

# Mimicry and Radical Resistance in Novel Saman

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**Abstract**—This study attempts to investigate the issue of identity seen from the issue of power relation in *Saman*, a novel by Ayu Utami. In particular, this study focuses on discussing the phenomenon of identity as an effect of superiority in the social order from postcolonial perspective. Data analysis revealed some phrases and sentences of postcolonial elements which show mimicry and radical resistance inside the novel. The novel shows how superiority in social order can bring the binary opposition of identity. The central figure of this novel who belongs to the inferior group in the society, *Saman*, accuses the Palm Oil corporation by mimicking their arrogance toward the farmers. *Saman* also uses the strategy used by the Oil Company in order to achieve his purposes. It is expected that this study will enrich the study of mimicry in postcolonial literary work.

**Keywords**—identity in postcolonial literature; mimicry; resistance; superior-inferior

## I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of several European colonialist countries in Indonesia for hundred years is hard to be removed from Indonesian history and memory. The colonization has so much impact on the development of Indonesian society in general, such as on education, and even on the community identity.

As Said stated that in general, the world is divided into two, namely West and East [1]. The West is a nation that represents the white commonly referred to as European; while the East represents skin colors other than white, like black, brown, yellow and so on. Moreover, he also added that the West managed to create a long tradition of leading colored races. The division of these two large regions also constituted a marker, that the West and the East were two poles opposite of each other. The West occupation for hundreds of years in Indonesia created division in the region, so that European countries have their class as well as the Eastern countries.

Becoming white actually is an allusion toward European colonies. It is because Europe always positions themselves as a race or nation which is superior to Eastern countries. Being a *white man* is a kind of strong and self-confirmed identity—as Said explained that those kind of behavior were conducted because they feel that they have an obligation to regulate the primitive—the people who left behind and exotic in the East [1]. In fact, though hundred years of occupation in Indonesia, Europe, especially the Netherland, has dredged various naturals and human wealth that was used to support the life of this country, Indonesia, during the occupation they carried out in

many countries. The Netherlands and other colonizing countries will not be able to pay their debts, even though their reciprocal politics have been carried out, the cause of casualties during forced cultivation, suffering for hundred years, trauma and taking natural resources are very expensive. Therefore, Huat mentions that South Asian countries including Indonesia as postcolonial countries because of the colonial history [2].

Talking about post-colonialism and the length of the history of persecution that occurred in Indonesia raises questions in researchers' thinking; is Indonesia still colonized? Or have the Indonesian people have been freed from colonialism? This was caused in addition to various material lost suffered by the Indonesian community due to the colonialism, the identity of the general public has undergone into changes. During hundred years living under occupation and discrimination, many Indonesians people at that time sought equal recognition and status toward European countries (Netherland, England, Portugal). In other words, Indonesian try to imitate European identity. Likewise, Pradopo argued that those kind of imitation which they did was not only a way of dressing, but also in behavior and mindset which later became a kind of nature that was passed down from generation to generation [3]. Various phenomena that occurred in the indigenous identity were recorded and enshrined in literary works—which are not born from a cultural. As Kurniawan state that this is because the effects arising from colonialism can be traced through the textual world including literary works—especially the novel [4]. Pradopo also added that the novel is able to emit something freely, presents more detail and involves more complex problems [3].

Many literary works that talk about the suffering of Indonesian people due to colonialism, for example *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat*, tetralogy *Bumi Manusia* and other works of the authors who lived during the colonial atmosphere is still strongly felt. In fact, the evidence of the occupation can still be seen in this modern era, for example in the teenage film *Diam-Diam Suka*, which airs on one of the private TV stations in Indonesia [5]. The TV show shows Papuan figures as indigenous representatives and figures of foreign descent as representatives of invaders. So, in fact even though Indonesia is physically independent, it still puts western hegemony as a guideline. In fact, these colonial traces are still alive and growing with the people of Bombay, India until today [6]. This is evidenced by the many literary works, especially novels that crave an equal city, without the presence of one group that dominates or "colonizes" another group that is weaker or

minority. In fact, today many women feel proud when their bodies are viewed by millions of pairs of eyes in a show, even though they are not aware that this is what is called "social colonialism" [7]. Considering that colonialism is still alive and developing until now, this study will investigate postcolonial traces in Saman's novel by Ayu Utami. As argued by Ratna, postcolonial traces in the novel can be identified through postcolonial studies [8].

#### A. Active Resistance

Human efforts to self-defense raise various models of resistance. The resistance is realized through radical or active actions that are considered capable of bringing about changes in the ongoing situation. The question that then arises is how is this resistance realized so that it is able to achieve the goals it aspires to? The resistance discussed in this paper is active resistance that involves the physical person or group of people, and mimicry or camouflage that is only related to someone's self that persists for a long time.

