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Spaces in Short Stories by Sidoarjo Woman Writers: A Postcolonialism Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research is a form of literary criticism used as an appreciation for the works of female writers in Sidoarjo. The problem examined in this study is the possible traces of postcolonialism in these texts and how these traces of postcolonialism emerge in space politics. Data were collected randomly through qualitative methods that were limited to understanding the text. The results show that at least there are representations of the reconstructed traces of the colonies. In interpreting the text, the writer performs a deconstructive reading to prove assumptions about postcolonial traces in the representation of space. The space description contains two different results, namely, a stable and unstable/chaotic space. The results showed that the writers, as postcolonial society members, are inside the political boundary of postcolonial ideas.

Keywords: short story, postcolonialism, space

A. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes short stories by women writers who are members of the Pena Perajut Aksara Community from a postcolonial perspective. The period between the end of the colonial period and the present is quite long, reaching three-quarters of a century. However, the postcolonial discussion in the writer's writings is not necessarily irrelevant because the postcolonial discourse covers an unlimited sphere of time. The terminology that needs to be understood is that postcolonial studies do not merely show the remnants of colonialism in various ways, but this is one way to strengthen the identity of a nation.

The significance of postcolonialism discussions, particularly in literary texts, is underlined by (McLeod, 2000). He stated that the postcolonial terminology does not merely refer to the classification of time after colonialism but also relates to the ideological remnants in a nation that has experienced colonialism. Meanwhile, (Moore-Gilbert, 1997) focuses on the cultural agenda of cultural entities that are part of societies that have experienced colonialism, such as labeling "commonwealth literature" by writers from ex-colonial countries, such as Salman Rushdie, VS. Naipaul, and others.



These cultural agendas may be evident in a country that holds Commonwealth status. However, in a nation/country that is not a Commonwealth, the agenda that needs to be investigated is neocolonialism. (Faruk, 2007) emphasized that the colonialism carried out by the Dutch and Japanese in Indonesia was carried out militarily and culturally. The legacy they leave behind is not only a memory of physical repression but also hegemonic ones.

Starting from these scientific arguments, the researcher discusses the short stories works of these women writers, which are discussed from a postcolonial perspective. Literary works are a bridge of thought between the writer and the reader. There needs to be a critical study from various perspectives, one of which is postcolonialism.

The works discussed in this study are *Hilang* by Joda and *Kamboja Layu* by Winda Sulistyoningsih. The two works were randomly selected from the *Antologi Bunga Kehidupan* which is a product of Pena Perajut Aksara community, a women writer's community in Sidoarjo.

Research on literary works with a postcolonial perspective approach is not something new. However, this research discusses colonial traces in a more specific context, and does not use objects categorized as canon literary works. (Indriyanto, 2020) blended postcolonial and ecological perspectives in his study of James A. Michener's Hawai'i novel. (Sulistyo, 2020) discussed the lyrics of the phenomenal works of Maestro Gesang, *Bengawan Solo*, and Sutedja's *Di Tepinya Sungai Serayu*, using the same perspective as this research, namely spatial politics. Meanwhile, (Rahariyoso, 2014) discussed the paradoxes of body space in Joko Pinurbo's poem entitled *Sakramen*. Another analysis using the spatial postcolonialism perspectives on novels has also been done by (Purwanti, 2014) who discussed *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription For Enduring The Ending Of The World* by Colin Johnson and (Suciati, 2014), who discussed *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy.

This discussion about female writers in Sidoarjo was previously discussed by (Fedyanto et al., 2020) and (Fedyanto et al., 2021). However, the scope of the language used in this study is different, because it discusses feminism and meta-literature.

Two questions answered in this research are; first, the possibility of postcolonialism traces in these texts, and second, how do these traces of postcolonialism appear in the context of space politics.

These problems are significant to be examined in research because postcolonial traces simultaneously exist in contemporary works. (Upstone, 2009) wrote that the colonial spatial order can be read productively in terms of instability of meaning, marked implausibility, and ever-present traces of which interrogate the obvious. Its 'truth' is constantly being weakened by "traces" that cannot be eradicated; the meaning is always unstable and keeps referring back to what it denies, marking the absence of disguised diversity.

The instability that appears in these traces is what is relevant for study, regardless of the era in which a work was written. This study aims to describe the shape of the political space traces that exist in each work and how these traces are.

This research is significant because discussing the postcolonial footprint allows ex-colonial people to become sensitive to something new (Upstone, 2009) called the neo-colonial agenda. The inheritance of colonial models and ideals paved the way for neo-colonial subjugation to postcolonial states, restoring an idealized perception of the "west".

