INTERPLAY OF CLASSICAL AND GLOBALIZED HUMANITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF HARMONY AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

Despite the rapid changes to human civilization, the one problem about identity is still dominantly found in many literary works. It seems that even the developments of literary theory have also been stuck by this myth, likely stating identity is the start of any human problems. Moreover in the era of the globalized world, covering the paradigms of postmodernism, post-colonialism, post-humanism, and also post-truth, the talk about identity is the most prominent idea to deliver. Not only is it dealing with how to build a new identity, but it is also more common on the conflict of interplay between the past and the new. The past is in accordance with the classical or traditional identity, and while the new may refer to the globalized one. Walcott's *Omeros*, a Caribbean novel published at the end of the second half of twentieth century, is one model of the postcolonial literatures showing the stress between the two. Further, some Indonesian short stories, published to start the twenty first century, also deliver and discuss the similar conflict. How each civilization, Caribbean, and Indonesian, uplifts the notion of harmony is worth observing, since each has its own characteristics and strategies to bridge the classical or traditional and the globalized notions of humanity.

Keywords: Classical, global, humanity, harmony, identity.

1. Introduction

The talk about identity is always worth observing and discussing, since this problem is closely attached to any conflicts delivered by literary works. This phenomenon, if we may consider that "the talk of identity" is the literature's characteristic phenomenon, in fact is inherent in the context of human development or civilization. It means dealing with civilization is to concern with human identity, both as an individual or part of social. Surely, identity is actually the prove that there has been a developing civilization. In other words, identity refers to the established changes, though it would continually change due to the development of civilization. This paper does not discuss the topic of "identity" in term of its

definition and characteristics, but how identity brings conflicts in its change or development. Those conflicts are due to humanity, and that's why literary works are fond of uplifting the topic of identity.

The conflicts around identity, especially in literature, are the interplay between the present civilization, meaning today, and the past era, which is usually marginalized. More specifically, they are about the stress how each criticizes another due to its own perspective. The present appears to be modern and newer, while the past holds its conventionality and tradition. Walcott's *Omeros*, in one of the chapters, depicts a story about a boy who visited his ancestry father, in which the father denied the son and even totally forgot him since the son had a strange name.

> ………………………………….. *I am not here*
> *or a shadow. And you, nameless son, are only the ghost*
> *of a name. Why did I never miss you until you returned?*
> *Why haven't I missed you, my son, until you were lost?*
> *Are you the smoke from a fire that never burned?*
> (Chapter XXV, pp. 136-139).

Meanwhile, in *Jendela Tua*, readers are led into the sympathy against the existence of an old mother who was alone and lonely during her days in the country. All her children were away because they had their own families in city, and even when they returned home they preferred to eat in a restaurant.

> *Setelah suami meninggal. Setelah anak-anak memilih rantau sebagai tujuan kehidupan. Dan rumah gadang hanya tinggal sebagai symbol kekokohan yang sebenarnya teramat rapuh dan sunyi…Ia tidak mengerti lagi dengan bahasa anak-anaknya yang telah jauh tertukar dengan ucapan-ucapan mereka yang terdengar aneh…Mereka telah mengusung kota ke rumah gadang ibu tua…Apalagi ketika mereka lebih memilih makan ke restoran ketimbang mencicipi masakan yang jauh-jauh hari sudah dipersiapkan ibu tua.*
> *(After her husband died. After the children preferred to be away of home to reside. And, the house finally stood just as the symbol of pride which was in fact very fragile and lonely…She didn't understand any more the children's tongue, in which there were many strange words spoken by them…They brought city to the old mother's home…Moreover, when they chose to dine in the restaurants instead of tasting the foods that the old mother had prepared several days before.)*
> (Iyut Fitra's *Jendela Tua*, Kompas, Oct. 26, 2008)

The other Indonesian fiction, Sule Subaweh's *Batu Akik*, depicts differently the stress between the past and the present by the existence of "*batu akik,*" in which Javanese culture considers it traditional and magical. Despite the environment of modern time, some people believe in the magical power of a stone, which is the eye of someone's finger's ring, and this is about Pardi who convinced his neighbors that his *batu akik* could save him from the flames when fire destroyed his house. The fact drove them to own such the stone in order to possess its magical power as well.

> *Cerita tentang Pardi mengembara dari mulut ke mulut, dari mulut ke telinga. Bahkan juga beredar di dunia maya. Pengakuannya diunggah oleh masyarakat setempat ke "Youtube."…Keresahan tidak hanya dirasakan oleh istri Pardi tapi juga dirasakan oleh para istri yang suaminya jarang pulang karena mencari batu akik. Ada yang mencari di sungai, pantai, pegunungan, di pohon-*

pohon besar. Ada juga yang sampai bermalam-malam di kuburan kramat hanya ingin mendapatkan batu akik, terlebih pada malam Jumat.
(The story about Pardi went continually from mouth to mouth, from mouth to ear. Even, spreading to the imaginary world. His conviction was uploaded by the local people to "Youtube"…Not only was Pardi's wife in confusion, but also were in the other wives, who their husbands hardly returned home in order to find magical stones. Some hunted in the river, the beach, the mountain, and the big trees. Some also stayed overnights in the cemetery just to own the stones, moreover during the evening prior to Friday.)
(Sule Subawah's *Batu Akik*, KR, Feb 15, 2015)

