

Ambivalence in Wieteke Van Dort's Geef *Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on how ambivalence works within the case of a Surabaya-born singer, Wieteke Van Dort through her song *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*. The colonial power that lasted the longest time in today's Indonesia was the Dutch administration. The Dutch people living in this area, experienced ambivalence, as the result of the challenging condition and the process of adaption where it was completely enigma to the condition of the motherland. Therefore, this study is conducted as a challenge to a dichotomy of western vs eastern division in which extremely opposes each other. This research was descriptive qualitative in nature. The theory of ambivalence proposed by Homi Bhabha was used as an underlying theory. The postcolonial approach was also applied in analyzing Wieteke Van Dort's ambivalence. The data were in the form of lyrics of a song entitled *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*. The research findings prove that through the lyrics of *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*, Wieteke Van Dort experiences ambivalence through her complex feeling of being attracted to her "native" Surabaya and her repulsion on the inferior Javanese culture. The research also shows that the western people, through the life of Wieteke Van Dort through her song *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*, experience ambivalence. It challenges the notion of nativeness in the sense that Wieteke Van Dort, as a native of Surabaya by birth, is ironically rejected by the other natives because of the judgment by blood. Western people, represented by Wieteke Van Dort, truly experience ambivalence.

Keywords: Ambivalence, Postcolonial Study, Wieteke Van Dort, *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*

INTRODUCTION

The colonial power that lasted the longest time in today's Indonesia was the Dutch administration. As a colonialization process took place in the archipelago, more and more of the European people, especially the Dutch citizens lured to this area and settled on the islands. They came and worked as civil servicemen, traders, soldiers, etc, and then, they shaped the changing era of the archipelago. These Dutch people, as lived separately from their motherland generations by generations, they clung to diversified culture within a local taste which was called Indies culture (Sukiman 2000).

Like their unique position within the colonial archipelago, the Dutch people living in this area, experienced ambivalence, as the result of the challenging condition and the process of adaption where it was completely enigma to the condition of the motherland. This research focuses on how ambivalence works (in line with Homi Bhabha's theory) within the case of a Surabaya-born singer, Wieteke Van Dort through her song *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*.

This research is conducted as a challenge to a dichotomy of western vs eastern division in which extremely opposes each other. By conducting this research, it can be studied that, on the

contrary, the western singer, Wieteke Van Dort enjoyed her life in Surabaya and this research questions how ambivalence challenges the nature of nativeness.

Java lured many Dutch people also because it was and until now considered as the most civilized in terms of the skill labored men and farmers. Besides Jakarta (Batavia at the time), so Surabaya was and is the seat of the important ports and reached the East part of the Dutch area of its operation for defense and trade as well. This study focuses on a Dutch singer who was born in Surabaya, Wieteke Van Dort.

This research uses Wieteke Van Dort's song entitled *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng* becomes the source of study. This song was created in 1957 in the Dutch language, just after the tension happened between the Netherlands Government and the Indonesian Government over the dispute around the future of the West Papua. Wieteke, who was still 13 years old at the time living with her family who owned a business in Surabaya, sang the song as a condition of the Dutch people that had to leave their "home" country and saw the future Netherland, which ironically and an enigma for them.

The theory used in this research was ambivalence theory. The term "ambivalence" as a psychological state cannot be avoided from its relation with psychoanalysis as it explores the two opposing sides of someone in different directions. The condition reflects an embattling mind of someone who experiences this condition. Bhabha (1994) reflects this condition as the complex mix of attraction and repulsion within somebody's mind. This condition happens as "the colonial subject never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. Rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are 'complicit' and some 'resistant', ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject".

By understanding the definition, it can be studied that the concept of Bhabha's ambivalence is closely aimed at the colonized people. He sees that within the relation of the groups, the colonial people who control the native people and subjugate them make the native lives in a desperate condition in which fruits a condition that the colonized people will always feel an uncanny condition, that is the lure of the attraction of western culture and the eastern native culture that must be repulsed but he lives within this cultural heritage.

The cause of the ambivalence happens as the phenomena of the feelings of being inferior in facing the controlling and magnifying western culture against his own diminutive culture. It happens more if the victims of this ambivalence are the well- educated persons with a native background. The feeling extensively becomes a problem as Fanon says in his famous book *Black Skin White Mask* (1952) in which he lamented a phenomenon of a black man who tried to be white by associating himself with them and feels arrogant to his native people, but inferior in front of white people.

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METHODS

A qualitative research design was applied in analyzing the research topic. It is stated in Neuman's book entitled *Social Research Methods* (2007:89) that

Qualitative researchers use the language of cases and contexts, examine social processes and case in their social context, and look at interpretations or the creations of meaning in specific settings. Qualitative data are empirical. They involve documenting real events, recording what people say (with words, gestures, and tones), observing specific behavior, studying written documents, or examining visual images.

