



Subjectification as a Marker of Masculine Character in Memoir of “*Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang*” By Utuy Tatang Sontani

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ABSTRACT

Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang (DBLTB) by Utuy Tatang Sontani is a travel writer with which the author does subjectification, that is, emphasizing the logic of identity and difference to reveal the author's masculinity. With Lisle and Bassnett's travel writing theory and Connell's masculinity theory, this study described subjectivity and its function as a masculinity marker. Methodologically, the data were collected through a note-taking and literature study, which were later analyzed by using content and discourse analysis. The results of this study indicated that the “I” character in DBLTB, which is Utuy's self-image as a traveler, is an exile in China who is unable to return to Indonesia because of the 1965 political events. During meeting fellow Indonesians, he differentiates Self from others to show and maintain an identity as an individualist so becomes an alone and independent subject. This loneliness and independence signify a masculine character, namely a male who dares to live in solitude and refuses to depend on external actors. This study concludes that the dismantling of subjectivity can describe the author's identity who is self-fictionalizing or actorizing himself in the story. Meanwhile, it appears that Utuy keeps masculinity as a hidden ideology in the text.

Keywords: *Analysis of subjectification, Ideology, Marker of masculine character, Masculinity, Memoir.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The political and military events of October 1, 1965 were an important part of Indonesia's modern history, which in turn had implications for subsequent events, politically, ideologically, socially, diplomatically, and culturally. In fact, the impact occurred not only in the country but also abroad. Domestically, for example, people who were seen as affiliated with the PKI or Leftist ideology were crushed, even causing the death of no less than half of Indonesia's population from October 1965—January 1966 (Anderson, 2000). However, the impact of these events on leftists who happen to be abroad is often ignored from the conversation (Mudzakkir, 2015). Those, who at that time were from Left countries, such as China. It was because their citizenship status was revoked. They could not return to Indonesia (Mudzakkir, 2015). They were referred to as exiles.

One of the Indonesian exiles in China is Utuy Tatang Sontani. During his life there, he wrote several memoirs, which were later compiled into a book with the title “*Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang*” (abbreviated as DBLTB). This memoir narrated Utuy's life

chronologically from Cianjur, Indonesia, to his life in China, which includes the story of himself, family, education, career, to his identity as an exile. DBLTB could be categorized as a travel writing because it contained the movement of a traveler as a subject from one place to another; encountering other places and subjects, then interacting with them. In this memoir, Utuy, who became the character “I”, responded to the encounter by defending and affirming the logic and identity of difference. This was called as subjectivity (Lisle, 2006). According to Lisle (2006), this was caused by the author's character who lived with a masculine character.

The description above, furthermore, assumed that subjectivity implied or marks a masculine character. Moreover, DBLTB was a travel text written by a male author. This study aimed to describe the aspects of subjectivity and its function as a marker of masculinity ideology. Subjectivity was an important issue to be uncovered because it showed not only the way travelers responded to encounters in different cultural contexts but also ideology as something hidden in the text of their

journey. To achieve that goal, this study used the travel writing theory by Lisle (2006) and Bassnett (2002), and masculinity by Connell (2005).

Lisle (2006) explained that travel writers-maintained subjectivity by projecting differences on two external actors, namely tourists and local people. Meanwhile, for Bassnett (2002), a travel writing was a way to seek and find an identity. This was related to the ideology reflected by the author's character, for example, the masculine character. Further, masculinity was explained by Connell (2005) that there were many definitions of it. Masculinity was better understood as a gendered process in life. The three theories would be used as a related analytical tool as a unified concept, not fragmented, to answer the problem in this research, namely subjectivity and its implications for masculine character in Utuy Tatang Sontani's DBLTB.

Based on the description above, the posed research questions are (1) how should subjectivity be described? and (2) how this description has implications on the demolition of masculine ideology in DBLTB. Based on these questions, this study aims to provide the description of the first research variable, which in turn can reveal the ideology, namely masculinity, that is hidden by Utuy as the author. As a literary work that appears to have been marginalized, it is undeniable that this memoir has not received sufficient attentions from scholars. Most of the previous studies, several of which were done by Chambert-Loir (2016), Aveling (1967, 1969), and Hill (2010), and these studies only mention a little about DBLTB and are more oriented towards the discussion of Utuy, his exile identity, and his other works.

