

Stereotype, Ambivalence, and Mimicry in Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978)

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Abstract—Cultural encounters between the West and the Rest during colonialism are often based on unequal relations. Many of these encounters are revealed in literary works, one of which is *Morenga* by Uwe Timm (1978). The novel, which revolved around the German colonial period in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika, became one of the essential novels in Germany after World War II. This paper discussed how the colonial encounter between Germans and the Nama tribes in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika was colored by the efforts of both parties to survive in it. This research focused on the problem of colonial encounters by employing a qualitative approach, while the text analysis technique employed close reading. From the analysis conducted, it is identified that stereotypes, ambivalence, and mimicry were the strategies carried out by both parties in the encounter. These strategies appeared not only one-way but rather two-way, which was either realized or had not happened to influence each other between the Germans and the Nama tribe.

Keywords: *ambivalence, colonial discourse, mimicry, Morenga, stereotype*

I. INTRODUCTION

German colonialism history became a popular theme align with the emergence of the Africa boom and memory boom in 1960-1980. This theme is currently still ardently discussed in Germany through the independence of the Namibian state in 1990. Namibia was once a German colony, named Deutsch-Südwest Africa, which was then handed to England through the defeat of Germany in World War I in 1919. Deutsch-Südwest Africa was able to shift to South African territory until 1990.

Göttsche (2003) mentions that the tendency of writers towards African themes began with the re-writing of colonialism. The project mentioned by Aschcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2002) is a reaction to writing about the colonial period of Europeans in various regions of the world that was considered imbalanced. It is considered so due to the higher domination of the colonialist perspective; hence, the writing colonial history tends to be biased in interpreting the colonized people as a society who came from a lower class and trying to justify the conquests committed by the colonizers. In addition, colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha, 1994).

The colonizers require stability and determination in order to confirm their existence so that they define and create boundaries that can distinguish between the colonizers and the colonized. Fixity as a vital feature of colonial discourse is mentioned by Bhabha (1994, p. 94) "Fixity is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and daemonic repetition". The fixity is always repeated, so everyone believes in the discourse built by the colonizers.

The discursive strategy employed to perpetuate colonial discourse is a stereotype that is always repeated. The repetition of this stereotype is indeed intended to define identity rigidly in order to maintain the fixity. Hence, the term indigenous people as primitive, wild, lazy, and stupid, while migrants were modern, civilized, diligent, and intelligent were always repeated so that there were clear boundaries between the colonizers and colonized people.

Therefore, the West also came with a mission to civilize the Rest: Asia, Africa, and America. Various ways had been implemented to civilize the indigenous population, both through infrastructure development, education, and Christian missions. However, these efforts could not be separated from ambivalence. On the one hand, the Western people intended to civilize non-European societies, but on the other hand, they did not want to make all similar, or in Bhabha's statement (1994, p. 122) is "almost the same, but not quite."

Amidst the ambivalence conducted, mimicry or imitation by the colonized party developed. Mimicry referred by Bhabha (1994), appeared as a representation of differences, which was a process of denial and attempts by the colonized people to articulate a complex renewal, regulation, and discipline strategy through 'adaptation' with the colonizers but having the function of rebellion and mockery. Thus, mimicry in the colonizers' view had two sides, namely similarity and threat.

The concepts of stereotypes, ambivalence, and mimicry were critical points that would be used in discussing the novel *Morenga* by Uwe Timm. The novel, written in 1978, depicts the rebellion of the Nama tribes from August 1904 to 1907 through the eyes of a veterinarian, Gottschalk. The massacre aims to economically weaken indigenous people, forces them to labor, and seizes their land as well as livestock. *Morenga* leads the rebellion. *Morenga* is described as the most vital chief of Nama tribes in the war against Germany. He received an education

from a school founded by missionaries and mastered foreign languages, namely German and English.

