

Mimicry and Hybridity as Forms of Resistance in the Novel *Cantik itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan

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Abstract

The novel "Cantik itu Luka" represents colonial events with lasting impacts on Eastern societies. In response to colonization, Eastern nations endeavored to resist through acts of mimicry and hybridity. This research aims to analyze mimicry and hybridity as forms of resistance in Eka Kurniawan's novel "Cantik itu Luka." The study seeks to broaden societal awareness regarding postcolonial studies, particularly focusing on forms of resistance, especially mimicry and hybridity. The research employs a literary sociology approach with a qualitative research design. The primary data source is the text of "Cantik itu Luka" by Eka Kurniawan. Data in this study consist of excerpts from the novel suspected to contain forms of resistance in terms of mimicry and hybridity. Data collection utilizes heuristic techniques, while data analysis employs hermeneutic techniques. The findings of this research reveal the presence of resistance exhibited by characters Dewi Ayu and indigenous characters through mimicry as a form of opposition. Imitation is observed in terms of thought patterns, education, language, and lifestyle. Additionally, indigenous characters demonstrate another form of resistance through hybridity, manifested in behavior, living tools, mindset, lifestyle, and clothing styles—an effort to preserve identities eroded by colonization.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is considered a universal cultural phenomenon that can occur anytime, anywhere, and in every human society (Sehandi, 2014). Literary works are not only influenced by the surrounding society but also by the society and environment itself (Murti, 2020). The modern literary phenomenon in Indonesia reflects the dynamics of society and the changes occurring in its surroundings. As a means of expression, literature not only records history but also explores the complexity of cultural development and the identity of a nation. Colonialism indirectly altered the mindset and social structure of indigenous communities (Setiowati et al., 2023). Colonial discourse created concepts about the East and the West, superiority-inferiority, the West-East dichotomy, as well as interlock and confinement (Dapit et al., 2020). Deconstruction in colonial discourse needs to be examined to dispel the myth that the West is considered dynamic, while the East is viewed as static (Sehandi, 2014).

In this context, the role of mimicry in cultural resistance and hybridity in narrative renewal becomes an intriguing aspect to explore. By involving these elements, literary works not only serve as stories but also become fields of resistance against cultural hegemony. The use of industrial goods or representational products cannot completely erase their beliefs in certain traditional cultural elements that are part of their ancestral heritage (Setiawan et al., 2020).

The novel "Cantik itu Luka" represents events from the colonial period whose impacts are still felt by the Eastern nations. Mimicry, as a form of resistance, becomes a strategy for indigenous communities to express dissatisfaction with colonial cultural dominance. Despite engaging in acts of imitation (mimicry), they simultaneously convey mockery towards the essence of modern culture. Meanwhile, hybridity, as a form of narrative renewal, has implications for creating works that reflect a dynamic and changing local identity. Mercer (in Fajar, 2011)

reveals that identity issues often arise as a central concern during moments of crisis, wherein previously perceived definite and stable identities are replaced by doubt and uncertainty. Therefore, resistance emerges as a central role involving the rejection and adaptation of imposed norms.

The importance of examining forms of resistance extends beyond literary discourse alone; it also holds significant relevance within the socio-cultural context. Modern literature depicts society's resistance against various forms of hegemony, with hybridity playing a unifying role in shaping identities in these works. Within the framework of literary studies, this research aims to delve deeper into the contribution of modern literature to understanding the dynamics of society and exploring elements such as mimicry and hybridity. Thus, the objective of this study is to provide a more profound insight into the role of literature in reflecting, responding to, and resisting cultural changes within the context of modern Indonesia.

Previous research by Taula'bi' et al. (2021) explored the topics of mimicry and hybridity, focusing on the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of the colonized people that reflected a desire to experience the superiority displayed by the colonizers. Novtarianggi et al. (2020) investigated the novel "Kiriti Njunjung Drajat," revealing forms of mimicry in the cultural, social, and mindset relations of the main character, contrasting with his family's priyayi status. Najib et al. (2022) found data on resistance accompanied by ambivalence. Musa et al. (2022) identified five forms of hegemony as a resistance found in the novel "Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak."

In line with these previous studies, this research also adopts a postcolonial theory approach as an analytical tool, focusing on Eka Kurniawan's novel "Cantik itu Luka" to uncover how indigenous characters express resistance to colonization through mimicry and hybridity.

