. It explores how the portrayals of characters, places, and stories in Indonesian films significantly influence its audiences. The study seeks to shed light on how film representation affects societal perceptions and plays a role in Islam and religion.

Picture 1: CDA chart for film



The discussion moves to the Indonesian film's broader vision of influencing Indonesia's society, culture, and development. It explores how its activities, mainly through the film "*99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*", aimed to shape Indonesian society according to its interests and ideals. This study is a foundation for understanding the multifaceted dimensions of religious representation and its broader implications. It links it to the overarching theme of Indonesian films' representation of Islam and Muslims.

The discussion and exploration of representation and its role in generating and exchanging meanings are widespread across various fields. This body of literature provides a comprehensive insight into how cultural elements are symbolically portrayed and interpreted. For instance, (Hall, 1997) contends that constructing representations is fluid, allowing for various potential outcomes. The selection of different symbols, concepts, and ideas significantly influences how the representation is perceived. In film as a mass medium, these factors play a crucial role in shaping the portrayal of characters, places, and narratives for broad audiences. When specific representation conventions emerge and recur, especially in depicting individuals or locations, the impact of these representations can accumulate, creating a perceived reality. (Dyer, 2002) further notes that conventions of cultural forms and codes permeate representational methods, giving rise to emerging stereotypes as a form of societal arrangement. These conventions condense into ideas through generalization, inscription, and classification. Consequently, representational stereotypes are considered inevitable within the realm of cultural representation.

This study posits that a comprehensive examination of representation is crucial for understanding its influence. Employing a critical discourse analysis methodology,

which integrates Norman Fairclough's approach and incorporates Baudrillard's perspectives on simulacra and simulacrum, we explore how the construction of reality operates within the film. Within this framework, representation emerges as a fundamental element, as films inherently function as "constructs, fabrications, [and] representations" (Stam & Spence, 1983). Therefore, we delve into explaining and analyzing the nature of representation, specifically within the contextual framework of "*99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*," which explores themes of religion and Islam. In the realm of power relations, (Dyer, 2002) presents a comprehensive perspective on representation, asserting that "How social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life". This study acknowledges and engages with these power dynamics to illuminate the intricate connections between representation, societal treatment, and the nuanced portrayal of religious themes within the film.

Regarding intertextuality, the film "*99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*" engages with Indonesia's broader cultural or artistic context. It reveals a multifaceted narrative that delves into the intersection of religion and popular culture. The film explores the concept of simulacrum, presenting a complex representation of these themes. The film has left an indelible mark on the Indonesian cinematic landscape, captivating audiences and sparking critical discussions. The film serves as a cultural artifact, portraying the experiences of Indonesian Muslims navigating life in Europe. It provides insights into how cultural elements, particularly Islam, are represented and negotiated in a foreign context. Employing critical discourse analysis allows for examining the ideologies embedded in the film. This approach helps uncover the power dynamics, cultural constructions, and discursive strategies that shape the narrative. The film can be seen as

a reflection of the societal context in which it was produced. Analyzing Indonesia's cultural, political, and historical backdrop during the film's release provides context for understanding its thematic choices.

Regarding simulacra and simulation, Baudrillard argues that reality is often replaced by "simulacra" – copies without an original in contemporary society. This leads to a breakdown in the connection between language and reality. Words and images no longer refer to an external reality but instead refer to other signs and symbols. The storyline revolves around the protagonists' journey through Europe, providing a unique lens to explore cultural dynamics. A central theme revolves around the coexistence of Islam and popular culture. The film explores how these seemingly disparate elements intersect and influence each other, reflecting the evolving dynamics within contemporary Indonesian society. The film's portrayal of religion is noteworthy, as it goes beyond mere representation and delves into the intricate interplay between religious beliefs and the cultural milieu. The film "*99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*" becomes a canvas for examining how spiritual elements are woven into the fabric of popular culture and impact Indonesian society through religion and Islamic concepts.

