



Postcolonial Representation in the Novel *Janji Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial representation in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu depicts traces of colonialism through identity, culture, and power relations in people's lives. This study aims to describe the forms of postcolonial representation contained in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method with a postcolonial study approach. Through this method and approach, the research data is described from a colonial perspective in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa*, resistance to colonial power, and the representation of cultural identity and characters in the colonial structure. The research data in the form of quotations in the novel were collected using a non-test instrument, namely observation guidelines based on time triangulation. Postcolonial representation in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu was analyzed thematically using a content analysis technique approach based on time triangulation through a check-check guide sheet both for the data collection process and in the data analysis process of postcolonial representation in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu. The analysis of postcolonial representation in Agil Sri Rahayu's novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* (Promise in the Land of Java) demonstrates postcolonial aspects through the dominance of power, cultural hybridity, the search for identity, and the characters' resistance to colonial legacies. These findings demonstrate that the novel not only depicts historical events but also reflects the impact of colonialism on the social and cultural life of Indonesian society.

Keywords: representation, postcolonial, novel, Janji di Tanah Jawa

Representasi Poskolonial dalam Novel *Janji Tanah Jawa* Karya Agil Sri Rahayu

ABSTRAK

Representasi poskolonial dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* karya Agil Sri Rahayu yang menggambarkan jejak kolonialisme melalui identitas, budaya, dan relasi kuasa dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk-bentuk representasi poskolonial yang terdapat dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* karya Agil Sri Rahayu. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian poskolonial. Melalui metode dan pendekatan ini data penelitian dideskripsikan dari perspektif kolonial dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa*, resistensi terhadap kekuasaan kolonial, dan representasi identitas budaya serta tokoh dalam struktur kolonial. Data penelitian berupa kutipan-kutipan dalam novel dikumpulkan menggunakan instrumen nontes yakni pedoman observasi berbasis triangulasi waktu. Representasi poskolonial dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* karya Agil Sri Rahayu dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan pendekatan teknik analisis isi berbasis triangulasi waktu melalui lembar pedoman cek-ricek baik terhadap proses pengumpulan data maupun dalam proses analisis data representasi poskolonial dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* karya Agil Sri Rahayu. Hasil analisis data representasi poskolonial dalam novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* karya Agil Sri Rahayu menunjukkan bahwa novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* merepresentasikan aspek poskolonial melalui dominasi kekuasaan, hibriditas budaya, pencarian identitas, serta bentuk perlawanan tokoh terhadap warisan kolonial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa novel tidak hanya mengangkat kisah sejarah, tetapi juga merefleksikan dampak kolonialisme terhadap kehidupan sosial dan budaya masyarakat Indonesia.

Kata kunci: representasi, poskolonial, novel, Janji di Tanah Jawa

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is a cultural product born from the interaction of authors with the surrounding social reality. Through literary works, various phenomena of social life can be represented in the form of narratives, symbols, and conflicts that depict social conditions at a particular time. Literary works function not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for reflection on various issues faced by society, including the issue of colonialism and its impact on the socio-cultural life of formerly colonized societies. Therefore, literary works often serve as social documents that can be used to understand the dynamics of a nation's history and culture (Faruk, 217:45).

In the Indonesian context, the centuries-long colonial experience has left numerous traces in the lives of its people. Colonialism not only created political and economic domination but also shaped the perspectives, identities, and social structures of indigenous communities. These impacts are then widely represented in Indonesian literature, both those written during the colonial period and after independence. The representation of colonialism in literature is important to study because it can show how power relations between colonizers and colonized societies are constructed, maintained, and resisted (Bhaha, 2018:112).

One approach that can be used to examine the relationship between literature and colonialism is postcolonial theory. Postcolonial studies attempt to uncover various forms of colonial domination and their impact on societies that have experienced colonization. According to Edward Said, colonialism gave rise to a dichotomous construction between the West and the East that positions the West as superior, while the East is positioned as inferior. This view then became the basis for legitimizing the practice of colonialism carried out by European countries against their colonies. In further developments, Homi K. Bhabha explained that the relationship between colonizers and colonized is not always black and white, but rather gives rise to various forms of ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry that reflect

the complexity of the identity of colonial societies (Edward, 2018:5)

Postcolonial studies in Indonesian literature are relevant because many literary works address the theme of colonialism and resistance to it. Through this approach, researchers can identify how colonial power is represented in literary texts and how indigenous characters respond to this domination. Furthermore, postcolonial studies can also be used to examine how local cultural identities are maintained amidst the pressures of colonial culture that seek to dominate community life (Bhaha, 2018:112).

The novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* by Agil Sri Rahayu is a contemporary literary work that presents the setting of Javanese society in 1840, when Dutch colonial influence was still strong in various aspects of society. This novel tells the story of the journey of the character Manggala, who returns to Jayamukti with a specific mission related to colonial rule.

