

## ***Indies Culture in Wieteke Van Dort's song Geef Mij Maar NasiGoreng : Postcolonialism Approach***

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**Abstract**—This research focuses on Indies Culture in Wieteke Van Dort' Song GeefMij Maar NasiGoreng. The research applies the theory of Indies Culture and postcolonialism approach. The finding shows that the lines show that the climate of the Netherlands is something that she does not imagine, which is completely different from her native place. The speaker feels that starting a new life in the "new" country even though based on the origin of her blood means nothing if it is compared to the comfort that the place she was born, the Dutch Indies or Indonesia, especially Surabaya where the climate and the food are very familiar to her. The research reveals that the lyrics show the blend of culture between the Dutch and the natives of Surabaya. The blend of the culture can be seen from the words "nasigoreng and a glass of beer, and sate babi". On one side, the speaker as a Dutch-blooded girl is accustomed to drinking cold beer (while the natives prefer the toak that is made of fermented aren), on the other side, as someone that lives in Surabaya, rice, as the main source of Nasi goreng is the main staple of the natives. The condition can be seen as an imitation. The finding also shows that the speaker of the song has two feelings toward the problem of her journey to the Netherlands, that is she must leave all the memories and comfortable life in Surabaya and starts to live peacefully in the Netherlands that ironically the alien land for her

**Keywords**—Indies Culture, Postcolonialism Approach, Mimicry, Ambiguity, Hybridity

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The expansion of the Dutch power to Nusantara since 1596 formed colonies on the land of the Indonesian Archipelago becomes a historical chapter in this area. The Dutch people live in many parts of the islands, as well as in Java in which filled with a Dutch taste, and the cities given the Dutch taste even though the cities were typical tropics with their swamps (Soekiman, 2000:4). The big cities in Java, such as Batavia, Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya became important areas for their life with the Dutch colonies being quite prosperous there, especially because of Dutch plantations, especially sugar, tea and

coffee factories in Java (Knight , 2013). The growth of Dutch colonies, of course, had implications for the meeting between the earthly cultures of the sons and the Dutch European culture, and the struggle for cultural fusion was what was called Indies culture (Soekiman, 2000: 21).

Indies culture was inseparable from the gradual process of the Dutch colonial policy pattern itself, which based its thinking on Europe-centricism. That is, that the measure of ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic values is very European in character. The Dutch policy, which was originally like the actions of Spain and Portugal, only exploited the colonies (the Nations and States), and the result of this policy was the existence of the small number of Dutch women in the Dutch East Indies region. These events led to concubinage, an event that could not be avoided from the colonial government's policy action. This concubinage gave birth to a new kind of society biologically, half Dutch and half indigenous. When the Suez Canal opened, waves of Dutch women came to the colony and the arrival of these women made the culture in the archipelago more diverse (Soekiman, 2000, Wardhani, 2010). On the one hand, Europe-centricism is still the dream of many Dutch and Indonesians, but more and

more people are increasingly attached to the subjective nature of the archipelago.

The combination that gives birth to Indies culture is now a cultural heritage of Indonesia today which still exists in physical form such as buildings, namely churches, post offices, government offices, schools, restaurants and other buildings. The other side of Indies culture is the influence in the Indonesian and Javanese language field and so on. This research is interested in the heritage of Indies culture which is manifested in the songs sung by the Surabaya-born Dutch singer who was born to a rich Dutch family in Surabaya, Wieteke Van Dort.

Through song entitled "*GeefMij MaarNasiGoreng*", sung by Wieteke Van Dort, this research reveals that the black-and-white view between European-centric values faces challenges loudly and being questionable. The postcolonialist ideas of HomiBhabha which saw west-east relations which were central to the western power and created a losing mentality to non-colonized non-European citizens also faced great challenges. The ideas of the white-west-east view of life that are binary opposition, especially in relation to Antonio Gramsci's hegemony which views the strength of cultural and political institutions of the rulers in mastering the mentality embodied in ethics, epistemology and aesthetics, reach out to

the challenge through this research. If Gramsci and Bhabha argue that a colonized person, due to the weak and fragile condition of the colonized, will easily follow the western mentality, on the contrary, this research proves that this opinion is not completely correct. In fact, the Dutch colony in the Dutch East Indies was very accustomed to and enjoyed the culture of the archipelago and the cultural products. The four songs studied illustrate that the Dutch singers at that time felt very much part of the nature and culture of the archipelago, and it would not be true that their entire culture was based on Europe-centricism.