METHODOLOGY

The approach employed in this research is a qualitative approach with the theory of literary sociology. The focus of this study is on the forms

of mimicry and hybridity resistance in the novel "Cantik itu Luka." The data for the research consist of excerpts from the text of "Cantik itu Luka," suspected to indicate the presence of mimicry and hybridity as forms of resistance in Eka Kurniawan's novel "Cantik itu Luka." The data source for this research is the text of "Cantik itu Luka" by Eka Kurniawan, published by PT Gramedia Jakarta in the sixteenth edition, September 2018. Data collection in this study is carried out through heuristic reading techniques. The validity of the data is examined using the techniques of perseverance observation and triangulation theory. The data analysis technique employs hermeneutic methods, interpreting the text from incomprehension to understanding (Supriyanto, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis results related to the problem formulation discussed in the previous chapter, the findings of this research include acts of imitation and the process of forming new identities in the context of the novel "Cantik itu Luka." To support this analysis, the study utilizes Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, particularly in exploring the concepts of mimicry and hybridity.

Forms of Mimicry Resistance in Eka Kurniawan's Novel "Cantik itu Luka"

Identitas suatu bangsa akan terus terpengaruh oleh berbagai pengaruh luar seiring berjalannya waktu. Setelah periode penjajahan berakhir, masyarakat Indonesia mulai mengadopsi identitas dan budaya penjajah. Identitas merupakan suatu kebutuhan yang selalu diperjuangkan guna menjaga rasa kebersamaan (Maydita & Supriyanto, 2021). Hal ini dilakukan untuk menjadi subjek yang hampir sama tetapi tidak sepenuhnya sama. Peniruan tokoh dalam novel *Cantik itu Luka* dapat diketahui sebagai berikut.

a. Thinking Style

One form of imitation or mimicry that reflects traces of colonization can be detected in the thoughts of indigenous communities. The

manifestation of this imitative thinking appears in the form of cunning and power-driven thoughts. Dewi Ayu is a central character who plays the role of a renowned prostitute in the Halimunda region. As a woman who has been colonized both in wealth and person, she inherits the Western mindset of seeking one-sided profit. Before her first death, Dewi Ayu gives birth to exceptionally beautiful children. She intends to exploit the beauty bestowed upon her children solely for personal gain. As a mother who has given birth, she would naturally be reluctant to compromise the dignity of her children by offering them disrespectfully to others. However, Dewi Ayu harbors wicked and cunning thoughts toward her children because she has successfully given birth to exceptionally beautiful women.

Physical beauty is often used by society or those in power as a tool to measure an individual's worth. Dewi Ayu's statement expressing the demand to have her "own brothel" is interpreted as a form of resistance against a system that compels women to work in the sex industry or prostitution due to difficult social and economic conditions. This statement indicates that Dewi Ayu is not merely accepting the role of a prostitute passively but desires control over her own fate. The use of an irritated tone in Dewi Ayu's words also reflects dissatisfaction with the situation she faces. It is a way to convey resistance and disagreement with the norms that may be imposed by society or the authorities, degrading her dignity. This creates a narrative that portrays an effort to maintain agency and control over her own life, even in challenging circumstances.

b. Education

Another form of imitation undertaken by the indigenous community is in the realm of education. This occurs as a result of the colonialism process, which manifests not only during the colonial period but also persists after the end of colonization, leaving influences and cultural legacies that are still felt. The situation unfolds when several women and children are held hostage. They are brought by the Dutch army after having their belongings confiscated. With Dewi Ayu's resourcefulness and

intelligence, she does not remain passive, even in dire and threatening circumstances. Dewi Ayu imparts the knowledge she possesses to the children in captivity. This serves as a form of resistance by providing education and instruction so that someday they can become knowledgeable individuals and not always face misfortune.