As a matter of fact, there have been flourished studies examining *Morenga*. One of the researchers correlating this research with Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory is Sellman (2016), who employed post-colonial methodology in the framework of cultural studies. Sellmann regards the concept of 'the other' embedded in the imagination of a nation with a collective culture and manifested itself as an inherent truth to justify the methods of conquest. Sellman's research emphasizes the analysis of mimicry used by indigenous people to enable the creation of cultural hybridity in which power relations continue to be negotiated and re-evaluated. To differentiate from Selmman's research, this research examined a part of the mimicry discussion; however, it is examined with different mimicry strategies and prioritized stereotypes and ambivalence.

II. METHOD

Research on *Morenga* by Uwe Timm was conducted by employing a post-colonial reading strategy. Aschcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) mentioned that this reading strategy would open more possibilities. Therefore, reconstructing more hidden potentials from the language used in the text and unarticulated subjects might be the most critical revealing of that text. Moreover, the post-colonial reading strategy in this paper relied on the idea of Homi K Bhabha by focusing on three crucial points, namely stereotype, ambivalence, and mimicry.

In addition, the text analysis technique engaged in this research was close reading. Lapp, Moss, Grant, & Johnson (2015) stated that close reading is a reading approach to express, involve, and understand information and ideas in a text. By reading the texts several times, readers have time to deepen the understanding through some steps, such as omission of text message ambiguity, context hint analysis to discover unfamiliar language, relations between ideas in detail, and visualization on organization pattern applied by the author to share information.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

The stereotype of Africans is mentioned repeatedly in *Morenga*. This stereotype became the instrument of the German colonial government in Deutsch-Südwest Africa to smooth dichotomy between the colonizers and the colonized. The stereotype which often occurred was based on complexion. In addition, identity addressing through complexion was associated with the social dimension. In other words, physical boundaries were often used to create hierarchy and social limitations. Douglas (as cited in Arndt, 2009) argues that one of the most central symbolic boundaries of the human body in history is complexion. It implies that complexion has been widely used to be a hierarchy and boundary in the society.

In addition, a dichotomy between Africa and Europe often uses black and white. The dichotomy is constructed as if they stand for kindness and evil, salvation and curse, civilization and barbarism, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object, as well as nature and culture.

As a matter of fact, black gives an impression of dirty and lower positions; meanwhile, white is correlated with a clean and higher position.

Furthermore, the description of African who has a lower position and disgusting appearance is depicted in the *Morenga*, as follows:

When the boat ran aground in shallow water, Gottschalk mounted the shoulders of one of the waiting natives. The man wore nothing but a pair of ragged trousers. Gottschalk felt the perspiring black skin, smelled the sour sweat. He felt sick. With a gentle rotation he was deposited on the beach (Timm, 2003)

This scene draws how Africans are perceived through touch and smell. That all the senses are used to enforce the dichotomy.

In addition, the stereotype often attached to Africans is they cannot think logically and believe in superstition, even if they have been educated in the missionaries' school. *For a moment he thought back with bitterness on his instructors at missionary school, who always said that natives couldn't think logically (Timm, 2003, p. 99)*. On the other hand, logically thinking is a stereotype attached to the Western people associated with science development since the Age of Enlightenment.

Accordingly, the European claimed themselves superior compared to the non-European; in this case, it is African people. European declared themselves as the civilization maker.

This lack of pity, this desperate courage, yes desperate, for that was the central fact in this war, that these people, as human beings, yes he used the term deliberately, as human beings, couldn't help but see that the Germans were superior to them, that hard work, knowledge, and careful preparations resulted in more and more land falling into the hands of the German settlers, even without the use of military force (Timm, 2003, p.196).

The attempt to civilize their colonized area was the primary mission of the colonizers. They tried the best to alter their colonized areas based on what they got in Europe. An establishment of settlement, plantation, farming, transportation, and education were the European attempts to civilize their colonized areas. Nevertheless, this establishment had to be identical with their countries. They took this action since they were worried that they might have lost their influence as a colonizer.