Chambert-Loir (2016) argues that DBLTB can be classified as exile literary works, which are the literary works written by people who are alienated or exiled abroad. However, according to him, as an exile literary work, this memoir has never clearly defined one of the essences of the memoir, namely the relationship between the fate of the individual and the fate of the nation. Although Chambert-Loir did not specifically examine this memoir, the findings in his research can at least show that this memoir needs to be studied in a wider scope, namely in relation to the 1965 Indonesian political upheaval as the cause of Utuy's exile in China. Meanwhile, Aveling (1967, 1969) examined Utuy's other works, namely *Tamera* and *Suling*, while Hill (2010) mentioned that DBLTB was a text that partially describes China at that time. The literature review that has been presented previously shows that DBLTB has never been specifically studied. Previous studies are still fragmentary and preliminary, and they even only briefly mention this work.

This research seeks to fill the void that is the absence of a focused study on DBLTB as an exile literary work that is possible to be studied in a wider scope, especially from its ideological viewpoint. While the previous

studies directly or indirectly evaluated this memoir in relation to the exile and Indonesia-China political events, this study focuses the scope of its discussion by looking at how the subject in this memoir are involved and live as an exile in China although issues related to his exile and politics cannot be excluded from the discussions. However, by looking further at the picture of the character's life and his relationship with other characters, this study reveals subjectivity, which in turn can reveal the masculine ideology in the memoir. With such a scope, compared to previous studies which are relatively macro in nature, this research can see a more micro and detailed aspect, namely the ideology of the author in relation to his position as an exile.

2. METHOD

This research is descriptive-analytical qualitative research. There are two research variables, subjectivity, and masculine character, which are hierarchical because the second variable can only be answered if the subjectivity is known. Subjectivity variable data are verbal units, both words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourses, in DBLTB which show the response of pedestrians to cultural encounters. The data was collected by using a note-taking technique, then analyzed by content analysis, namely interpreting the text according to the theory of travel literature. Meanwhile, data on masculine character variables, apart from referring to the DBLTB text, were obtained from social, cultural, and ideological texts, which were related to the author's self, ideology, and response during exile in China. The second variable data was analyzed by discourse analysis because DBLTB is assumed to be a discursive text, which cannot be separated from the social, political, and cultural environment (Lisle, 2006). In essence, the two variables above are related, subjectivity as the implication and masculine character as implied, so the analysis is carried out to see the relationship between data that can never be stated by the data itself (Faruk, 2012).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, three things will be presented, namely the general description of the story in DBLTB by Utuy Tatang Sontani, subjectivity, and its implications for masculine character.

3.1. An Overview “Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang” by Utuy Tatang Sontani

DBLTB consisted of four memoirs, which were initially written separately. It was later recorded by Ajip Rosidi, namely “*Mengapa Mengarang*”, “*Haru Yang Tak Kunjung Kering*”, “What is in a name?”, and “*Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang*”. Although separated, the stories in the four memoirs were causally related and chronologically tell Utuy's life in Indonesia to China. In

“What is in a name?”, it was told that he attended a cultural conference in Indonesia. This experience allowed him to work in a Japanese government office, then met a young man, namely D.N. Aidit, who later became known as the leader of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). They had a good relationship, especially when Aidit found out that Utuy was a writer. At that time, Aidit was actively attracting artists to become affiliated with the PKI because according to him, artists, and politics were interrelated.

Aidit found out that Utuy was suffering from liver disease. He also offered her to go to China for treatment; departed with a group from Indonesia who would attend the October 1 celebrations. However, in Indonesia, the incident occurred on October 1, 1965, which made the trip for treatment a journey to exile in China and never being able to return to the country. Utuy’s journey as an exile in China was described in “*Di Bawah Langit Tak Berbintang*”. In particular, this study discussed the last memoir because it described cross-country travel and cultural encounters in distant places, which allowed the logic of identity and difference to be found more significantly. However, it was also undeniable that the other three memoirs might also be mentioned as reinforcement for the discussion.