Those works were published in the era of globalization or people usually say it the era of being modern. Dealing with globalization is obviously about the conflicts of being the past and the present, and it seems the conflicts have created a wide gap, which is deep and long, between the two eras. Even, from a certain perspective, they have given a certain position of being alienated. In *Omeros*, the son is alienated from his own ancestry tradition because the father denies him and considers him as someone who is beyond the grand narrative of ancestor. In *Jendela Tua*, it happens otherwise since the old mother is the one who suffers from being alienated around her own families consisting of the children and grandchildren. Meanwhile, *Batu Akik* views the concept of alienation characteristically, because of the manipulation of the past in dealing with the present. The gap, consequently presenting the condition of being alienated, is the other term to address the idea of disharmony, in which one era puts the blame on the other and also otherwise. And, this idea should possibly become the keen problem of establishing identity. In other words, it may happen that one identity is supposedly to appear superior to the other.

Nevertheless, as a matter of fact literary work is not just delivering any conflicts dealing with the establishment of identity, but it also provides a solution to the problem due to the stress between the present and the past. The solution, then, should be interpreted as the attempts of creating harmony, in which the two conflicting sides may take its own importance. As the key concept, harmony, in this context, is the ideal solution that the past represents the stepping stone for the sake of the newer identity represented by the present. Therefore, the discussion in the following will cover some questions: (1) How do the Caribbean and Indonesian fictions deliver the conflicts of identity, as the interplay between the past and the present? And (2) How does each civilization, dealing with both the Caribbean and Indonesian, uplift the ideal solution of creating harmony for the two?

2. Theoretical Concepts

There are some concepts which are prominent to comprehend the stated problems above. The concepts are dealt with the understandings of the present and past, identity and harmony in the context of the globalized world as it is perceived by literary works. Therefore, to frame them the concept of globalization in literature will be the point of start to discuss. This idea stands as the background in order the understandings of those several concepts can be specifically perceived since the realm of this paper's discussion is literature, which, in horatian tradition, has two prominent elements: *dulce et utile* (Habib, 2005, p. 105), meaning to delight and to teach. Even, Eagleton also emphasized its definition of literature (1996) by the statement that "Under the pressure of literary devices, the ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, turned on its head." (p. 3). In other words, to apply those theoretical concepts, it is worth noting that the process of textual interpretation is an important part of dealing with a piece of literary work.

Lockard (2011, p. 745) delivered, in his *Societies, Networks, and Transitions*, that "Globalization [is] a pattern in which economic, political, and cultural processes reach beyond nation state. The concept surely identifies a very prominent notion, i.e. change/s, and it shows some perspectives due to it. They are about economy, politics, and also culture or tradition. However, this does not specify point that globalization is about a product or an end, but it refers to an action or process. From such an understanding, the definition of identity is closely attached, though it's commonly addressed to something cultural and ancestry. That's why it happens that the problems or conflicts, around the changing phenomena of globalization, in fact are triggered by the existence of an identity, represented by the philosophical notions of "the past" and "the present."

Taking an example of the Caribbean societies, we are exposed to a unique identity dealing with the past. The history of Caribbean formation started from the fact of the slavery era, in which the European explorers brought many African slaves to the area, and then completed by the massacre against the local and indigenous inhabitants of Caribbean (Figueredo & Argote-Freyre, 2008). It means the conflict about "the past" of the Caribbean people, in the era of decolonization, is complex and complicated as well. They should, not be about reconstructing identity, be about constructing it, while there have been more than a single cultural identity. Its history also noted that there were also the other culturally different people coming from several parts of the earth. Therefore, in Caribbean post colonialism, there were two burdens to solve: negotiating an identity among several tribes and resisting a hegemonic identity of the colonizer. On the other hand, it did actually happen to the gap relation between the tribes and ancestors. The present people's identity seems displaced, both physically and culturally, from the ancestor's identity in the main lands, such as Africa, Asia, and other parts of the earth.

In general, identity is about differentiating, of someone from the others, and at the same time about equaling, of someone to the certain people of group. Chiara Bottici (2007, p. 230) interestingly suggested that identity could be both as a destiny and also a choice. More specifically, she explained identity as the problem of continuity, or the diachronic antinomy of identity and the synchronic dimension of it (p. 234). Dealing with modernity and identity, she added:

> *In other words, we can say that the conditions of modernity rendered personal and social identity fundamentally problematic because they made it clear that our identities are always the instable result of what we are, what we have been and what we want to be….. Modernity is, by definition, the "new epoch" ……the epoch that aspired to break radically with the past and, thus, it can transform identity into a "project".* (p. 236).

Finally, the hidden values brought by literature are concerned with how to solve the depicted conflicts. Owing to the problems of identity, stemming from the interplay between the past and the present, especially found in the talked works, i.e. Caribbean novel, *Omeros*, and Indonesian fictions, *Jendela Tua*, and *Batu Akik*, one of the values is about creating harmony between the two. Harmony is about the attitude of response against the existence of the gap caused by the conflicts. In this context harmony leads to the understanding that one is not the enemy, but even one is the complementary aspect of the other.