The film's narrative structure, storytelling techniques, and character development offer insights into how the filmmaker's ideology engages the audience. The visual language of the film plays a crucial role in conveying emotions and reinforcing the narrative. The filmmaker's approach to storytelling employs filmmaking techniques to create a visually engaging narrative. These mediums not only enhance the storytelling that carries within it a hidden ideology of capitalist propaganda practices under a purely Islamic religious cover but also reflect the evolving landscape of Indonesian cinema. In this context, Baudrillard argues that language

loses its referential quality in a simulation-dominated world. Words and signs no longer point to an external reality; they refer to other signs in an endless chain of meaning. Moreover, the film's exploration of the simulacrum adds depth to its cultural critique. By examining the representation of religious and cultural elements, the film prompts audiences to reflect on the authenticity of these portrayals and the impact of such simulacra on societal perceptions so that it makes audiences accept and follow this ideology. In his essay "The Precession of Simulacra," Baudrillard describes four stages of the image: First Order of Simulacra: A faithful copy of an original. Second Order of Simulacra: The copy begins to distort the original. Third Order of Simulacra: There is no longer an original; only copies exist. Fourth Order of Simulacra: The simulation precedes the real, and any reference to the original is lost.

In terms of the impact on the Audience, examining this film's reception and its impact on the audience provides a perspective on how it resonates with viewers. The film's popularity and cultural significance, as indicated by box office numbers and critical acclaim, contribute to its broader Indonesian societal influence. Throughout the film, there are Symbolism and Motifs; unpacking the symbolism and recurring motifs within the film contributes to a deeper understanding of its thematic underpinnings for which it was produced. Symbols include visual cues, Islamic religious metaphors, and popular cultural references that add layers of meaning to the narrative that encourages Indonesian society to follow. In the context of the Symbolic Exchange, Baudrillard distinguishes between symbolic exchange and sign value. Symbolic exchange is a form of communication where meaning is exchanged, while sign value refers to how signs and symbols are assigned value within a system. He critiques contemporary society

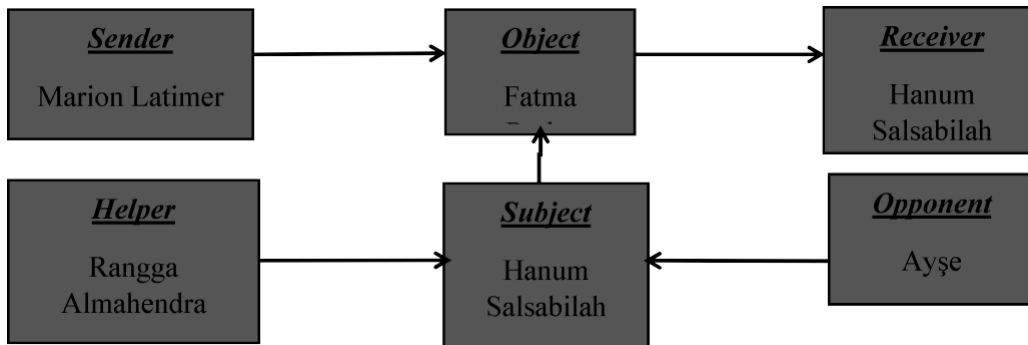
for prioritizing sign value over symbolic exchange, leading to a loss of genuine meaning. Hence, given its focus on Islam, the film becomes a lens through which to analyze the representation of the religion. The portrayal of Islamic teachings, practices, and the Muslim image in a foreign context can be examined for its authenticity and potential impact on perceptions. The film is analyzed as a commentary on contemporary cultural dynamics, addressing issues such as identity, diaspora, and the negotiation of religious values in a globalized world. Exploring these aspects sheds light on the film's societal relevance. In the context of this gulf of meaning, Baudrillard contends that there is a growing gap or gulf between signs

and the reality they supposedly represent. This gap results in losing the stable meaning that language traditionally provides.