The other ambivalence emerged is the description of Simon, an African man who adored German culture and language. Nevertheless, he could not be considered as German people since he was physically different.

Simon, reared from childhood in a mission house where he excelled through his love of learning, traveled to Germany at the age of seventeen with the missionary. Inspired by the paved streets, the stone houses, the gas street lamps, electric trams, shops, all the well-run institutions, the public pissiors, the policemen on the corners, he was mildly disturbed now and then only by the color of his skin and the crinkly hair on his head (Timm, 2003, p.264).

The experience of Simon visiting German and was introduced to a modern culture that was exceedingly different from his hometown was his attempt to equal with White people.

Furthermore, Fanon (2008) stated that the more intensive the colonized people assimilate with the cultural value of colonizers, the bigger the probability for them to raise their level is. The harder they leave their “blackness”, the whiter they are. Nonetheless, their wish was limited to their physical boundaries, which were regarded as an obstruction in achieving that level of equality.

Another ambivalence is the description of Africans' positive character, which was regarded as a civilization disruption for German.

...brotherly love among the Hottentots in the form of mutual aid, respect for the elderly and for women, their tender affection for children, their abstemiousness with regard to the property of others (although limited to the property of their own tribe)—all these are such autochthonous laws. The colonizers then restricted this positive character for a negative thing, which inhibited their nation development. Hence, it is evident that the colonizer ambivalence was real (Timm, 2003, p. 272).

The last point, amidst the rebellion committed by Gottschalk toward the government and German colonial guard in Deutsch-Südwest Africa, as well as his empathy to the indigenous people, he finally realized that there were positive things happened in that colonized area. *Gottschalk told himself that every innovation brought to this land furthered its development and would benefit the natives one day (Timm, 2003, p. 258).*

That ambivalence was practiced to highlight German existence in the colonized area as a civilization maker and good colonizer, as it is stated by Schilling (2014, p. 11): “... This is marked by a belief in Germans as ‘good colonizers’ compared to other European powers”. This idea is strengthened by Gann (as cited in Bürger, 2017, p. 263): “To come to more specific issues, the German record of conquest in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika was certainly grim. But the Germans, for all their ruthlessness, were not more brutal against the Herero than the Australians had been in the treatment of the Tasmanians, the Americans of the Apache Indians...” As a result, construction emerged in some societies on German colonialism was positive. Alternatively, at least, what German colonialism did was much lighter than other colonialism countries.

Furthermore, mimicry or imitating was a rebellion strategy applied by the Nama people in *Morenga*. Some of the prominent mimicries were dressing like German and using the German language in written or verbal.

The use of German soldier clothes was often practiced by indigenous soldiers to fight back. They had soldiers' clothes from German soldiers killed on the battlefield. The use of that soldiers' clothes was not merely imitating, but as a media to fight German. They did not fight German physically; in contrast, they wore that soldier clothes to ridicule German soldiers.

Most of them wore Colonial Guard uniforms and were armed with model 88 rifles (Timm, 2003, p. 301).

Lieutenant Schwanebach ordered the corporal, who had already taken aim, to lower his weapon, since the man they were about to shoot was still wearing a German uniform.... Now the man was standing there naked, his face still in a swollen grin, chewing his tobacco. Gottschalk wondered why no one was upset by this complacent chewing, which seemed contemptuous in the face of the raised gun, the lieutenant, and those standing curiously about (Timm, 2003, p. 40).

The interesting point of this novel is how the leader of Nama tribes communicated with the German colonialism government in Deutsch-Südwest Africa in written form using the German language. This communication method is also considered as mimicry.