B. METHOD

This research is a qualitative study because this research does not focus on proving data with defined measures. The word qualitative with the understanding of hermeneutics means that the total method does not focus on size, the addition of intensive data, or the frequency that finally processes to get meaning according to the context. The reality that is built into social life is studied, studied qualitatively. Conditions and situations are also considered in the study. The search for many questions of the social realm for meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

As the material object discussed in this study is literary work, this research is actually a form of research (Siswanto, 2010) called an "applied criticism." (Pradopo, 2003) explained that applied criticism which is under literary research, is phenomenological criticism, which describes parts of literary works based on phenomena objectively. This means that the researcher must use rigorous and disciplined methods.

In more detail, the interpretation made by the writer is to apply the deconstructive reading method. As explained by (Faruk, 2013), before interrogating the text, the author who is also a deconstructor destroys the text's defenses, and shows that pair opposition is found in it. The opposition is arranged hierarchically by placing one pair as something special, or in a position that is "more" than the other. The deconstructor then shows that the special identity depends on its exclusion from the others and shows that the primacy lies in the subordinate.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

a. The Postcolonial City in *Hilang*

Spaces are not just mere settings in a work of literature, but as (Upstone, 2009) emphasized, the symbolization of spaces in a postcolonial work shows a political representation. This is related to the existence of the colonial heritage in the area that became the colony. He explained that postcolonial traces would certainly remain no matter how long the colonial nation leaves a space. Only, the traces are not always the same as what the former



colonists left. Upstone classified these spaces into national units, journeys, cities, homes and bodies.

This short story tells about a family trip from the city of Surabaya to Yogyakarta for a vacation. (Upstone, 2009) said that postcolonial writers' journeys are metaphors. Air travel and global communication networks are attempts to undercut national ownership with an international perspective. In this short story, the writer's most dominant space being used as the setting is Malioboro, Yogyakarta.

Yogyakarta yang terkenal dengan keratonnya, bahasa Jawanya, penduduk yang ramah, bangunan kuno peninggalan penjajah Belanda, batik yang mendunia, pasar rakyat ternama Bringharjo dan tidak lupa jalan Malioboro yang merupakan poros Garis Imajiner Kota Yogyakarta....

(Yogyakarta which is famous for its palaces, Javanese language, friendly people, ancient buildings from the Dutch colonialists, global batik, the famous folk market, Bringharjo, and not to forget Malioboro street which is the axis of the Yogyakarta City Imaginary Line...)

Yogyakarta which is famous for its palaces, Javanese language, friendly people, ancient buildings from the Dutch colonialists, global batik, the famous folk market, Bringharjo, and Malioboro street which is the axis of the Yogyakarta City Imaginary Line. The fragment represents the writer's image of a city. ideal as a vacation destination. However, the sentence structure shows that there is a hierarchy regarding racial identity. The phrase about the beauty of the city is a paradox about the city that was the legacy of the colonizers. During this time, the occupation was assumed to be a repressive force that caused deep trauma for the nation that was once colonized. However, the city he inherited was regarded as something beautiful. The political aspect that appears is how the natives still regard the European nation as a superior nation and are above the native nation.

*Pada awalnya, kota ini terasa sebagai suatu yang indah, menyenangkan,
Bagiku Yogyakarta sangat mengasyikkan, semuanya terasa alami, indah,
dan nyaman.*

*Jalan Malioboro ini sudah tidak asing lagi di mata dunia dengan seniman-
seniman dari dalam dan luar negeri.*

*Pada malam hari, jalan cantik ini dipenuhi pedagang kaki lima pengrajin
khas Yogyakarta, kafe-kafe, waung lesehan, happening art, pantomim,
musik, melukis, teater jalanan, dan lain-lain*

(At first, this city felt as a beautiful, relaxing,) (For me Yogyakarta is very exciting, everything feels natural, beautiful, and comfortable.) (Malioboro Street is no stranger to the world with artists from within and outside the country). (At night, this beautiful street is filled with street vendors, typical Yogyakarta craftsmen, cafes, warung lesehan, art happening, pantomime, music, painting, street theater, and others.)



These quotations show that the author has a view of a pleasant city. However, the quote shows how the space in the postcolonial city was also divided. There remains a separation between the space for natives and rivals. In this case, the colonial town representation is something that is intact, stable and segregated.

The space described by the author in this story is a space between two cultures, which is described as harmony. Traditional arts mingle with western arts, as well as economic activities that co-exist between traditional and western. The author considers this is a coveted space for local people. However, the author describes this as just a start because, in the end, this location became a chaotic place when she lost her child.

b. Body as Political Space

The body is a biological and cultural entity that has a natural form and a constructed form. This entity is also a space that may leave political traces that were formed in the past.