In traditional society, women who could read and write were those who received education, a privilege reserved for the colonial people. However, this does not apply to Dewi Ayu; she possesses reading and writing skills inherited from her Dutch-descendant parents. Dewi Ayu undergoes education as a schoolteacher, an opportunity not accessible to all natives. Despite this, Dewi Ayu chooses to identify as a native due to her love for the homeland she occupies. Her fondness for resembling the colonial people, who enjoy reading knowledge books, is utilized both to channel the knowledge she possesses and to entertain the bored and often crying children in captivity. During the colonial era, education was frequently used by colonizers as a tool to maintain and strengthen their dominance. Therefore, progress in education for the natives can be seen as resistance against efforts to control the local community.

c. Language

Mimicry can also be observed in the language used. The indigenous community, having interacted in a society that has endured for quite some time, tends to adopt the language of the Western nations. Consider the following quotation:

“Itu memang kewajibanku. Ik kom hier om orde te scheppen,” katanya. Aku datang untuk membereskan. (CIL: 182).

The above excerpt illustrates a form of mimicry performed by the character Kamerad Salim. Kamerad Salim is an indigenous individual who rebels due to the misfortunes faced by the natives. Unable to tolerate seeing the natives forced into labor and surrendering a portion of their harvest to the colonial government, he joins the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) to rebel against these practices. Living in proximity to the Dutch, cultural

influences often emerge. As expressed by Kamerad Salim, "Ik kom hier om orde te scheppen," which translates to "I come here to tidy up." The use of the Dutch language by Kamerad Salim indicates an imitation of the Dutch people. This occurs due to the influence of Western cultural dominance. The use of this language serves as a means of adaptation or to showcase a level of education recognized by Western society.

d. Lifestyle

Mimicry can also be observed in the lifestyle of the indigenous community. Lifestyle serves as a mirror reflecting the complex dynamics involving imitation as a response to European cultural influences. Mimicry is carried out by the serving girls when the night without men has arrived. They feel tranquility and freedom. That night is celebrated with a drinking party, which is not a customary practice among the indigenous people to express festivity. Even Helena, a girl with the strongest religious beliefs, creates an image of a religious ceremony that carries more significant meaning, combining elements of wine celebration with sacred or religious elements. This constitutes a form of mock ceremony that has been devised.

e. Habit/Behavior

The form of imitation is not limited to the realm of thought but also encompasses the domain of behavior. Behavior is a manifestation of a series of experiences and interactions with the environment, reflected in an individual's attitudes and actions (Setiari, 2016). Mimicry in the context of behavior is exemplified by the character Dewi Ayu, who imitates the Dutch habit of smoking. During the Dutch colonial period, smoking was done to alleviate headaches and as a form of camaraderie. Despite being prohibited, Dutch culture, such as smoking, eventually gained appreciation and found its way into Indonesia, becoming a habit. Smoking was not a native habit, especially for a woman. Generally, smoking is considered a masculine and rough habit, yet Dewi Ayu does it with elegance and grace. This indicates that despite living in a patriarchal culture that emphasizes rigid gender roles, Dewi Ayu still has the freedom

to express herself in unconventional ways and defy norms.

Form of Hybridity in the Novel "Cantik itu Luka" by Eka Kurniawan

The Western cultural dominance over indigenous communities, as reflected in Eka Kurniawan's novel "Cantik itu Luka," manifests in various aspects of daily life. This influence plays a significant role in shaping the indigenous identity through a process of cultural amalgamation, resulting in cultural hybridity. Hybridity can be observed in the adoption of cultural forms such as clothing, food, construction, and so forth (Nilsen, 2017). The forms of hybridity in the novel "Cantik itu Luka" are as follows.

a. Behavior

Hybridity in the form of behavior in the novel "Cantik itu Luka" is vividly represented in the relationship between Europeans and the indigenous community.

"The natives are the most unfortunate, as unfortunate as can be. After years of being deceived by the kings, suddenly, the Europeans arrive. Those who were once unfamiliar with respect become excessively revered in Java. Farmers, after being forced into labor and surrendering a portion of their harvest to the colonial government, are even required to squat on the road simply because a Dutch lady is passing by" (CIL: 182).