Occupation in the post-colonial era is not only in the form of occupation, but can be in the form of discrimination and marginalization. Differentiation of treatment does not only apply between countries like Indonesia to East Timor [9] but also interethnic, as happened in America between Anglo-American to African-American, which is depicted in Hughes poems [10], between groups in global cities, namely groups with strong economic power against groups. Weak economy [11], among individuals described in short stories *Samin Kembar's*, namely between Samin as a manifestation of the indigenous and Resident Blora as invaders [12] even in incorporating religious curricula as happened in the UK, namely religious subjects that are less noticed [13]. Resistance can be divided into active [14] or radical [6] and passive. This distinction is based on actions taken by resistance actors. Therefore, active action is called active or radical resistance, and vice versa. However, it does not mean that mimicry is a passive action that only acts as a receptor, but also active actions that appear in individuals to groups with the same pattern. In this paper, we will discuss forms of active resistance which involve various actions and mimicry which are passive resistance by individuals and collectively in the face of inequality of relations between colonizers and colonized.

Active or radical resistance is characterized by the existence of organized movement plans, which are realized through direct clashes or attacks or warfare or producing text or magazine [15]. Therefore, the frequency of active resistance will be seen in many opposing inferior relationships.

#### B. Occupational Concepts That Become "Invaders"

Mimicry and consciousness have a fairly close interaction [16]. As an attempt to emulate, the perpetrator can consciously carry out mimicry for certain purposes. However, Kulesza also emphasized that not all mimicry is carried out with full awareness [16]. Living and developing in an environment can transform individuals into synonymous with the environment, even without being fully desired. Perpetrators can unconsciously lead to actions such as smiles, foot movements, how to shake hands, political views, clothing, appetite and so on that usually appear in their daily interactions [17]. However,

it is not easy for the inferior case to imitate everything done by the superior, because mimicry is the reproduction of a stripped European subjectivity so that the natives are no longer pure [18].

Mimicry is an imitation done by inferior to superior, in other words indigenous with colonial taste [12]. So, it can be concluded that mimicry is an indigenous effort to "become" colonial because during the indigenous colonial period lived as "the other". "*The other*" is the realization of the subjugation made by Europeans to the East by making indigenous lower class citizens. In fact, in Indonesia at that time indigenous people were positioned under China, Arabia and India [19] which deliberately did for the revitalization and existence of Europe as the highest caste.

Mimicry is an expression of something different from what actually happened [20]. The agents mimicry hide their identity by showing a similar role with superior colonizing them. In other words, mimicry is camouflage [20] an action filled with pretense because mimicry actors want to be recognized, heard and treated equally as superior. mimicry is present as a manifestation of the difference in identity between natives and invaders which raises the denial of their true identity [20].

The existence of mimicry not only includes the relationship between colonizers and colonized in the context of colonialism, but can also be between inferior and superior. The concept is a manifestation of postcolonial theory which describes "colonization" after colonialism. Colonialism is considered to be still going on when there are superior parties who still put western hegemony as the mecca and manifestation of Europe in exercising its power against the inferior, weak and need space to speak out.

## II. METHOD

The method used in this research is Postcolonial. The analysis technique applied in the research on Postcolonial traces in Ayu Utami's Saman novel is qualitative descriptive.

The steps taken in analyzing the data contained in the data source involved close reading of the novel. Following this, the next step was identifying the data in accordance with the formulation of the problem and the purpose of the research that has been determined. Next, the data were classified according to the formulation of the problem. Then the results of analysis were triangulated with theories and previous works. After going through the four stages above, the last thing to do was drawing conclusion to conclude the research based on the findings.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Postcolonial Violence

Active resistance is always characterized by more violence ending in bloodshed in the process. Inferior sues the subjugation of the fascist superior and the feudal view through actions that are considered the most real and progressive. This is also found in the characters in Ayu Utami's Saman novel. As

figures who are inferior manifestations, they make a lawsuit through violence.

*Dari ambang pintu dilihatnya lelaki itu tak lagi berbentuk. Kemeja birunya menghitam oleh darah. Tungkainya tak lagi lurus, seperti telah dislokasi, ujung telapak yang satu ke samping, yang lain melencong agak ke belakang. Selangkangannya tertutup warna merah yang kental. Wis tidak bisa melihat wajahnya, sebab orang-orang sedang menendangi [21].*

From the doorway he saw that the man was no longer shaped. The blue shirt is blackened by blood. The legs are no longer straight, as if they were dislocated, the tip of the palm is one side, and the other is deviating slightly backwards. The crotch was covered in thick red. Wis could not see his face, because people were kicking [21].