3.2. The Journey to China and the Formation of Subjectification

It has been stated previously that Utuy made himself the character “I” in his stories. Although not explicitly described, the word Jakarta airport (p. 77) implied that he went to China by plane. This transportation allowed cross-country travel to be carried out. So, Indonesia and China, two countries separated by oceans and continents, could be connected. As stated by Thompson (2011), airplanes became a means of transportation in the 20th century that could subdue the power of distance and connect two countries within the framework of global interconnection. It was also this transportation that allowed cultural encounters so that in turn, the logic of identity and difference could be traced. Meanwhile, after arriving in Peking, “I” and his entourage were transferred to a hospital in Canton. There, he met fellow Indonesians. This indicated that “I” met local people, namely Indonesians, as external actors.

The encounter with fellow Indonesians implied the formation of myself as a subject as well as the construction of identity and difference. Those were related in relation to people from the same cultural background. At the hospital, for example, “I” came into conflict with a member of the Politburo who annoyed him by turning on the radio loudly and not knowing the rules. This conflict created a matrix between “I” and “He” as those who understand and do not understand the rules. In addition, “I” was also associated with a woman who was often called Zus. Zus really devoted his life to the party

and communism, so he considered that life was bound by the party. However, it did not apply to “I”. He did not want to be bound by party regulations. He joined the party because he was interested in communism, not collectivism. That was, there is a subjectification of “I” as an individualist as opposed to collectivism. Although he joined the party, a collectivist political environment, he still maintained the logic of identity and distinguished himself from the rest.

The matrix of opposition between individualism and collectivism became more apparent when “I” lived at the Cengkareng army’s defense stand. Together with the Indonesians, they were required to learn together, namely to study the mistakes of the party by citing Mao Ce-Tung’s books. However, “I” responded to the activity in a confrontational manner. For him, it was not important to study the mistakes of others, especially those who died and only cite the same source. No novelty. If according to Zus, the activity was aimed at preventing past mistakes from being repeated, for “I” learning should be aimed at oneself, not others. Afterwards, the difference in views emphasizes the ideological differences between “I” and the Indonesian people. They have the ideology of collectivism, while “I” has the ideology of individualism because once again, he is only interested in communism and not in his party which emphasizes togetherness. Therefore, as an external world, the study groups and debates with the Indonesians clearly show that “I” is a genuine individualist.

This kind of conflict also occurred when “I” was transferred to a place called the Sanatorium. There, he met Pak Misra, who had been deputy governor in Indonesia because of the PKI’s assistance. Pak Misra always spoke about the heyday of the PKI in Indonesia, and he even dares to criticize the behavior and attitude of “I” who does not want to join the study group that is a mandatory activity for all party members. “I” feels this criticism is annoying, so that he responds this in a confrontational way. This confrontation manifests in counter-statements that are critical, ironic, and even sarcastic.

Because of his attitude of knowing about the identity of “I”, “I” also responded that Pak Misra became governor not because of his own hard work, but because of the party’s help. While, “I” became an author because of himself, not someone else. Here it appeared that individualist achievements were seen as better than collectivist achievements.

The various explanations above were descriptions of subjectification formed through the actions and relationships of character with other characters. That was, the logic of identity and difference was found implicitly. In this memoir, “I” also described himself explicitly as an individualist by analogizing himself to an eagle who did not want to be tied down and bound (p.81); joined the party out of personal interest, not out of interest in

collectivism. In this memoir, there are actually still some attempts made by “I” to manage the differences by accepting other ideologies around him. For example, he recognizes that communism and its adherents were admirable because they are able to unite art and politics. However, the affirmation of the logic of identity and difference turns out to be quite dominant, especially when “I” meets and deals with characters who harass and try to oppose his individualism.