Europeans, previously unfamiliar with the notion of respect, have become excessively revered in Java. This illustrates the rigidity in the social hierarchy established by colonial power, where Europeans are considered to hold a higher and excessively respected position. Norms and rules are shaped by the colonizers to maintain their dominance. The indigenous people are perceived as a group that must submit and show respect to the colonizers, while Dutch ladies are deemed to have a higher position and are excessively respected. One of the manifestations of this respect by the indigenous farmers is demonstrated by squatting when a Dutch lady passes by.

b. Equipment

Hybridity can also be observed in the equipment used by the indigenous community, influenced by the interaction of different cultures. A clear example of hybridity is seen in the character Sang Shodanco's response to the arrogant behavior of a thug by taking extreme measures—brandishing a pistol. This action is prompted by Sang Shodanco's confrontation with Maman Gendeng over the competition for the most beautiful prostitute in Halimunda, namely Dewi Ayu. In this confrontation, Maman Gendeng threatens with a drawn knife. This threat impels Sang Shodanco to point the pistol he carries towards Maman Gendeng. The use of a pistol by Sang Shodanco can be considered an act of hybridity. The use of a pistol is not an original or traditional defense tool of the Indonesian people. Indigenous defense tools typically involve traditional weapons such as keris, spears, swords, bows, and arrows. The use of pistols among the indigenous community is a result of colonial influence and military modernization.

c. Mindset

Hybridity, or the interaction between two cultures with distinct identities, can be observed through thought patterns. The emergence of new thought patterns in the indigenous community is influenced by the Dutch way of thinking during the colonial period. The presence of hybridity is exemplified in Dewi Ayu's family. Despite Dewi Ayu's grandparents being of Dutch descent, they resided in Indonesia. This circumstance made them uneasy, as the war compelled Dutch citizens to leave and return to their respective countries. However, Dewi Ayu chose to stay because she felt a connection to her indigenous heritage, considering herself part of the indigenous community.

d. Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers to the way individuals or groups lead their daily lives, encompassing entertainment, consumption, work, and social activities. Lifestyle can be influenced by factors such as culture, social environment, education, economic status, and technological developments, including the presence of superior nations that colonized. The character Kliwon is

trying to win the heart of the woman he loves by singing love songs and using pick-up lines commonly employed to attract women, accompanied by a guitar. However, his efforts prove futile, even though Kliwon's throat is parched from singing. Until Kliwon meets Dewi Ayu's eldest daughter, Alamanda. It is at that moment that his affection shifts to Alamanda, starting from their first encounter when Alamanda offers him a cup of drink and engages in conversation for the first time. The guitar used by Kliwon represents a form of resistance through hybridity. The guitar is not an indigenous musical instrument of Indonesia; it originates from Europe and was introduced to various parts of the world through processes of colonization and cultural contact. The guitar is used in various music genres, including pop, rock, and traditional, and has undergone local adaptations in various forms.

e. Clothing Style

Clothing can involve various types of garments and accessories, such as tops, bottoms, shoes, hats, or other accessories, chosen and worn by an individual according to needs, activities, and cultural norms. The function of clothing is not limited to functional aspects like protecting the body from weather or providing comfort, but also encompasses aesthetic aspects and cultural identity. Clothing style is often observed in indigenous communities as a form of emerging hybridity. Hybridity is exemplified by the attire worn by indigenous servants. Sneakers are generally associated with casual and comfortable everyday style. The use of sneakers in the indigenous context may indicate the adoption of cultural elements that might originate from outside influences, such as Western or global fashion trends. On the other hand, the sarong is a traditional garment typically associated with local culture and indigenous traditions. The use of sarongs signifies an attachment to heritage and traditional cultural values. The combination of sneakers with sarongs creates an intriguing blend of modern and traditional elements. This can reflect the indigenous community's adaptation to changing times and interactions with external cultures. The

use of sneakers and sarongs in the context of the indigenous community creates a portrayal of hybridity that illustrates the complex dynamics between local traditions and the influences of global or modern culture.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Eka Kurniawan's novel "Cantik itu Luka" reveals that mimicry and hybridity emerge as intriguing and complex forms of resistance against colonial influences. By employing postcolonial theory, particularly Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, the novel unveils how the indigenous community creatively responds to the domination of Western culture with adaptive strategies. Mimicry takes shape in terms of thought patterns, education, language, and lifestyle, serving to explore and reclaim identities eroded by colonization.

On the other hand, the novel illustrates hybridity in behavior, tools, mindset, lifestyle, and clothing styles. In this context, hybridity emerges as an inevitable phenomenon, not merely as the blending of two stable entities but as a constant existence that has been present from the beginning. Indigenous identity is formed through a dynamic interaction between local and colonial cultures, shaping a framework of resistance against the hegemony of Western culture.

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