Baudrillard, in his book *The Precession of Simulacra* (Baudrillard, 1983b), a review of the spectacle community phenomenon, explains that objects have wrapped up the community and all kinds of signs thrown at them by mass production, thus encouraging them always to dress up, aspiring to look fabulous in all social interactions. The community has been trapped in a sea of signs produced by the stage world that does not tell the real apart from the unreal. This is what Baudrillard labels as the way of translating the body, the *Simulacra*, a mirage created by Indonesian religious films.

***The characters' point of view (protagonist/ main role/ subject) through actantial structural analysis in "99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa"***

**Chart 1: Actant relation in 99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa**



(Jäger & Maier, 2009)

***Non-discursive practices***

In his discussion of language and meaning, Baudrillard states that the object starts from a favorable economic theory incarnating into an addictive economy, highlighting the essential behavior where people tend to or prefer being consumers to producers. In turn, it makes the community lose its ideas and creativity due to a significant force controlling the process, making its way through the means

and production they choose to consume. Objectivity is made possible through various media, including film. Let us delve into the leading roles. Rangga is a young, fashionable, and religious intellect, proven in his wearing a shirt and tidy haircut and good-looking while taking a prayer. Next is Hanum, a typical present-day Muslim woman whose faith is shown to prosper throughout. Portrayed as a good Moslem without religious attire in her daily life at the beginning, she decides to put on the veil to

fulfil her promise to the late Asye. Fatima is another attraction: beautiful, fashionable and veil-wearing. Fatma represents a wide range of qualities a Muslim woman should grow to attain young, religious-dressed, pretty and fashionable.

### ***Baudrillard on Indonesia religious film: a media-created reality on present-day young Muslims***

Baudrillard's view on postmodernism reflects the development of space and time, resulting from technological advances, especially the growing media in capitalist society rampant with commodification in daily life. He calls into question the rationality of society evoked by the Age of Enlightenment. The focal point of Baudrillard's postmodernist idea lies in the influence of technological advances in object reproduction in society, especially in Western cultures, referred to by Baudrillard as simulation. The simulation produces its own spectrum called simulacrum space. The periodization of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1983b) is still related to the discourse of value outlined by Marx. In the (Baudrillard, 1983b), simulacra are introduced through hyperrealism, annulling the reference to the proliferation of signs.

In the words of Baudrillard, simulation is emphasized as a process of proliferation in the form of a simulative creation, meaning an object, the reference of which is not tangible or unclear in terms of the origin. To put it into perspective, what is currently seen on a map appears to be imaginary in that we do not know how it came into being (Baudrillard, 1983b). As with consumer society, the needs produced are no longer easily distinguished. Today's consumption is no longer based on the real needs of objects, but rather, it is built around systems of objects, a pseudo-reality; it is best explained using object virtualization. Microprocessor technology and integrated

circuits pave the way for creating objects in a virtual world; Baudrillard calls it the automatic written world. Creating reality into the binary codes channeled perfectly through the virtual world results in cyberspace (Baudrillard, 1995). Baudrillard uses simulation to randomly compare a model to reality, covering four phases: model formation, model manipulation, results interpretation, and comparisons.

### ***The simulated reality in Indonesian religious film on simulacrum space***

#### *The reflection of basic reality*

Pope argued that extra-textual discourse, on the one hand, and easily duped and retrogressive audiences, on the other hand, are two factors earning a film hegemonic effect (Pope, 2012). So mesmerizing are the imagery aspects of young Moslems presented that the filmgoers do not realize they have been led as such. *"What I am calling a postmodern mirror moment is a visual aura in film, in which a display of two-dimensional imaging – in a mirror or otherwise – criticizes the attenuation of reality. The former mirror of Nature – mimesis as the classical conception of narrative art – is opposed by the postmodern mirror of nothing at all, as in a digital image generated by code with no Profilmic object whatsoever. The film adaptation of literary work is now and always has been a for-profit simulation of reference, but commercial film adaptations sometimes internalize critiques of their own commodity status. Some films stage their own inescapable difference from their supposed referential"* (Hoagwood, 2006). Hoagwood's stance can be seen through a popular religious film that stars a young, intellectual, fashionable-looking, and spiritual figure as the leading character in the story. A vivid portrayal would be when Rangga is taking a prayer at the campus church, delivering a speech followed by applause from the

crowd, Hanum's faith getting more muscular and her great-looking persona, as well as Fatimah being described as tall, fashionable, veil-wearing religious girl.