On the other hand, the character Kinanti and the Jayamukti community must face various conflicts arising from clashes between colonial interests, local power, and cultural values entrenched in the community. The colonial setting, which underpins the story, makes this novel an interesting study from a postcolonial perspective. The various conflicts that emerge in the novel demonstrate the unequal power relations between the colonialists and the indigenous people. Furthermore, the characters in the novel also demonstrate efforts to maintain local cultural identity amidst colonial domination. This phenomenon demonstrates that this novel not only presents a historical narrative but also represents various issues that are the focus of postcolonial studies, such as hegemony, resistance, identity, and ambivalence.

Research on the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* is still relatively limited due to its relatively recent nature. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Indonesian literary studies, particularly in the field of postcolonial studies. Analysis of postcolonial representation in this novel is also expected to



enrich understanding of how colonial experiences are re-represented in contemporary literary works.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative descriptive method was used to describe and interpret the data contained in Agil Sri Rahayu's novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa*, based on a postcolonial perspective. Qualitative research focuses on a deep and comprehensive understanding of phenomena, resulting in data in the form of words, sentences, and narratives that are analyzed interpretively. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon systematically, factually, and accurately based on the data found (Yuliani, 2018:83-40; Razak, 2017:176).

The approach used in this research is a postcolonial approach. This approach is used to examine the representation of colonialism, resistance, cultural identity, and ambivalence that emerges in the novel. Through a postcolonial approach, this research seeks to uncover the power relations between the colonizer and the colonized as represented in the literary text.

The primary data source in this research is Agil Sri Rahayu's novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa*, published by PT Skuad Media Cakrawala. The research data consists of words, sentences, dialogue, narratives, and events that demonstrate postcolonial representation in the novel. Secondary data sources were obtained from postcolonial theory books, scientific journals, research articles, and various references relevant to postcolonial studies, particularly the theories of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha.

The data collection technique in this study utilized reading and note-taking. The researcher read the novel repeatedly to gain a deeper understanding of the story's content. Furthermore, the researcher noted sections containing postcolonial elements such as colonial hegemony, resistance, cultural identity, mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence (Wruwu, 2024:198-205).

Documentation techniques were also used to collect data in the form of theories, concepts, and

previous research results related to postcolonial studies. Documentation was conducted through searching books, scientific journals, and other academic sources relevant to the research focus.

The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique used to identify, categorize, and interpret the meaning contained in a text. In literary research, content analysis is used to uncover elements, values, ideologies, and socio-cultural representations contained in literary works. The data analysis steps in this study included:

- 1) reading the novel "*Janji di Tanah Jawa*" in its entirety.
- 2) identifying data related to postcolonial representation.
- 3) classifying data based on postcolonial theory categories, namely colonial hegemony, resistance, cultural identity, mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence.
- 4) analyzing data using postcolonial theory by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha.
- 5) drawing conclusions based on the results of the data analysis.

In qualitative research, the primary research instrument is the researcher themselves (human instrument). The researcher plays a role in determining the research focus, collecting data, classifying data, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. To aid the analysis process, the researcher used a data classification table containing novel excerpts according to postcolonial studies categories (Yuliani, 2018:83-40).

RESULTS

1. Colonialism in the Novel

Colonial hegemony in the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* is evident through the indirect control exercised by the colonial authorities over the Jayamukti region. Colonial power is present not only in military form, but also through political influence over local rulers. This demonstrates that colonialism operates systematically, involving native elites as extensions of foreign power.

In the novel, the power structure is depicted as unbalanced between the colonialists and

Javanese society. Local nobles are often caught between maintaining traditional power and submitting to colonial interests. This situation demonstrates that colonialism not only controlled physical territory but also controlled the social and political systems of indigenous communities. This phenomenon aligns with Edward Said's concept that colonialism operates through the formation of systems of knowledge and power that position the East as the party that must be regulated and controlled.

2. Resistance to Colonial Power

The form of resistance in the novel emerges through the characters' attitudes, both subtly and openly rejecting colonial domination. Manggala is the central figure in this conflict. He finds himself in an ambiguous position due to his ties to a colonial mission, yet he also possesses an emotional awareness of the suffering of the Jayamukti community.

Resistance is also evident in the community's efforts to defend their land, customs, and local honor. While not always physical resistance, resistance in the novel is more often demonstrated through maintaining cultural identity and rejecting foreign intervention in local life. This aligns with the postcolonial view that resistance does not always take the form of rebellion but can also take the form of cultural practices that maintain the identity of a colonized society.

3. Representation of Cultural Identity

This novel presents Javanese culture as a strong identity through its social system, customs, and values of honor. The lives of the Jayamukti people are still heavily influenced by traditional structures such as nobility, obedience to leaders, and loyalty to their homeland.

The character of Kinanti is depicted as a Javanese woman who maintains cultural values despite social and political pressures. She symbolizes the resilience of local identity amidst the changes brought about by colonialism. From a postcolonial perspective, this local culture serves as a symbolic form of resistance against the

dominance of colonial culture, which seeks to dominate the lives of indigenous people.