DjokoSoekiman (2000) and MahardikaDwiWardani (2010) have conducted research on Indies culture in Yogyakarta and Solo. Their research is focused solely on material forms, such as the architectural form of buildings left over from the Dutch era. Indies cultural studies related to the culture of people related to non-physical buildings have not received attention, even though songs are mentality builders and soul generator. Therefore, this research has novelty in researching the object of research on Dutch heritage in the form of a song sung by Wieteke Van Dort. Therefore, the focus of the research is how the reflection of Indies Culture expressed in “*GeefMijMaarNasiGoreng*” song and

how the research becomes a challenge for the study of postcolonialism.

The research focuses on the study of culture; therefore, it is important to trace back how theory of culture is constructed. Kluckohn has 164 definitions (Spencer-Oatey, 2012: 1), so a special discussion is needed which is used as the operational basis for this research. From these many definitions, researchers conclude that culture is ‘culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2012:2).

The definition above shows that the relationship is related to life-oriented values, beliefs, and even behavioral conventions of a group and dedicates meaning to something; thus, if seen, Indies culture can be interpreted as how people Dutch people represented through songs sung by Wieteke Van Dort are a picture of the values, lifestyle, and meanings given by the Dutch people in the Dutch East Indies. An Indonesian historian, DjokoSoekiman in 2000 conducted a study of Indies culture which focused on buildings and paintings in the Yogyakarta

area, including church and residential buildings. The intersection of European and indigenous cultures became mutually influential, so that it became the backbone of Indies culture. Soekiman explained that the mixing of European and Javanese styles which includes seven universal elements of culture supported by a group of Indonesian people is called Indies culture (2000: 21).

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research also applies postcolonialism approach which is the main purpose is how to challenge “white mythology” (Carter, 2002:115). Postcolonialism criticism in literature is a discourse that strengthens from the dominance of literary criticism that began to be felt in the 1970s through its character, namely Edward Said. Through his work entitled *Orientalism*, Said understands the nature of racism hidden in western literary works. Said's basic idea is that it is the ruling western people that determine values, and it is Europe-centric. In fact, Said clearly takes the idea from two great people, namely Michael Foucault about the relationship of language and power, and Gramsci with hegemony. The second discusses at length about how the ruling group exercises political domination which results in cultural and ideological domination.

Within this context, whole Homi Bhabha stresses that the easterners are dominated culturally by westerners, so that they create hybrid, and imitation, however this research shows the other side.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The text of the song “*GefMij MaarNasiGoreng*” is related to a Dutch girl that was born in Surabaya, the Dutch Indies in 1943. Her father was a rich man of the white Dutch descent. In 1957, on the dispute of Irian problem, the Dutch people in the new born states, Indonesia left Indonesia. One of the Dutch woman that was born in Indonesia is Wieteke van Dort. During the hard journey from Surabaya to the Netherlands in 1957, Van Dort memorized it through the lyrics of song which was produced in 1977. The lyrics were:

Toen wij repatrieerden uit de gordel  
van smaragd  
Dat Nederland zo koud was  
hadden wij toch nooit gedacht  
Maar 't ergst was 't eten.  
Nog erger dan op reis  
Aardapp'len,  
vlees en groenten en suiker op de  
rijst  
Geef mij maar nasigoreng met  
een gebakken ei  
Wat sambalen wat kroepoekeneengo  
ed glas bier erbij  
Geef mij maar nasigoreng met  
een gebakken ei  
Wat sambalen wat kroepoekeneengo  
ed glas bier erbij

Geenlontong, sate babi,  
ennietssmaakthierpedis  
Geentrassi, sroendeng,  
bandenggeentahoe petis  
Kwee lapis, onde-onde,  
geenketella of ba-pao  
Geenketan, geen...(Wieteke Van  
Dort, 1977)

In English, the lyrics can be :  
When we returned from the  
emerald belt  
We never imagined that the  
Netherlands was so cold  
But the worst part was the food.  
Even worse than traveling  
Potatoes, meat and vegetables and  
sugar on the rice  
Give me nasigoreng with a fried  
egg  
Some sambal and some prawn  
crackers and a good glass of beer  
Give me *nasigoreng* with a fried  
egg  
Some sambal and some prawn  
crackers and a good glass of beer  
No *lontong*, *sate babi*, and nothing  
tastes like *petis*  
No shrimp paste, *sroendeng*,  
*bandeng* and no tofu *petis*  
*Kwee lapis*, onde-onde, no *ketella*  
or *ba-pao*  
No *ketan*, no ...