*The covering and changing of the basic reality*

The reflection and concealment of fundamental reality implies a theology of truth and secrecy (ideology covered). In truth, the cinema, acting as a simulacrum – a sign in possession of referent or not at all), does coat an inevitable reality while appearing in a route to reflect it to the watching audience (González, 2009, p. 29). Simulation, as the main road to the codes and the signs, initially described from a critical point of view, is a matter of alienation; it is, however, a form of the society of the spectacle. Later, in (Baudrillard, 2017), Baudrillard offers a critique that surpasses the political economy by reversing all codes and extraordinary opposition in which subject and object relations are no longer significant or gone. His assumptions are in line with Saussure's anagram, the reversal of the term discourse – a force against the simulation order; it is a natural opposition system regulating meaning, at the same time being a movement to bring back the symbolic order to its original context as a means of higher-level exchange.

Films that use a complete set of visual technology to create a high-caliber illusion of the real are more likely to conceal the reality (Leach, 2002). Rogers echoes Leach's idea, "*The idea was that, in contrast to celluloid filmmaking, where larger crews and equipment were understood to interfere with the connection between filmmaker and subject, the digital apparatus intruded less and thus facilitated a sense of connection referenced through terms like intimacy and immediacy.*" (Rogers, 2012). The cinema has the light of playing, toying with visitors' fantasy and mentality. Those images they see on-screen influence attitudes,

beliefs, and behavior; a film can subtly instill ideology, in this case, a lifestyle, simply through a simulated process. Celluloid filmmaking has the crews and equipment disrupting the rhythm between filmmakers and subject; the digital world, meanwhile, provides much more "intimacy" and "immediacy" (Gold, J, 2001). Modern-day film brings people together through a shared culture (Haytock, 2008).

Fatma and Rangga play a role in featuring counter-culture movements by putting on images and conducting practices characterizing global popular culture. The two, however, give new meaning to them to later go against dominantly nurtured ideas and values that oppose orthodox Islamic teachings. A scene in the 25th minute shows Hanum and her colleagues dress uncommonly in the old teaching of Islam: combining a coat with a brown veil. The traits of border crossing of popular culture to Islam are vividly shown throughout the film, taking its pinnacle when Hanum decides to wear a veil made from a scarf circling her neck. Fatma is no less astonishing; she represents pretty, fashionable, religious young women. Examined thoroughly, we will realize that all are by-products of commodification. Baudrillard explains this phenomenon in his work (Baudrillard, 1998), focusing on a consumerism world holding on to religious values. He believed that the ultimate value lies beyond the structure and signs that make up the exchange rate; in his views, Marx had forgotten to incorporate the social contours of the socialist community. Therefore, Baudrillard's approach is constructive in understanding commodification processes in the film, a text in which postmodernism and simulacrum become the primary, antithetical act of documentation (Sperb, 2006).

Modified values (commodification) are not an overnight design; they are a well-researched plan to drag people into a consumerist world and value systems



### Image 1: Film 99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa



Source: YouTube Video

by taking advantage of religion as a living culture. Though challenging, we must admit that the film is bombarding us with opposing values and consumerism. It is more than just a clothing matter; it reaches the social level, becoming a radical seminary hegemony using sign exchange (Weinreich, 2004). Also promoted in the film are Islamic-branded cosmetics products such as Wardah, as shown on Hanum's beauty kits. The brand is not there by accident; the producer wants it to be there for commercial purposes. The money the brand pays depends on how often it is shown on screen. Being the companion of the fashionable young actresses, a product like Wardah is deemed to be trusted without the audience realizing that it is a secret message or, rather, a mission (Baudrillard, 2017). The film is not only a medium in which people get to see the urban settings, but it is also an illustration of the views of the city and urban life (Gold, J, 2001).