4. Characters in Colonial Structures

This situation demonstrates that colonialism not only creates external conflict but also internal conflict within individuals. The characters in the novel are not depicted in black and white, but rather exist in a gray area filled with moral and identity dilemmas. According to Bhabha, ambivalence is a psychological condition of colonized people who simultaneously accept and reject colonial culture. This results in an incomplete identity that is constantly under negotiation.

The novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* depicts colonialism as a complex system of power. Colonialism exists not only as a military force, but also as a social, political, and cultural system that influences the lives of Javanese people. Through the characters of Manggala and Kinanti, the novel demonstrates that indigenous people are not entirely passive. They have room for resistance, although often symbolic and indirect. On the other hand, the characters also experience an identity crisis due to colonial pressure, which creates ambivalence within them.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of Agil Sri Rahayu's novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* shows that this work represents various postcolonial issues related to the power relations between colonizers and indigenous people. In this novel, colonialism is presented not only as a military force occupying territory, but also as a system of power that influenced the social, political, and cultural structures of Javanese society at that time. Colonial power operates through the involvement of local elites who indirectly serve as extensions of colonial interests, thus creating an unequal social structure within Jayamukti society.

This imbalanced power relationship then gives rise to various forms of social tension experienced by the characters. Manggala is the central figure of this conflict, as he finds himself in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, he is bound by a mission



related to the interests of the colonial power, but on the other, he also harbors an emotional and moral attachment to his homeland and the Jayamukti community. This situation demonstrates that colonialism not only creates external domination but also generates internal conflict within individuals. Manggala's inner struggle demonstrates how a person's identity can be fragmented by the pressures of colonial power, forcing them to tread between two conflicting interests.

Furthermore, the forms of resistance to colonialism in this novel are not always displayed through physical resistance or open rebellion, but rather appear in symbolic attitudes and actions. The Jayamukti community strives to defend their land, customs, and cultural values as a form of resistance against foreign domination. The character of Kinanti, for example, is depicted as a figure who adheres to Javanese cultural values despite being under intense political and social pressure. This attitude demonstrates that local culture serves as an important space of resistance in the face of colonial power that seeks to change the way of life of indigenous communities.

On the other hand, this novel also showcases the strong Javanese cultural identity as a vital part of the community's life. The social system, still based on aristocratic structures, customs, and values of loyalty to one's homeland, demonstrates that local culture remains a primary foundation for the Jayamukti community. However, the presence of colonialism has meant that this cultural identity has not always remained stable, but has instead been subjected to pressure and negotiation with the foreign culture brought by the colonialists.

From a postcolonial perspective, this condition can be understood as a form of ambivalence, a situation in which individuals or communities find themselves both accepting and rejecting colonial influence. This is clearly seen in the character Manggala, who experiences deep inner conflict due to his position between colonial interests and loyalty to his homeland. This ambivalence demonstrates that identity in colonial society is not a single entity but is always in a

complex process of negotiation. The characters' identities are neither wholly colonial nor wholly indigenous, but are formed through a mixture of conflicting experiences.

Beyond ambivalence, this novel also demonstrates a process of hybridity, a blending of colonial and local cultures. While not always depicted harmoniously, this process of hybridization demonstrates that colonialism created a space for cultural encounters that resulted in changes in how some figures viewed power, tradition, and social structures. However, these changes did not completely erase local identities, but instead created new tensions within society.

The novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* demonstrates that colonialism is a complex and multidimensional system of power. It encompasses not only political and economic domination but also touches on the psychological and cultural aspects of colonized societies. Through its characters, the novel depicts how indigenous people struggle to survive amidst colonial pressure through various forms of resistance, both direct and symbolic. At the same time, colonialism also creates an identity crisis that leaves the characters in a state of ambivalence and constant inner struggle.

CONCLUSION

The novel clearly depicts various forms of power relations between colonizers and indigenous people during the colonial period in Java. Colonialism in the novel is present not only as a political and military force but also as a system that influences the social structure, culture, and psychological well-being of the characters.

Colonial hegemony in the novel is demonstrated through the dominance of power that involves local elites as intermediaries for colonial interests. This demonstrates that colonialism operates systemically and is not always directly visible, but rather through complex social and political control within society.

The forms of resistance of indigenous people in the novel are not always displayed through physical resistance, but rather through the defense of cultural values, homeland, and local honor. This

resistance demonstrates that indigenous people still have room to resist colonial domination, albeit in symbolic and indirect forms.

There are also symptoms of hybridity, indicating a blending of colonial and local cultures. Although not always harmonious, this process demonstrates that colonialism resulted in changes in the social structure and perspectives of indigenous people.

In conclusion, the novel *Janji di Tanah Jawa* is a postcolonial narrative that depicts the complexity of the relationship between colonizers and colonized peoples. This novel shows how colonialism creates unequal power relations, gives rise to various forms of resistance, and creates identity conflicts experienced by its characters.

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