As a matter of fact, writing culture is identical to European culture, but not with the Nama tribe. Notwithstanding, this novel illustrates how the Nama tribe chief sent a letter to declare war and underestimated the colonialism soldiers who only replied that letter by showing off their weapon. The ability of the German language in written and verbal opened a negotiation space for the colonized people. It was identified by the negotiation attempt between German colonial guards in Deutsch-Südwest Africa with Morenga as a Nama opposition leader. It implies that the colonized people did not take the condition of being colonized for granted.

B. Discussion

Stereotypes, ambivalence, and mimicry as a result of dynamic interactions between the colonialists and the colonized people became the main study discussed by Homi Bhabha in his postcolonial studies. These three points are not only a stigma that appears in one-way, but rather in two-way. These three points might have been realized or have not mutually influenced by the colonizers and colonized parties. The existence of mutual influence between the two was believed since colonialism did not write itself on a blank page, as mentioned by Loomba (2016).

Colonialism formation abroad cannot be considered as citizen movement from a country to other uninhabited areas in other countries. Loomba (2016) mentioned that colonial formation indicates forcing process toward the indigenous people in certain areas to leave their area or reconstruct their existed community through trade practice, both nature and human resources, looting, negotiation, and opposition by the indigenous people. Through these practices, colonialism survived and stood together with capitalism. This opinion is believed by Loomba (2016) that there is a difference between per-capitalist colonialism with modern capitalist colonialism. In fact, capitalist colonialism did not only invade an area and demand a tribute from the colonized area. More than that, it contributed to change the structure existing in the colonized area, either structure of the economy, social, or even politics signified by massive goods and human flow which provided more benefit to the colonized countries,

Due to the structural transformation, the relation between the colonizers and colonized people which were neutral, became biased and imbalanced. This imbalance was then perpetuated and legitimated by the colonizers to upright their identity, which was different from the colonized parties. It, further, emerged a

stereotype argued by Bhabha (1994, p. 107) as “the scene of a similar fantasy and defense — the desire for originality which is again threatened by the differences of race, color, and culture.” Stereotype, furthermore, is the real manifestation that is disguised due to a threat of race, color, and cultural differences and alters the colonial subjects into not suitable.

Moreover, the colonialism discourse as it is argued by Bhabha (1994) has strategical functions in creating a space for society to produce knowledge, including stereotype, with aims to differentiate the colonized people as a population with degeneration type based on racial origin, and it ends to social justification or even perpetuation for the colonizers to invade. In addition, the stereotype is a construction result of the colonizers to cover their identity. Loomba (2016), further, said that the threat of indigenous rebellion has resulted in a colonial stereotype. It is profoundly different where it illustrates the colonized society as a rapper (usually black skin) who comes to rape a white woman representing the European culture. This stereotype turns down the colonialism metaphor as raping and shifting the crime of colonialism between the colonizers and colonized.

The other important point of Bhabha's post-colonialism idea is ambivalence. It means that colonialism existence often breaks. On the one hand, it attempts to represent itself as a genuine personality and showing its authority. On the other hand, it attempts to signify differences. Ambivalence emerges due to the anxiety of colonizer hegemony collapse toward the colonized society. The European stereotype, which always placed themselves as a civilized nation, had a great mission to civilize non-European nations who were deemed uncivilized/primitive.

The European applied various methods in their colonized areas. The point was how the colonized areas were equal to their nation, either from physical development, such as infrastructure development, or mental development through education. This development was closely related to the colonized area concept as a hoping land, the second motherland for German, which must be maintained. It is also implied in the *Morenga* stating that hundred of thousands of German could find the second motherland of German in the colonized areas. In addition, they expected a better life compared to their life in the former motherland or even ruled the new land. Likewise, it is also portrayed in the description of the character in *Morenga*, either Strohmeier, the farmer, who opened the farming land named "*Deutsche Erde*" (German soil), Gottschalk who dreamed of having a farm with German-style, or even Rattenhuber, the soldier, who imagined of having ice skate arena in German colonized areas in Deutsch-Südwest Africa. All of it identifies that those attempts are intended to create a colonized area to be more civilized.