Based on Neumann's explanation, the researchers make up their mind to choose qualitative research design because the analysis of the topic does not concentrate on numbers, but the emphasis is on studying written documents in the form of song lyrics of a song entitled *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*.

This research also makes use of the postcolonial approach in which the main purpose is how to challenge “: white mythology” (Carter, 2002:115). This idea of criticism in literature is an umbrella for a discourse that overviews from the dominance of literary criticism that can be found in the 1970s through its prominent thinker, Edward Said. By reading his work entitled *Orientalism*, it can be said that the nature of racism is hidden in western literary works. Said's basic idea is that it is the ruling power directing values, Europe-centric. Therefore, the truth value, as well as the aesthetic value, are judged from the white European value. Related to this idea, Said owed to two thinkers, Michael Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. From Foucault, Said borrowed the relationship of language and power, and from Gramsci, hegemony. While the traditional postcolonial criticism studies political domination which results in cultural and ideological domination. This research sees that western people also experience ambivalence.

The researchers follow some procedures to conduct close reading to collect the data for the research. Patricia (1998) has explained the procedures of close reading as follows:

When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. You may focus on a particular passage or the text as a whole. Your aim may be to notice all striking features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, and cultural references; or, your aim may be to notice only *selected* features of the text—for instance, oppositions and correspondences, or particular historical references. Either way, making these observations constitutes the first step in the process of close reading. The second step is interpreting your observations. What we're talking about here is inductive reasoning: moving from the observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. And, as with inductive reasoning, close reading requires the careful gathering of data (your observations) and careful thinking about what these data add up to.

The researchers point the procedures of doing close reading as follows:

- a. Reading and observing the fact and detail about the text.
- b. Noticing all striking features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, and cultural references based on the topic of the research
- c. Collecting the intended data related to the research topic while observing and noticing.

d. Interpreting the data using either deductive or inductive reasoning.

The researchers decided to use content analysis as the technique of data analysis because this is one of the most common methods to analyze qualitative data. It is used to analyze documented information in the form of texts, media, or even physical items. Krippendorff (2004: 18) proposed the definition of content analysis by saying that states, "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". In that definition, content analysis is indeed considered as a technique and as a technique, the thesis writer believes that it must have procedures.

The use of the word 'text' in the above definition shows that the concern of content analysis is the data in the form of document or text but the phrase "or other meaningful matter" indicates that in content analysis works of images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and even numerical records may be included as data that is, they may be considered as texts-provided they speak to someone about phenomena outside of what can be sensed or observed.

Therefore, the researchers think that the primary data which are song lyrics should be analyzed using the content analysis technique because the primary data are in the form of text also.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on how Homi Bhabha's theory of ambivalence is studied with a new perspective. While traditional Bhabha's framework studies that it is the native people who will have ambivalence, on the contrary, this study proves it the western, Wieteke Van Dort who has ambivalence, the song reflects how a native Surabaya by birth and not-native by blood because of her European origin makes Wieteke experiences complex feelings in which it is called by Bhabha as the complex between attraction and repulsion.

The internal conflict that Wieteke bears her ambivalence happens due to her nature that lives in tropical Java which has a different climate from the Netherlands. She feels more accustomed to living in the tropical Surabaya where she was born. She knows Java, especially Surabaya better than her destination country, Netherlands. By having a different political aspiration, the woman who was born in pre-independent Indonesia, of course, expected a future Indonesia that lived harmonically with the Netherlands, where at home within a Dutch colonial heritage, she was expected to live as a European value and aesthetics or the Euro-centric perspective. This expectation seemed to be good to be true because life has changed a lot. While the western ways of life that were based on the Euro-centric was too far for her to be reached and imagined, was the tropical Surabaya attracted her much better, while on the other hand, at home, it had to be resisted.

