

The Politic of Space in *Martavan* by Fahrul Khahim

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SUBJECT

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Abstract

The confinement and construction of Lita's body formed by the traditional environment forced her to fight against it all. In the short story *Martavan* by Fahrul Khahim, Lita makes a solid attempt to redefine her body. By using Sara Upstone's theory of space politics, this paper tries to reveal how the efforts of space politics in this short story take place in the character. In this research, we explain the political classification of body space. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. This research aims to reveal the failure of body politics in Fahrul Khahim's *Martavan* short story. The data collection techniques used are reading and note-taking techniques. The short story *Martavan* by Fahrul Khahim, seen from the perspective of postcolonialism, did not go smoothly and failed body politics. This phenomenon can be ascertained after chaos cannot be taken over by post-space. Resistance efforts in this short story can be done repeatedly

to find a body upon which one agrees. This failure can be caused by the balance of resistance between East and West, where the East can only attack through the character Lita. Bapak and Hari are part of the West that can attack or indoctrinate the East. It is as if the women in this short story are unable to become their bodies to escape the boundaries that colonialism has created. The body present in the short story is a weakly constructed female body, failing to influence or dismantle the construction of the body.

1. Introduction

There are many ways to document the experiences we have had. Literature can be a space for documenting in the form of stories. The stories presented depart from the surrounding environment, recording various things with our interpretation. We can specify that the story narrows down these stories. A short story is a work of fiction written concisely and concisely with story elements that reveal a problem (Puspitasari, 2017). Short stories often originate from problems in the author's social environment. This phenomenon happens because the writer is also part of society. Through his ability to write short stories, the author challenges, informs, or questions the problems around him.

In this case, art can be interpreted as literary work and can only imitate and imagine things in visible reality (Teeuw, 2017). The author cannot fully bring reality into

the work. This depiction of reality provides an alternative point of view and a way to understand society. The author does not convey reality in raw terms, meaning that the author has interpreted it before the work reaches the reader's hands (Endraswara, 2013). Then, the work presented is a mixture of reality and imagination.

These interpretations also apply in the postcolonial context. This picture of the situation in Indonesia is still being interpreted continuously by writers and writers regarding colonial history. As a colonized nation, Indonesia can be categorized as a postcolonial society because there has been adoption, adaptation and transformation of the culture of the colonial nation to the colonized nation through various systems, whether consciously or not (Rahariyoso, 2014). This statement affects cultural products such as short stories.

There are efforts to resist the domination of colonial power, mimicry, ambivalence, identity discourse, and many more. The emerging narratives are present as an effort to redefine or reinterpret colonialism itself. The legacies left by the colonialists will be challenged and contested in the narrative to be destroyed by the presence of postcolonialism (Rauf, 2018).

One of the short stories that implies efforts to resist colonialism is *Martavan* by Fahrul Khahim. This short story was published in *Media Indonesia* on 08 November 2020. Lita, as the main character, has to deal with two situations. First, her father wanted Lita to get married immediately. Second, there is the necessity to select young people from the same tribe in the village. The first reason was that "my father" was worried he would not have the generation to become the head of the Iban tribe in the village. Because the husband of Lita's eldest sister, Momo, was killed due to a war between tribes. That hope fell on Lita. The second reason was that no young man in the village matched his heart's desires. Only Husein, an assistant lecturer at Airlangga University, managed to melt Lita's heart. However, the conflict arose not only from his father. The result of the jealousy felt by Hari and Danu, two men who were really into Lita, was that Husein's body was battered. He tries to save her, but it turns out that at the end of the story, Lita is killed by Hari with a Mandau.

This short story is wrapped in local Kalimantan culture, especially the Iban tribe, such as *lamin* (traditional house) and *tajau martavan*. Initially, in the Dayak tribe's culture, to build a *lamin* house, the *ngayao* culture or cutting off the head of a human from another tribe had to be carried out. The head was planted under the central pillar of the newly built *lamin* house, which led to frequent wars between tribes. In practice, the *lamin* house is not only a place to live but also a centre of life and social activities within a Dayak ethnic group, based on the value of togetherness (Yuuwono, 2016). The stilt structure of the *lamin* house also functions as a place of defence from attacks by wild animals and attacks from other tribes (Yuuwono, 2016).

Tajau, in another, more common language, is a jar. The *Martavan* type of *tajau*; *tajau* is widely traded through the *Martavan* port in Burma. *Tajau* like this were widely produced in the 17th to 18th centuries AD in the South China region (Hartatik, 2018).