Nonetheless, the development provided a strict boundary that the European nation had more power compared to the indigenous society. Superiority shown by the Strohmeier farmer through his whip, German interior in Gottschalk dream, and ice skate arena wished by Rattenhuber were their distinction from indigenous society. It is in line with an argument of Bhabha (1994, p. 49), proposing that culture authority ambivalence is a problem arising due to that cultural differences. Moreover, the ambivalence is an effort to dominate an area and colonized

people in the name of cultural supremacy. However, this domination will occur if differences between colonial subjects, namely the colonizers and colonized people, arise. Hence, it is evident that differences should be maintained to uphold superiority existence among the inferior indigenous people.

While in the mental development of the educational facilities establishment, they tried to gather the colonized people who had the same mindset as the colonizers. Stoler (as cited in Foulcher, 2008) states that among the far-reaching changes that began in the colonies in the late 19th century as the aftermath of liberal thought in metropolitan Europe, it was a series of actions designed to educate colonized people in notions of bourgeois morality and the citizenship responsibility. This effort was an ambivalence of the colonizers since education was believed to threaten their hegemony over their colonies. Therefore, inferior stereotypes were made to inhibit their thinking progress.

Finally, the mimicry is an important concept in the post-colonialism study of Bhabha. Mimicry is referred to by Bhabha (1994) as a sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the others as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate; however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power intensifies surveillance and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers". Thus mimicry has two sign aspects, firstly as a sign of conformity, which is a strategy to adapt the indigenous people as the other to appear to have powers equivalent to their colonizers. On the other hand, it is a sign of non-compliance, which poses a threat to the colonizers.

The indigenous people carried out various methods to imitate the colonizers. Nevertheless, they did not want to imitate the colonizers to be at an equal level, but rather to fight, so it triggered a threat for the colonizers. Therefore, in order to against that threat, ambivalence re-occurred to limit that imitation. As a result, that stereotype kept attaining the colonizers and the colonized people. Even the colonizers looked more superior compared to the colonized people, as it is stated above.

The mimicry strategy that emerged in the *Morenga* consisted of the use of German soldiers' clothes and European clothing, as well as the use of German language, both verbally and in writing by the chief of the Nama tribe. Specifically, regarding writing, from two letters sent by Hendrik Witbooi as the chief of the Nama tribe, were not responded in writing, by the German colonial government. The German government, however, responded by showing off their strength and superiority. Hence, all the mimicry strategies applied by the colonized parties reflected a rebellion in the form of ridicule or insult to the government and the German colonial guard in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika.

IV. CONCLUSION

German colonialism, as believed in all forms of colonialism, cannot be viewed as a history written in a blank sheet without involving the indigenous people's existence in the colonized area. Colonialism also cannot be considered as a one-way power

relation from the colonizers and colonized parties. Moreover, it should not be assumed that the colonized parties did not make any effort to negotiate with the colonizers. More than that, there was a mutually influential relationship between the two parties.

A range of strategies was carried out by the two parties to negotiate and maintain its existence. In *Morenga*, the strategy appeared and was carried out by the government, the soldiers, and immigrants from Germany as the ruler of the colony and by the indigenous population of the Nama tribe in Deutsch-Südwest Afrika. As a nation that had a mission to civilize its colony, Germany tried to manipulate its territory and its inhabitants to resemble Germany. Physical and mental development was carried out, but in the frame of ambivalence because they actually did not want to be equaled by the indigenous population as the colony subjects. For that reason, to limit the indigenous population and emphasize German existence as a civilization maker, the colonizers labeled stereotypes to the indigenous population as low human beings, robbers, lazy, and not illogically thinking.

Another strategy employed was through mimicry, namely the imitation of the indigenous population towards the Germans in terms of dressing and communicating both verbally and in writing in the German language. This imitation was actually intended to copy and insult the colonizers.

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