The thesis of Chambert-Loir (2016) could be considered that DBLTB was exile literature, whose journey as the core of memoirs was related to the exclusivity of citizens. That was why, unlike other travel writing texts which dealt with touristic and exploratory journeys and interactions between migrants and settlers or tourists and locals, the journey in this memoir took place in the environment of Indonesians. Likewise, subjectification to assert identity and differences could take place among local people as exiles of the same culture.

3.3. Masculinity as the Author’s Ideological Implication

In various encounters, Utuy maintained an individualist identity. Then, he built differences with those who were collectivists. This showed that Utuy was an author with a resistance-based identity. It was named an individual who was pushed to the periphery of society in terms of politics, culture, and society by building an identity to resist assimilation with a system that subordinated him (Castells, 2006). Collectivism, like the party and its adherents, was a system that had undeniably subordinated it because it lives in a Left country, which the system operates very strongly there. This showed that even though travel relied on the relationship between an Indonesian and another Indonesian, China as a travel space must also be considered. This space became the center of the operation of a system that was in opposition to Utuy’s identity, which he then responded to by distinguishing himself.

Such a system pushed Utuy to the periphery because his aspirations, views, and ideas were not in line with the system. For example, when he alone refused to study together, others accepted it voluntarily. However, with the identity-based resistance above, Utuy was very resistant to many things that were contrary to his individualism, which the logic of identity and difference, both implicitly and explicitly, as illustrated in the text. Since the DBLTB text was a narrative that has shown the identity of the author. Its ideology could also be dismantled, even more so by noting that this work was written by a man. This study considered that the subjectification above, namely the logic of identity, and difference, implied the author’s ideology, namely masculinity. In DBLTB, it seemed that it did not seem to describe—Connell’s (2005) term—a gendered life, in

which men and women were in a relationship that contrasted femininity and masculinity.

However, in this case, masculinity could be understood in a positivist way, namely, the way to be an idealized man (Connell, 2005). In this regard, individualism reflects the urgency of social relations within the basic understanding of an individual within himself (Davis & Williamson, 2019). Even though he lives in a collectivist society, Utuy is a very individualist individual. The various descriptions above showed that Utuy built an identity as an individualist who was not only different but also, more than that, free, independent, not bound. He did not want to be tied down. He did not want to be subdued, moved according to his own desires, and so on, which in essence opposed collectivism and collectivism. With such a response, he became a subject who lived alone and independently. This loneliness and independence signified a masculine character, a character that portrays an ideal man, namely a character that was expected as a masculine male identity, who dared to live in solitude and refused to depend on external actors. In the character and aspirations of an ideal male, the presence of external actors is seen as something that can bind this character, so that he becomes not free. This subject will continue to emphasize the logic of his identity and differences. Davis and Williamson (2019) argue that individualism emphasizes the value of autonomy, self-expression, and the ethos of individual rights. These values, in turn, become legitimate tools to the affirm identity as a masculine man, who is a man who dares to leave collectivism, dares to affirm their views, and are independent. Therefore, the depiction of subjectivity makes it possible to uncover the ideology of a male author.

4. CONCLUSION

In travel writing, DBLTB is related to the logic of identity and difference. The “I” in the memoir, is none other than Utuy as the author. It maintains his identity and distinguishes him from others. The “I” in this memoir uses the mechanism of subjectification to respond to the encounter, even though the encounter takes place with and within the internal environment of its own culture, namely the Indonesian exiles in China. “I” in this case maintains an identity as an individualist that is different from a collectivist by building colonial matrices. So, the opposition is built between the Self and the other. The preservation of this identity is related to Utuy’s position as an author and subject who is marginalized. It is because he is an exile in a Left country where the collectivity operates very strongly. Therefore, he builds a resistance-based identity. So, if he lives in a conflicting environment, there is always the possibility for him to be resistant. This, in turn, leads to the ideological implications of the author, especially since the author is a male, namely masculinity. Positively, this relates to the

depiction of the ideal man who dares to act alone, independent, free, and individual.

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