Since the 15th century AD, *Martavan* jugs have been widely used by sailors to store water and food supplies during voyages. Its large diameter is suitable for storing large quantities of food and drinks. Because of its function, this jug is in great demand in the international market. Among the target markets are Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo, and Indonesia (Husni et al., 2020).

This article attempts to show efforts to resist the domination of colonialism using Sara Upstone's theory of spatial politics. Lita, as a representative of a colonized class, tries to redefine colonialism. However, unlike other studies, Martavan presents the efforts that resulted in the main character's failure to carry out spatial politics.

Upstone's spatial politics theory research was conducted by Elly (2017) entitled *Konstruksi Tubuh dalam Cerita Pendek Keroncong Pembunuhan* by Seno Gumira Ajidarma. This research attempts to describe the body's construction in the short story *Keroncong Pembunuhan* by Seno Gumira Ajidarma using the postcolonial space framework of Sara Upstone's body. The research method used is the deconstructive reading method. The research results show that in this short story, Seno Gumira Ajidarma does not entirely reject solid space but simultaneously displays magical and metaphorical space.

Rahmawati's other research with the title *Ketidakstabilan Ruang Tubuh Sebagai Strategi Pascakolonial* melalui Karya Sastra Indonesia. This article discusses spatial instability, a national power strategy against colonial discourse. This research outlines the Indonesian people's strategy in visiting the construction of colonial discourse. This paper also wants to discuss how fluid spaces have become a cultural strategy for the Indonesian people through literary works. The method used in this paper is descriptive qualitative. This paper will discuss the work of Eka Kurniawan, Triyanto Triwikromo, and Danarto, who provide an alternative strategy to colonialism with their work, which has elements of magic (magical realism). This research proves that works containing magic are an alternative solution to creating a fluid space as a form of resistance to colonial discourse. Thus, Indonesian literary works have a role in strengthening the culture of the Indonesian nation.

In poetry, body politics are discussed in *Paradoks Ruang Tubuh dalam Puisi Sakramen Karya Joko Pinurbo: Kajian' Pascakolonial Tubuh' Sara Upstone* by Rahariyoso (2014). This research discusses the postcolonial space of the body in the poem *Sacrament* by Joko Pinurbo. The results of this research found that the construction of the body that appears in the poem "Sacrament" paradoxically presents a dialectic between body and soul that revolves around the problematic issue of God as a body. This construction ultimately becomes self-deconstruction for the poet, who ontologically directs that the body (material) is destroyed in mortality, while the spirit (idea) of Christ as God is idealized in wholeness. Ultimately, these conditions lead to the ideal construction being over there (the spiritual world), whereas over here (empirical, physical) is just irony.

In the novel, research using spatial politics was carried out by Fawaid (2020) with the title *Domestikasi Ruang dalam Durga Umayi: Melampauai Nation, Menuju' Tubuh Politis'*. This article wants to show the "spatial politics" strategy played by Mangunwijaya in *Durga Umayi* (1991). This article examines how colonial spatiality still exists in a society that considers itself to be in a postcolonial condition. The results of this research by Mangunwijaya show instability, contestation and struggle for meaning in various colonial terms, such as gender, multiculturalism, patriarchy, identity, etc. By continuing to create tension and contestation, Durga Umayi's novel shapes political action and offers a subversive attitude towards all political structures of power. Mangunwijaya deconstructs and domesticates places by offering a reversal of scale and transcending the (geographical) idea of the nation through magical realism, domestic space, travel, and the body.

Based on the relevant research above, the postcolonial perspective with Sara Upstone's spatial political theory has been discussed several times. However, the

material object of the short story *Martavan* by Fahrul Khakim has never been discussed using this theory. So, spatial politics research in Fahrul Khakim's *Martavan* is deemed necessary.

2. Theoretical framework

Postcolonialism discourse emerged after colonialism physically ended. Postcolonial questions re-question or redefine the domination of colonial power. Postcolonialism tries to destroy colonial legacies, both systems and structures that control colonized objects. According to Faruk, the focus of postcolonial studies is on the conditions and tendencies of colonized and previously colonized communities (Elly, 2017).

In short, the emergence of postcolonialism began with the presence of Edward Said, who coined his ideas about the West and East in his book *Orientalism* (1979). Said explains the West made a perspective constructed, stated, and defined the East unilaterally. Afterwards, Homi K. Babha offered the concept of third space and hybridity and considered that what Said said was too rigid, absolute and straightforward (Elly, 2017).

Next, Sara Upstone offers postcolonialism, introducing a postcolonial reading that focuses on the politics of space. In her book *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* (2009), Upstone states that spatial politics is not only limited to the nation but reflects the various kinds of spaces that construct the postcolonial experience.