Baudrillard's simulation theory indicates that when reality is systematically transformed into a spectacle, the spectacle itself becomes a reality intended as political or symbolic resistance. The intended information is usually inserted into specific social settings, as has been proven by Wardah, where people need to realize that they are led into a world of persuasion. The effectiveness lies in beautiful, fashionable, and intelligent women being used as signs to achieve the goals achieved. Frequently seeing their favorite figures getting along well with those products, they start to become fond of them.

In The (Baudrillard, 1998), Baudrillard believes that only some commercial advertisements are meaningful. Still, they all contribute to creating a difference, resulting in the production of different industries. The appearance of Wardah in the 7th minute is well-planned right from the start to generate massive business profit from what spectators need to realize they are tricked into. When people relate the product to the context it is put in, they will start to see its significance. Currently, if well integrated into the story of a film, advertising products on screen is considered the most effective to generate profit and create a new culture among young women. At this point, industrial products unite many people in a new culture. Brand recall is the phenomenon where people have fond memories of the products they have seen; for the patrons of Wardah, the brand being shown on the screen directly affects their perceived values since they can cross-check what they experience with what they see. Brand recall substantially impacts the consumers sitting in the cinema room; they can evaluate right where they belong. Their level of trust and loyalty can [...] be a whole new level if their evaluation is positive (Astuti, 2015).

Wardah has revolutionized the marketing world; it opens new ways for their counterparts to travel the same path. Additionally, the study finds that contemporary industry is the most profitable way of introducing a product to a broader public. The spectators see themselves as their idols and the product since they are

also part of the setting. Wardah has an edge over other competitors since it capitalizes on the halal part. Their annual revenue rises 75%, compared to other competitors making less than 15%. Recently, people at Wardah claimed they had recorded 80% of [yearly] revenue. They [target] young women early in their cosmetics journey (Astuti, 2015). The excellent opportunity for the cosmetics industry to gain a broader market (especially the younger generation) and the rapidly developing Indonesian films, brand placement is becoming more promising in reaching out to the public (Astuti, 2015). The audience feels more involved by the existence of the public figures as the ambassadors.

#### *The missing of the basic reality*

The film reminds us of the problem that started the century for most high modernists — the loss of a sense of the real, the core, the authentic, and the original (Heffernan, 2016). Conversely, the fashion industry has given birth to marginality, something Baudrillard opposes; the fight against it is evident in signs simulated. In *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, Baudrillard rejects Foucault's thinking that the mass is the recipient and object of the discourse of power; he believes that the desire to watch is nothing of "the positive brutality" (Baudrillard, 2007). In Baudrillard's words, silence is the absence of the principal (fundamental) reality through modern media (Baudrillard, 1981). The reality on the screen culture is no longer in a one-on-one setting (inter-subject); it is now trans-subjects, the interaction between icons and people, covering physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual relations in the real world. In the capitalist world, an unknown subject can go to the marketplace to get an identity; it only takes a change of perspective to identify the weakness to achieve self-search (Pope, 2012).

The charm of Rangga and Fatma and all the signs attached signify physical and spiritual relations between spectators and their icons. Fatma's dropping by to see both Rangga and Hanum on their visit to Istanbul is vivid proof of the missing reality where the former dresses so elegantly. The more we go into the film, the more we learn about the bonding between young Moslems' fashion and popular culture. The new fashion is a form of semiological banditry by uncommon code driven by rebellious, authentic, and political content (Baudrillard, 2007). Baudrillard is becoming increasingly critical of discourses of marginality and alienation and interprets them as mere simulations of resistance produced by the code itself. In *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, Baudrillard describes the silence he sees as a rejection of the fiction of accurate exchange, a protest filed based on the recognition that modern media itself inhibits and prevents exchange. The remediation is the sense that the so-called film is a medium continuously rewatched, containing a deep understanding of how it is perceived in the past (Braester, 2015).