The data above is a form of active resistance as a response to subjection experienced by inferior. Inferior who have more quantity or amount of retaliation for terror that has long shackled their village. Seen in the data above, a group of people almost killed other people, who put them as criminals. However, the inferior response gives the reader a projection that the inferior who is tired of their position can turn against the superior. The same thing happened in Indonesia, when the natives fought the invaders using guerrilla warfare tactics. At that time, wars resulted in bloodshed were considered as the most reasonable attempt at seizing state independence.

Direct confrontation provides practical results that can be seen. That is one of the causes of many marginal groups who choose the path of violence. This also appears in the following excerpt.

*Dalam perjalanan Anson bercerita bahwa ia memang telah berencana membakar pabrik sawit yang baru dibangun itu, tanpa tahu Wis disekap didalamnya. Ia juga mengabarkan, beberapa laki-laki yang menyerang markas polisi tertangkap dan ditahan [21].*

On the way Anson told me that he had indeed planned to set fire to the newly built palm oil mill, without knowing Wis was kept inside. He also reported, several men who attacked the police headquarters were arrested and detained [21].

The excerpt above illustrates the actions of a number of people who burned oil palm companies. The action actually reminds us of the many acts of violence which are more harmful than providing practical benefits related to the demands raised. People who have long felt wronged and feel entitled to damage, burn, and physically hurt superior. This is an impulse for the emotional outburst after being unable to do anything for a long time. And this was what Anson and his friends did as well. Those who have long lived in fear due to terror are taking greater action than before. The actions they took were considered appropriate, considering that this was the case with them for years.

Violence committed by the inferior is sometimes done only because there is little support from some parties. Humans are clustered, with enthusiasm and emotion feel worthy of doing something, until a little ignited will easily burn. A similar thing

happened in a demonstration. Many protests ended rioting, although from the beginning they did not want riots. This appears in the following excerpt.

*Bagaimana keadaan tanah air, terutama Medan? Aku baru mulai memeriksa laporan dan file tentang unjuk rasa yang rusuh dua pekan lalu itu, yang akhirnya membikin aku terdampar di sini [21].*

How is the country, especially Medan? I just started checking reports and files about the riotous demonstrations two weeks ago, which finally made me stranded here [21].

The data excerpt above is a fragment of Saman's letter to Yasmin. Saman's question to Yasmin regarding the protests that ended in chaos implied Saman's concern because the incident was not as planned. All of them only want to protest, but precisely the riots that occur make Saman hide abroad. It is not clear what the cause of the riots is, but clearly, the demonstration is an active resistance which is intended to voice the will to use human waves. Novel Saman illustrates to the reader, that the active resistance that many inferiorly chose in the novel is grouped.

Besides using physical violence, active resistance can also be done through publications. Publication can represent inferior will, because at the same time it can reach many circles.

*Karena persoalan tak akan segera selesai, Wis ke Palembang, Lampung dan Jakarta, setelah memotret desa dan mengumpulkan data-data tentang dusun mereka yang tengah maju. Ia mengunjungi kantor-kantor surat kabar dan LSM [21].*

Because the problem will not be resolved soon, Wis goes to Palembang, Lampung and Jakarta, after photographing the village and collecting data about their advanced hamlet. He visited newspaper offices and LSM [21].

The above excerpt represents Saman's actions against the superiority of the oil palm companies. After going through various efforts and problems not yet finished, Saman chose the publication as an alternative to the resistance he did. Through the publication, Saman gained support from readers, so that he was able to thrill the superior to review their decisions regarding the land Saman was fighting for.

As part of the struggle against marginalization, Saman is a figure who is described as quite observant and clever in dealing with it. He chose the solution that took the least number of lives, compared to the usual direct confrontation. The overwhelming superior strength makes many people tremble, but the public text or text will become a track record that will continue to be tracked in the future. Through these considerations, publication writings are considered as an alternative that needs to be considered

#### *B. Mimicry as an Attempt to Save*

Mimicry in the form of copying or camouflage being superior. However, it is not uncommon that mimicry is carried out in the form of a *mockery* that is precisely aimed at banter.

*"Itu orang seismoclypse, "oil servise" yang kami kontrak untuk logging," Ujar Cano sambil berjalan menuju orang-*

*orang yang kini sedang membenahi alat sensor yang baru diturunkan dari crane. Ia menyebut mereka "orang service", mereka menyebut dia "company man" [21].*

"That's a seismoclypse," oil service "that we contracted for logging," Cano said as he walked towards the people who were now fixing the sensor that had just been taken down from the crane. He calls them "service people", they call him "company man" [21].