The postcolonial view rejects construction while offering space to be reshaped. This reconstruction is supported by various voices based on the experience of colonialism. It is this heterogeneity that will give rise to chaos. Chaos is an effort to dismantle views considered fixed while simultaneously instilling new understandings that require the fluidity of space, which Upstone calls post-space. Post-space as a concept is no longer included in rigid colonial boundaries, so it becomes a new unlimited space that is hybrid and fluid. This concept has a solid power to attack the order or understanding of colonialism. This could also be interpreted as an effort to negotiate the definition of identity or resistance (Rauf, 2018).

Upstone classifies spatial politics into five levels: nation, journey, city, home and body. This research will only focus on the body level. The body became an essential part of the colonized individual. Because the body, apart from being the first recipient of colonial experience, is also a way to continue colonialism in an invisible form. However, the body in postcolonial discourse rejects Western control because it can carry out resistance (Rahmawati, 2018). The body in colonial discourse is a body that has the same pattern as one another, but postcolonial ensures that bodies are formed from heterogeneous experiences.

Material space or locus forms the body with boundaries of which it is unaware. Political steps taken by colonialists like this made individuals from the body themselves feel comfortable and were no longer related to colonialism. So, the body seems to belong to the individual, being pure and natural (Fawaid, 2020). Postcoloniality offers resistance or resistance efforts to dismantle this construction. The previously rigid body is questioned again to present a fluid body and out of the control space of colonialism. The body becomes an accessible area, meaning it has a heterogeneous nature that can penetrate boundaries (Rahmawati, 2018).

The body, previously considered a strategic and controllable area, in the postcolonial presence based on the subjectivity of individual bodily experiences can be

questioned again—postcolonial attempts to overthrow the domination of power and superiority of the colonized body.

3. Result

The body's helplessness against what attacks it, in this case associated with the postcolonial, shows a rigid body as in the quote below:

Mandau itu telah menghunus perut Lita, memecahkan segala harapan yang tersisa. (paragraf 1)
The Mandau had pierced Lita's stomach, destroying all remaining hope. (paragraph 1)

Mandau can be interpreted as a doctrine that causes Lita to be unable to act beyond her limits, including fulfilling the needs (hopes) that Lita wants. This rigid situation is emphasized by the author in the following quote:

Lita melotot getir, menahan dua sakit yang mendera: sakit mengingat Husein babak belur dihajar pemuda desa sekaligus sakit yang bersarang di ulu lambungnya. (paragraf 1)
Lita glared bitterly, holding back two excruciating pains: the pain of remembering Husein being battered and beaten by village youths, as well as the pain that was lodged in the pit of her stomach. (paragraph 1)

This narrative shows that the body of a colonized individual is unable to resist what his own body accepts.

"Bapak ingin kau segera menikah, Lita...." (paragraf 3)
"I want you to get married soon, Lita..." (paragraf 3)
"Baguslah, biar Bapak pilihkan saja untukmu." (paragraf 5)
"Okay, let me choose for you." (paragraf 5)

The father can be represented as a colonial who can control the body he constructs. The two dialogues also show the attitude of dominating power, which positions the father as superior and Lita as inferior. The body was made into a property that could be adjusted according to the needs of the colonial imperialists. In this section, the body is defined and functions according to the needs of the main class, the colonial. However, the resistance effort against the body occurs in the following quote:

"Tidak, Bapak," Lita ingin berkata jujur, tetapi dia justru berdusta untuk kedua kalinya.
"Beri aku waktu untuk menentukan pilihanku sendiri," (paragraf 6)
"No, Father," Lita wanted to tell the truth, but instead, she lied for the second time. "Give me time to make my own choice" (paragraf 6)

As a teenage woman who has grown and is aware of her body's needs, Lita can resist Western control. The father, as the dominant power, has not been able to exercise control in influencing or managing other bodies. This means that Lita's efforts are an awareness

present because of a mismatch with what has happened so far. However, this resistance wavered again because the imperialist project strengthened its position.

"Jauhi pemuda kurus itu, Lita. Mereka bukan suku kita. Mereka hanya ingin mencuri sesuatu dari desa kita," Bapak mulai menyadari kedekatan Lita dengan Husein. (paragraf 15).

"Stay away from that skinny young man, Lita. They are not our tribe. They want to steal something from our village," Father began to realize Lita's closeness to Husein. (paragraf 15)

"Tidak, kau harus berhenti menemuinya. Kau bisa belajar menghias baju atau mengukir kepada para ibu di desa." (paragraf 17).

"No, you have to stop seeing him. You can learn to decorate clothes or carve from the women in the village." (paragraf 17).