Baudrillard speaks about a "double bond" in our relationship with media culture, very much like conflicting young children over the demanding ways of their parents; they have their inherent rights on the one hand, but they are required to be submissive to their parents on the other hand. To borrow from that analogy, the film is seen as the parents while the audience is taken for the children. The concealment strategy is a perfect weapon for Islam-oriented film and money-seeking producers; they target a large spectrum of audiences. Filmmakers wrap up their ideological content in romantic and melodrama fashion. Both pop culture and postmodernism get involved in each other, much in a deconstructive reflection of old texts to entirely new versions of [ancient] texts (Mills, 2015). Strategic resistance is a claim

of liberation from subjectivity to oppression. Today's arena is nothing strategic anymore since the system has a lot of meanings at its disposal; the resistance of meaning is carried out through hyper-conforming simulation (Baudrillard, 2007). Baudrillard consciously rejects the media; he believes it to be a phenomenon of contemporary culture, a euphoria where technology rages, turning itself into a phantasmagoria of the screen (Baudrillard, 1983b).

### *The rise of pseudo-reality*

In his work entitled *The Precession of Simulacra*, Baudrillard argues that representation is a realm containing ideas gathered from images of reality it refers to. To grasp representation, one must imagine inevitable reality in physical, psychological, or social aspects, including unreal social settings; in that case, the image becomes a representation (Baudrillard, 1983b). Furthermore, Baudrillard assumes that no matter the number of euphoric signs modern men continuously attain, they are not real; they are meant for eternal dissatisfaction, following the massive gap between realities and idealizing reverie (Moser, 2014). Representation depends on the universe of reality, so reality precedes the image so that representation can be created. The concept of production has the same assumption that some products have been produced before, which now require reproduction; the existence of reproduction precedes production.

The basic principle of image reproduction is that it no longer represents reality outside of itself but is built independently in the mechanism of the simulation technology. In this case, Jean Baudrillard sees simulation as a self-reference (pure simulacrum), simulacrum as a disconnection of an image from reality, in the sense that the image no longer reproduces the world of reality

outside of itself but produces itself. The disconnection enables the rise of the actual models (Baudrillard, 1983b). This is echoed by Disney in the promotional film, stating that the champagne will bring back the spectators to the old days (Petersen, 2007). The culture of contemporary Western cities does not merely create massive daily consumption; it also gives birth to a memorable experience in art, entertainment, and tourism. Baudrillard declares that the culture industry brings out and dictates the audience's consciousness by instilling a desire over false needs and trying to get rid of actual needs.

As shown in the film, representation is an effort to bring back specific ideas obtained through film media; it creates reality and fantasy. "The image of artworks made from discarded products could be interpreted by seeing them as a medium to disclose the mythologizing sign systems of global consumption, showing how they cleverly hide empty promises on waste" (Cruickshank, 2007). As such, a cultural icon is interpreted as a cultural product that implies a series of values, beliefs, and norms in society, having a solid grip on many community members. Both Rangga and Fatma are there to embody that concept; the latter attracts a broad audience through her fashion and the image she has designated for her character. Baudrillard calls this a "communication ecstasy," where technology turns itself into a phantasmagoria on the screen.

### *Indonesian religious film: the identity politics of young Muslims*

If we delve into the phenomenal film, the exposure of Islamic symbols is met with great response and interest from the Muslim market in Indonesia (Haryadi, 2013). Therefore, it is relevant to revisit McLuhan's slogan, "media is the message"; if one aspires to spread specific values to a broader