From the above quotation, the researchers can conclude that the speaker of the lyrics has been comfortable with her life in the tropical Dutch Indies or then Indonesia. The lines “When we returned from the emerald belt. We never imagined that the Netherlands was so cold” show that the climate of the Netherlands is something that she does not imagine, which is completely different from her native place. That is not the end, the worst

thing she cannot stand is the food when she moves from the Dutch Indies. The statement is supported on the lines, “But the worst part was the food. Even worse than traveling Potatoes, meat and vegetables and sugar on the rice give me nasigoreng with a fried egg” The speaker feels that starting a new life in the “new” country, even though based on the origin of her blood means nothing if it is compared to the comfort that the place she was born, the Dutch Indies or Indonesia, especially Surabaya where the climate and the food are very familiar to her. As Kluckhohn shows that cultural value is behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people the speaker of the lyrics is very tied to the culture of the tropical Surabaya. She lives in a certain pattern of the Surabayan way of life that includes climate, food, and drink. From theory of Indies Culture, the research reveals that the lyrics show the the blend of culture between the Dutch and the natives of Surabaya.

The blend of the culture can be seen in the words “*nasigoreng* and a glass of beer, and *sate babi*”. On one side, the speaker as a Dutch- blooded girl is accustomed to drinking cold beer (while the natives prefer the *toak* that is made of fermented *aren*), on the other side, as someone that lives in Surabaya, rice, as the main source of *Nasigoreng* is the main

staple of the natives. The condition can be seen as an imitation or mimicry. While Bhabha states that the easterners imitate (do mimicry) the westerners, in this research, the speaker of the song feels the way around. Though she is a westerner, she feels comfortable to enjoy many Surabayan food. Therefore, the speaker of the song, experiences imitation or mimicry and even ambiguity. Her ambiguity can be seen through her upset feeling toward her journey on the Netherlands. On one side, she feels that she is refused to live in the Dutch Indies or Indonesia, on the other side, she wants to continue to live with her comfortable life in the tropical Surabaya. This bitter ambiguity can be understood in the context of the Indies Culture that many of descendants of the Dutch people feel happy in the tropical Indonesia that they know well and most of them live as the upperclass, and are forced to leave all the belongings and memories suddenly. For them, it can be a miserable thing; therefore, an ambiguity cannot be avoided.

This research also challenges Bhabha's notion that the easterners will imitate the westerners. In fact, this research shows, as a contradictory fact, even the westerners by blood that imitates the ways of life of the easterners, including the food and acceptance of climate. This research also shows that the speaker also undergoes

ambiguity. As it is explained that the speaker of the song has two feelings toward the problem of her journey to the Netherlands, that is, she must leave all the memories and comfortable life in Surabaya and starts to live peacefully in the Netherlands that ironically the alien land for her.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The song "*Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*", sung by Wieteke Van Dort reveals that the black-and-white view between European-centric values faces challenges loudly and being questionable. The postcolonialist ideas of Homi Bhabha which saw west-east relations which were central to the western power and created a losing mentality to non-colonized non-European citizens also faced great challenges. These lines in the song "*Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng*" shows that the climate of the Netherlands is something that she does not imagine, which is completely different from her native place. The speaker, Wieteke Van Dort, feels that starting a new life in the "new" country, even though based on the origin of her blood means nothing if it is compared to the comfort that the place she was born, the Dutch Indies or Indonesia, especially Surabaya where the climate and the food are very familiar to



her. The research reveals that the lyrics show the blend of culture between the Dutch and the natives of Surabaya. The blend of the culture can be seen in the words “*nasigoreng* and a glass of beer, and *sate babi*”. On one side, the speaker as a Dutch-blooded girl is accustomed to drinking cold beer (while the natives prefer the *toak* that is made of fermented *daren*), on the other side, as someone that lives in Surabaya, rice, as the main source of *Nasigoreng* is the main staple of the natives. The condition can be seen as an imitation or mimicry. The finding also shows that the speaker of the song has two feelings toward the problem of her journey to the Netherlands, which are that she must leave all the memories and comfortable life in Surabaya and that she starts to live peacefully in the Netherlands that ironically the alien land for her.

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