*Oil service* in the context of the excerpt above refers to a group of workers in the field of technicians who handle drilling machines used in one of the Indonesian oil refineries. The naming of *oil service* is a manifestation of the low value of appreciation given by Rosano as superior to employees as an embodiment of inferiority. Furthermore, as a mimicry, the inferior performs *mockery* by naming Rosano with *Company man*. The reaction carried out by the inferior is a manifestation of passive resistance by imitating the superior.

In accordance with Efendi's opinion that mimicry is native to colonial tastes, and mimicry is an imitation that arises from within that is based on the urge to be treated equally, then *oil service* performs *mockery* as proof that they are capable of doing the same thing as superior [12]. *Mockery* done by the inferior gives the reader an idea that the subject can become an object in relation to mimicry.

Mimicry gives the inferior opportunity to do more beyond the limits given by the superior. These resistance actions foster personal "equal" which can then foster courage to act in an expressive real suit. Through mimicry, inferior self-realization in the best version of the most concrete, which is parallel to superior. Inferior who seeks recognition feels they deserve to be acknowledged and finally provide space for them to emerge as part of the superior.

*Kenapa kedua laki-laki ini selalu nampak tidak rukun? Sihar mencari-cari kelemahan pendapat Rosano. Si Company Man juga selalu mengungkit-ungkit keterlambatan kerja Seismoclypse [21].*

Why do these two men always seem not to get along well? Sihar looked for weaknesses in Rosano's opinion. Si Company Man also always brings up the delay in the work of Seismoclypse [21].

The excerpt above gives the reader a picture of superior and inferior contradictions. The dichotomy of the relationship is built by the relationship of opposition that has long shackled inferiority. Therefore, the inferior who was represented through Sihar made a lawsuit by stimulating Rosano's attitude.

There is a significant role that Sihar carries out in the above mimicry. More than just mimicry, Sihar affirmed his position as a party that should also be taken into account in the colonized-colonized relations. He tried to transcend the limits that placed him as *the other* and proved that he was able to do as Rosano did.

Besides Sihar, the figures who carried out mimicry were Iis and Anson. As representatives of colonized, they perform mimicry actions so as to realize the "negotiation" space which is expected to provide superior reasons for considering inferior existence.

*Tapi, Wis, Anson dan yang lainnya memberi syarat: kami hanya mau merundingkannya dengan warga jika perusahaan menyertakan kertas perjanjian bagi setiap kepala keluarga. Lalu empat orang itu pergi dengan wajah marah [21].*

But, Wis, Anson and others gave the conditions: we only wanted to negotiate with residents if the company included agreement papers for each family head. Then the four people left with angry faces [21].

The quote above puts inferiority reflected through Wis and Anton in figures doing mimicry. As a marginalized party, they make a lawsuit by negotiating the requirements. These requirements are the realization of the desire that they be given space to express opinions, as superior.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Occupation in Indonesia left traces that can still be traced up to now. These colonial traces are not only in the form of inheritance of historical places and trauma, but also the mindset that is absorbed and capitalized by the people of Indonesia. The division of power between inferior and superior raises dichotomous relationships. Through these inferior and superior relations, traces of colonialism can be identified.

Resistance is a natural reaction carried out by inferior when experiencing marginalization and retardation by the superior. The record is an attempt to obtain treatment and recognition equal to superior. Through resistance, inferior tries to voice themselves that they deserve to be taken into account. So, just like in the colonial era, inferior did resistance also when subjected to subjection by superior strength even though it came from fellow Indonesians. One form of resistance that is carried out is through active or radical resistance and mimicry or imitation.

Active resistance is resistance that is done by relying on strength. This resistance allows inferior to confrontation in conveying their aspirations. Through active resistance, inferior get the opportunity to express their demands and claims openly. However, active resistance is not the only way for inferior to sue. Inferior can do mimicry which is also an inferior resistance to superior marginalization. The radical or active resistance contained in the novel *Saman* by Ayu Utami is represented by rubber farmers and *Saman* against oil palm entrepreneurs. These figures are indigenous representatives who are oppressed, but still struggle and fight.

Mimicry is imitation or camouflage which is carried out inferiorly to the superior. Camouflage gives the inferior room to show themselves to the superior, that they deserve and have the right to speak out and be given the same position. Camouflage carried out by the inferior cannot be perfect, because mimicry is a revitalized superior subjectivity that is striped. Indigenous or inferior cannot fully become superior through the process of mimicry. Therefore, mimicry always leaves an "intermediate" space that can be filled with various possibilities. Mimicry found in Ayu Utami's *Saman* novel is carried out by figures who sue in a similar manner by superior. These figures are Sihar and Anson as indigenous representations of colonialism.

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