audience and have a more immediate effect in the real world, a film is, one might say, the right choice. Due to its visual appeal, the cinema can play with the audience's emotions and is much easier to understand than the written word. When specific values are presented to the audience, it is none other than presenting a particular value behind the ideology. At this stage, emotions strengthen the recognition of ideology, thus making film the perfect medium for spreading ideology. Ideology-oriented films can be packaged in a romantic form and presented melodically. By riding a religious realm with certain commodities in their pocket, the capitalists seek to meet the consumers' demands; in other words, they try to make them relate to religious values when they consume certain capitalist products. Articulating religious values into applying material products is captivating to most people. The system is nothing new; it is a common practice in releasing a new product, advertisement, or brand in the business world. Transference happens when people try to dress like their idols and impersonate them, as did metaphor. Rangga and Fatma set the standard for young Indonesians to dress. It is well-explained by Baudrillard when he offers a mirror analogy: a world of communication where we contact, connect, and give feedback (Baudrillard, 1983a). The subject is an abstract concept that explains the psychic relationship of oneself (self) with others and the various worlds around it. Self is an individual who is aware of himself and can explain who he is. Every individual has a self-concept, which explains the relationship between himself and others (the others), either fixed or changing. Therefore, the characters on the screen are not subjects in the true sense but subjects simulated by their creators in such a way as if they had such a self-concept.

The screen world does not build up an inter-subject realm, the relationship between

an individual and another individual as subjects in real space-time; however, it produces a trans-subject relationship, involving real subjects in spectators and subjects appearing on screen in such a way that the interaction feels real. Self-identification through film takes place intensively, in the sense that the actual subjects try to identify themselves with the subjects being watched on the screen. The subject's involvement in the discourse alienates him from himself, causing him to lose an essential part of himself and find an image in the screen icons.

Baudrillard realizes the essential use of language, leading people to bring themselves to become exactly like what an advertisement wants them to be. We are at a crossroads, trying to get a massive impression into this consumptive society (Baudrillard, 1998). His view centers on how the economy motif has shifted from positive to addictive, from a producer into a person with an addiction. The ongoing transformation of the young Moslems is called mass unconsciousness, where they lose their identity and then construct their new persona based on the pseudo-reality aspect shown to them. At the end of it all, they bring themselves much closer to the image of the subjects they revere on the screen; they are tricked. Channeling information and shaping the audience's minds is what mediascape is all about.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the "99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa*" analysis comprehensively explores its cultural, thematic, and cinematic dimensions. By delving into these aspects, one can appreciate the film's contribution to Indonesian cinema and its role in shaping cultural discourse within aglobalized context. This study offers a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted dynamics between Indonesian cinema, societal structures, and

the construction of reality. By dissecting the ideological components within "99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa*," the research provides valuable insights into the intricate interplay of cultural representation, power dynamics, and the shaping of contemporary Muslim identity in Indonesia.

Through simulation, Baudrillard clarifies that cinema is where those capitalists channel reproduced repressive codes; they bring aspects such as politics, real-life events, and society onto the screen. As a simulation tool, film integrates information with a commodity, thus making it much further away from reality. Since the introduction of the hit film, Islamic symbols, such as Islam-bearing Wardah, have become commodities traded, gaining a spot in Indonesia's famous life and name in its respective business market. The film candidly presents the meeting of Islamic values and popular culture, which, as we all know, is warmly embraced across the country. The reconstruction of meanings into social identities originating from the social environment is to provide self-understanding and relationships with the dominant culture; the commercial element is intended for young people in the construction of meaning and identity, despite their not realizing being forced to get closer to pseudo-reality – false realities.

Popular Islamic practices in trendy hijab and the consumption of cosmetic brands sign the advance of consumer-contemporary culture in recent years, where the global economy intertwines with post-modern religion through commodification. The process allows the youth to pick from symbols that represent their identity creatively. Baudrillard's discussions on language and meaning are part of his critique of modern society's obsession with simulations and the consequences of living in a hyperreal world where representation and simulation take precedence over reality and genuine meaning.

## Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

## Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

## References

- Astuti, N. (2015). *The influence of brand placement acceptance and brand recall on preference, purchase intention, consumer perceived value and loyalty, a case study on 99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*. (Master Thesis). Faculty of Economics and Business. Universitas Indonesia.
- Baudrillard, J. (1983a). The ecstasy of communication. In H. Foster (Ed.), *The anti aesthetic: Essays on postmodern culture*, (pp.126-134). Bay Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1983b). The Precession of Simulacra. In P. Foss, P. Patton, & P. Beitchman (Trans.), *Simulations*, (pp.1-42). Semiotext(e).
- Baudrillard, J. (1995). *Simulacra and simulation*. University of Michigan Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society: Myth and structures*. Sage Publication.
- Baudrillard, J. (2001). *Impossible exchange*. Verso.
- Baudrillard, J. (2007). *In the shadow of the silent majorities, or, The end of the social*. Semiotext(e).
- Baudrillard, J. (2017). *Symbolic exchange and death*. Sage Publication.
- Baudrillard, J. (2020). *The system of objects*. Galimard.

- Braester, Y. (2015). The spectral return of cinema: Globalization and cinephilia in contemporary Chinese film. *Cinema Journal*, 55(1), 29–51. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43653484>
- Cruickshank, R. (2007). The work of art in the age of global consumption: Agnès Varda's "Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse." *L'Esprit Créateur*, 47(3), 119–132.
- Dyer, R. (2002). *The matter of images: Essays on representation*, (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Gold, J. R. (2001). Under darkened skies: The city in science-fiction film. *Geographical Association*, 86(4), 337–350.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications.
- Haryadi. (2013). *Islamic popular culture and the new identities of urban Muslim young people in Indonesia: The case Islamic films and Islamic self-help books*. Doctoral dissertation. The University of Western Australia, School of Social Sciences, Asian Studies Discipline.
- Haytock, J. (2008). "Finding out things like that": Film and the search for reality in Butterfield 8. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 41(1), 95–110.
- Heffernan, T. (2016). When the movie is better than the book: Fight Club, consumption, and vital signs. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 57(2), 91–103. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13110/framework.57.2.0091>
- Heryanto, A. (2008). Pop culture and competing identities. In A. Heryanto (Ed.). *Popular culture in Indonesian: Fluid identities in postauthoritarian politics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v12i2.2115>
- Hoagwood, T. (2006). Postmodern mirrors. *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 34(4), 267–273. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43797302>
- Jäger, S., & Maier, F. (2009). Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian CDA and dispositive analysis. In R. Wodak., & M. Michael. *Methods for critical discourse analysis*. Sage Publication.
- Leach, J. (2002). The reel nation: Image and reality in contemporary Canadian cinema: The Martin Walsh memorial lecture 2002. *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 11(2), 2–18. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/24405525>
- Mills, D. (2015). I thought Frailty's name was Carl": Mystery science theater 3000, Shakespeare, and postmodern canonization. *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 17(2), 206–227. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/intelitestud.17.2.0206>
- Moser, K. (2014). A Baudrillardian exploration of two victims of hyper-real, erotic simulations in Joseph Gordon-Levitt's film "Don Jon." *Studies in Popular Culture*, 37(1), 75–92. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/24332701>
- Petersen, A. (2007). "You believe in pirates, of course...": Disney's commodification and "Closure" vs. Johnny Depp's aesthetic piracy of "Pirates of the Caribbean." *Studies in Popular Culture*, 29(2), 63–81. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/23416141>
- Pope, R. (2012). A ritual-psychoanalytic approach to postmodern melodrama and a certain tendency of the action film. *Cinema Journal*, 51(2), 113–136. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41341038>
- Rogers, A. (2012). "You don't so much watch it as download it": conceptualizations of digital spectatorship. *Film History*, 24(2), 221–234. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/filmhistory.24.2.221>
- Sperb, J. (2006). Removing the experience: Simulacrum as an autobiographical act

in "American Splendor." *Self-Projection and Autobiography in Film*, 29(1), 123–139.

Stam, R., & Spence, L. (1983). Colonialism, racism and representation: An introduction by Robert Stam and Louise

Spence. *Screen*, 24(2), 2–20. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.2.2>

Weinreich, M. (2004). "Into the void": The hyperrealism of simulation in Bret Easton Ellis's "American Psycho". *American Studies*, 49(1), 65–78. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41157912>