(Upstone, 2009) stated that the construction of the body can be understood as a discourse that is inherited from colonial efforts in the past and their efforts to maintain control of the body in the postcolonial period. In practical terms, the body and shape are representations of the political forms left by the colonizers. Colonialism has always tried to maintain the superiority of their discourse over the body as a justification on their perspective and point of view.

Upstone represents the body based on Plato's concept of the body, namely, the body is seen as a 'chora'. This term was originally used in the discussion of theories of feminism and poststructuralism. Chora is the body's fluid identity, an attempt to continually reject the confinement of the natural boundaries of the body that the colonialists have determined. Chora provides the possibility of chaos in the colonial discourse, which will be assumed to be dangerous, in its (colonial) efforts to produce the categorization and organizing of the body used to create this discourse. The fluid body brought down the colonial regime because these conditions stopped the stereotypical discourse of the body that had been built so far by the colonialist in its relationship between colonial and colonized (Upstone,

The representation of the body as a political space does not always have to do with violence, sexual abuse, exploitation of women, or rape. The description of the body can be a representation of the colonial footprint when some parameters or standards state the values of the human body.

One representation of postcolonial political body appears in *Kamboja Layu*. This short story tells about the life of a mother and daughter. The family lives in poverty in Sidoarjo. The sentence *la memiliki putri yang ayu, berkulit putih, dan patuh kepada ibunya* (He has a beautiful



daughter, white skin, and obedient to her mother) represents the ideal figure of Indonesia women.

There are two representations of indigenous women who are used as a parameter about the "better" based on these quotes. First, women who have whiter skin are more beautiful than the darker skin. Second, educated and obedient women are also better than the less or non-educated women.

Although this research does not talk about the specific context of feminism, the representation of women illustrates that women are the object of what has been mentioned by (McLeod, 2000) as double colonialization.

Meanwhile, this figure also represents a standardized figure in terms of education.

The short story showed that education is the main point for them to shift their economic condition. *Ia yakin, salah satu cara memutus kemiskinan adalah belajar* (She believes that one of the ways to cut poverty is to study)

Adapting the discourse concept of Michele Foucault (Dewanthi, 2020) formulated the cultivation of colonial power in three stages. First, the colonizers impose knowledge on the natives with various cultural practices. The construction of cultural values "uproots" the roots of indigenous knowledge systems from their own systems. Second, the colonists suppressed the mentality of the natives, mainly through knowledge institutions (schools). Third, colonists take over the natives as a whole by making themselves as subjects, and natives as objects. In this last stage, colonists can exercise control by giving instructions to the natives as the objects of their desire.

An article by (Rahariyoso, 2014) found that colonial maintenance of the body can be seen as an echo of the maintenance of the entire space. Chaos and desire are obscured by linear systems, doubt and difference are obscured by homogeneity. The colonial order emerged as natural and beyond question.

The physical representations of skin color and obedient behavior show that native women, although not celebrations, are involved in preserving ideal values about the body and behavior created by the colonists.

2. DISCUSSION

. As discussed at the beginning of this article, the question that must be answered is the possibility of traces of postcolonialism in these texts, and second, how these traces of postcolonialism appear in the context of spatial politics. Regarding the first question, the results of this study indicate that traces of colonial construction still exist in these two short stories.

Two clear traces of construction exist in the two spatial representations, namely the postcolonial city and the body. In the colonial city, there was a racial hierarchy that separated the native and western. Interestingly, there are representations of chaotic perceptions of this postcolonial city. The author points out that the postcolonial city which was used as a "dream city" turned out to be a "traumatic" city.

The paradox of a space city from a harmonious dream city to a traumatic and chaotic city shows that there is an awareness of unity in a colonized nation. In the end, unity becomes the most important thing in their lives. The colonized nation finally shows that the city construction formed by the colonizing nation is something that is unstable, and tends to be chaotic.

Meanwhile, in the body space in short stories, construction is still represented as something that is intact and stable. There is no picture of a chaotic and unstable post-space. The construction of beauty through skin color is maintained as a standard, along with the attitude parameter.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous section, the researcher underlines several important points related to this research. First, the short stories by a female writer in Sidoarjo contain postcolonial traces. However, not all of them have a stable/complete picture/description. The discourse that appears in the representation of the city is a divided/chaotic entity. Second, body imprints are more deeply rooted in measures of female beauty. In addition, education is also something that has a significant influence in influencing the construction of children's behavior.

The recommendations given to further researchers are more in-depth research. There needs to be a study from a varied perspective on the works of female writers in Sidoarjo as a form of literary criticism.

Multi-disciplinary research will also benefit because the community can have references about history. This analysis provides a different angle of how history is internalized in the citizens' minds.

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