"Jangan membantah. Kau tak boleh mendekatinya lagi. Bapak sudah menaruh memecahkan tangkai di martavan dan menaruhnya di depan rumah kita, artinya kau sudah siap untuk dipersunting pemuda desa ini. Kau hanya boleh menikah dengan suku kita, harusnya kau menjaga diri," sungut Bapak. (paragraf 19).

"Do not argue. You cannot go near him anymore. Father has put the stems in the martavan and placed them in front of our house, meaning you are ready to be married to this village youth. "You can only marry into our tribe; you should take care of yourself," said the father. (paragraf 19)

As chief and father, it is obligatory to uphold the customary laws of the tribe. This can be related to the understandings held by colonialism, and to extend the life of that understanding, colonialism formed a new foundation in the body of the colonized individual, in this case, Lita. However, Lita tried to question her father's strength. This question did not enable Lita to escape the boundaries inherent in her body. So, individuals can only reason and move as wide as the boundaries created by colonialism.

Bapak merebut buku gambar Lita, (paragraf 20)

Dad snatched Lita's drawing book, (paragraf 20)

To strengthen the position of the West in an individual's body is to seize things that will impact the body, leaving the boundaries that have been created. This is illustrated in the quote above, where the picture book is Lita's resistance attempt to question and dismantle this construction. Despite resistance efforts, the body still views itself as inferior.

Dia takut bapak marah (paragraf 30)

He was afraid that his father would be angry (paragraf 30)

The fear that arises from Lita's feelings means that the body that wants to escape its limits still feels that the West or colonialism is superior. This view makes the colonial position easier to regulate the body. This situation can be overcome by creating what Upstone calls chaos.

Lita melempari kedua pemuda suku Iban itu dengan pecahan tajau sampai mereka menjauhi tubuh sekarat Husein. (paragraf 35)

Lita threw sharp shards at the two Iban youths until they moved away from Husein's dying body. (paragraph 35)

In understanding this quote, it can be said to be chora. Chora is a fluid identity owned by the body, an attempt to continuously reject the shackles of the body's natural boundaries, where these boundaries have certainly been determined by colonialism. Furthermore, Chora can give rise to disorder (chaos) as a dangerous effort that threatens power.

"Tidak, aku yang mendekatinya. Kalian memang bedebah, sama sekali tak berhak mendapatkan cintaku. Hanya pemuda baik ini yang pantas untukku. Pergi kalian." (paragraf 38)

"No, I approached him. You guys are bastards; you do not deserve my love at all. Only this good young man is worthy of me. Go, you guys." (paragraph 38)

Lita memanfaatkan kesempatan itu untuk mengambil mandau Danu lalu membacok lengan Danu sampai pemuda itu menjerit kesakitan. (paragraf 43)

Lita took advantage of this opportunity to take Danu's mandau and then slashed Danu's arm until the young man screamed in pain. (paragraph 43)

Dua kutipan di atas dapat diartikan sebagai chaos. Keadaan ini menggoyahkan posisi kolonial, upaya resistensi, dan meredefinisi tubuh individu itu sendiri. Pascakolonial membongkar bangunan kolonial yang terdapat dalam tubuh lalu merekonstruksi tubuh. Tubuh yang semula kaku dibongkar dan dibangun kembali tubuh yang cair dan tidak terbatas. Tubuh menolak perintah atau sistim yang ditransfer ke individu tersebut. Namun, ternyata upaya chaos ini tidak berjalan lancar:

Hari mengeluarkan mandau ketika Lita hendak menyerangnya. Perempuan itu kurang perhitungan ketika mandau Hari tepat menghunus ulu lambungnya. (paragraf 47)

Hari took out his Mandau when Lita was about to attack him. The woman was less calculating when Hari's mandau pierced her stomach. (paragraph 47)

In the passage above, Hari is a young man who is really into Lita's beauty. Hari can be interpreted as colonialism because of his strong desire to get Lita. The chaos did not present a post-space where the body could find a new body beyond its boundaries. Chaos does not present an active body and loses reaction.

4. Conclusion

The short story Martavan by Fahrul Khahim, seen from a postcolonial perspective, does not run smoothly and results in the failure of the body politic. This can be confirmed after chaos cannot be taken over by post-space. Resistance efforts in this short story can be done repeatedly to find a body that agrees with oneself. This failure could be caused by the balance of resistance between East and West, where East could only attack through Lita figures.

Bapak and Hari were part of the West, which was able to attack or indoctrinate the East. The woman in this short story seems unable to become her own body to escape the boundaries that colonialism has created. The body in the short story is a woman's body formed weakly, failing to influence or dismantle the body's construction. The body in this short story is a body that fails to redefine and create post-space.

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