The following quotations show how Wieteke Van Dort experiences the complex condition of attraction and repulsion:

Toen wij repatrieerden uit de gordel van smaragd
Dat Nederland zo koud was hadden wij toch nooit gedacht
Maar 't ergste was 't eten. Nog erger dan op reis
Aardapp'len, vlees en groenten en suiker op de rijst

Geef mij maar nasi goreng met een gebakken ei
Wat sambal en wat kroepoek en een goed glas bier erbij
Geef mij maar nasi goreng met een gebakken ei
Wat sambal en wat kroepoek en een goed glas bier erbij

The quotation can be translated as:

When we arrived from Emerald Belt (i.e., Indonesia)
We did not know that Netherlands was very cold
The worst was the food, worse than we got on the voyage
Potatoes, meat, vegetables, rice with sugar

So just Give me *Nasi Goreng* (famous fried rice) with omelet
With Javanese chilly, crackers, and a glass of beer
So just Give me *Nasi Goreng* (famous fried rice) with omelet
With Javanese chilly, crackers, and a glass of beer

From the quotation, it can be learned that Wieteke Van Dort experiences ambivalence through her complex feeling of being attracted to her “native” Surabaya and her repulsion from the inferior Javanese culture. Rather than feeling Javanese culture as inferior, Wieteke who lives and eats familiarly the Javanese cuisine feels that her Netherlands’ side is still weird for her. It can be said there is irony in her life. She does not live like the white people commonly who live in Europe who can feel hundred percent, Dutch girls. This ambivalent condition hurts her feeling during the journey as there is a feeling of conflict between her feeling as a Dutch girl who was forced to leave her native place of Surabaya, and there is no there is feeling of uncanny against the Javanese Surabaya. This happens because she knows her presence was refuted by other Surabaya, in which they can be seen as the people who share the same area of Surabaya, knowing the same places and enjoying the same spots and food.

On line “When we returned from the emerald belt. We did not know that the Netherlands was so cold” The lines show that the climate of the Netherlands is a place that cannot imagine that is completely different from her native place. By emphasizing the words “her native place”, it means that is a very hurtful condition because the political sphere at the time was very bad for the Dutch people by blood who lived in Surabaya. The researchers of this study regarding that Wieteke was a native Surabaya regardless of her blood origin. Like many other “foreigners” by blood who live in Surabaya, Wieteke like other Chinese, Indians, and Arabs were and are seen as integral parts of Surabaya, in which they share the same spots and food as well landscapes of this big city that cannot be denied. This tormented heart reflects ambivalence as well hurtful conditions as a native of Surabaya who was expelled because of the political sphere of the time.

Wieteke’s touched feeling to her native-born city, Surabaya was expressed by using the words: “the emerald belt” As an ambivalent person, she may be hurt by the expulsion that she suffers, and the unwelcomed feeling she experiences from her friends in Surabaya, but she never hated her Surabaya because she felt belonged to this city. Her sense of belonging of Surabaya is also expressed when she said “*Dat Nederland zo koud was hadden wij toch nooit gedacht. Maar ‘t ergste was ‘t eten. Nog erger dan op reis*”. The quotation shows how she feels depressed because of her ambivalent life as her sense of belongings to Surabaya is disturbed by the expulsion. As a psychological phenomenon, an ambivalent person can feel an uncanny condition because she feels she lives in two conditions, that is attraction and repulsion.

The feeling of being rejected by aside, and not feeling inside on another side where she comes is the fruit of ambivalence. She knows she cannot be accepted by her native friends, the Javanese Surabayans, and she cannot feel pleased with the life of the western people. This fluctuating condition can be seen as the lack of acceptance on the two sides. The feeling of being rejected and not fully integrated can be seen from her expertise on memorizing and tasting the

food that she used to enjoy and had to leave them all behind in a new life as seen in the following quotation:

Geen lontong, sate babi, en niets smaakt hier pedis
Geen trassi, sroendeng, bandeng en geen tahoe petis
Kwee lapis, onde-onde, geen ketella of ba-pao
Geen ketan, geen goela-djawa, daarom ja, ik zeg nou

The quotation describes that there is no *Lontong* (rice wrapped with banana leaf), *sate Babi* (pork satay), *Tabu Petis* (tofu with shrimp sauce), *Trasi* (shrimp sauce), etc. that belong to Javanese food. The quotation shows that Wieteke knows much better the Javanese Surabaya food than her Netherlands' food where she was expected to belong. This quotation reflects that Wieteke feels that her main food is not bread as what the Dutch people do but she enjoys the food as the eastern people do, the rice as the main staple, and a lot of food that the ingredients and the sources are found easily in the city of Surabaya and its surrounding area.

CONCLUSION

The song entitled *Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng* reflects how a native Surabaya by birth and not-native by blood because of her European origin makes Wieteke experience ambivalence in a form of complex feelings in which is called by Bhabha as the complex between attraction and repulsion. Wieteke also undergoes an internal conflict. The internal conflict that Wieteke bears her ambivalence happens due to her nature that lives in tropical Java which has a different climate from the Netherlands. She feels depressed because of her ambivalent life as her sense of belongings in Surabaya is disturbed by the expulsion. As a psychological phenomenon, an ambivalent person can feel an uncanny condition because she feels she lives in two conditions, that is attraction and repulsion.

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