3. Methodology

There are three objects to discuss in this paper. They consist of a long poem, *Omeros*, written by Derek Walcott, published in 1990, and two short stories/fictions, Iyut Fitria's

Jendela Tua, published in 2008, and Sule Subaweh's *Batu Akik*, published in 2015. Due to cultural identity, there are two identities: Caribbean and Indonesian. Walcott's Omeros is, in fact, postcolonial, and the depicted concepts brought are about the Caribbean post colonialism. It means the focused talk dealing with the poem is close to the establishment of postcolonial identity, in which Caribbean post colonialism is characteristically different from the conventional post-colonialism of Africa and Asia. However, this paper specifically uplifts the stress between the past and the present, between the present identity and the past ancestry one. Meanwhile, concerned with the Indonesian fictions, one thing prominent to note is about the publications which were attributed as the works produced by the 21st century. This century is characteristic because the paradigm of globalization is the mainstream of the world's civilization. Despite the globalized paradigm, bringing the idea of being modern or leaving totally the past, the ideal brought by the era is surprisingly obvious. It means there is still a gap between the past and the present.

Despite some theoretical concepts, covering post colonialism and postmodernism, the discussion by applying new historicism perspective is appropriate to conduct. Through the method of close reading, those objects are analyzed by considering the historical contexts of the texts, in which the years of publication are also prominent to support the discussion. Some philosophical understandings in the realm of postmodernism are the clues to understand those contexts, and therefore the results of the discussion would also put them in the existing civilization, which is always viewing the conflict of identity as the main concern.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Conflicts of Identity in Caribbean and Indonesian Fictions

Despite differences, the Caribbean and Indonesia are similar in some aspects. The first is about the inhabited lands, since the two are composed of many islands scattered on the oceans. Those scattered lands eventually show the existence of several societies or tribes, and in this context, the two are considered multicultural. Then, the two also have the similarity of being the ex-colonized countries, which led them to appear as the postcolonial societies. Post colonialism undergone by such postcolonial countries/societies proves that the historical backgrounds of them were surely burdened by the attempts or struggles of identity establishment, especially of being free from their own ex-colonizer. Certainly, there are many forms of postcoloniality (Ashcroft et al., 1995) to emphasize the interplay between the colonized and the colonizer. However, owing to their own perspective of post colonialism, Caribbean, compared to Indonesia, underwent a more complicated conflict dealing with "the past," since they had different nature of their past. The Caribbean's the past, as stated by history, consists of various cultural ancestors who were the newcomers to the Caribbean lands and they had been physically displaced from the motherlands, which were from many parts of the earth. Meanwhile, despite many cultural tribes, Indonesia's tribes might claim themselves as the indigenous or the owner of the lands. By this context, in their postcoloniality, Indonesia is still able to apply the ancestor's cultural identity as the weapon (Said, 1993, p. xiii) and as the project in recovering the past (Hall, 2003, p. 236) in order to resist the hegemony of theex-colonizers identity. Here, the Caribbean societies had more "to construct" rather than to reconstruct identity as the Indonesian did. As a matter of fact, the Caribbean societies should overcome firstly the conflict between the present and the past.

As one of the Caribbean's postcolonial complicated problems, i.e. the interplay between the present and the past, *Omeros* vividly depicts it in Book Three, Chapter XXV, in a very

specific way and in 3 parts to show the process of alienation gap between the two. In the first part, the relation of the two is like "*Mangroves, their ankles in water, walked with the canoe*," but this ideal condition seems only in the perspective of the present. In this context, the present was eager to return home, though it should undergo a difficult route because of its rowing along the dark river in the forest. "*The swift, racing its browner shadow, screeched, then veered into a dark inlet*." Achille, representing the present, struggled very hard in order to meet his ancestor by his canoe. "*Achille wanted to scream, he wanted the brown water to harden into a road, but the river widened ahead and closed behind him*." However, he's sure that what he was doing would give him success, since he thought his desire to meet the ancestor was right. "*And God said to Achille, 'Look, I giving you permission to come home*." Meanwhile, in the second part, the story shows its complication. When Achille met his father and the men, the boy felt the obvious gap or difference between him and his father. "*Half of me was with him. One half with the midshipman by a Dutch canal*." From this quote, readers are exposed to the reality that the present is different from the past. The text delivers that the continuity of identity (Boitti, p. 234) has stopped because the present does not reveal again the past as what it is. The present has developed differently, and even this might surprise the past. "*They touched his trousers, his undershirt … as a kitten does with cloth…*" The difference is certain, "*The sun stands with expectant silence*," and each seems to have their own questions unanswered. "*The river stops talking, the way silence sometimes suddenly turns off a market*." Finally, in the last part, the past or the ancestor, represented by Afolabe, decided that the present was not part of him. "*Why did I never miss you until you returned? …Are you smoke from a fire that never burned?*" It means the present must understand that the past has disappeared but the future is waiting. "*Achille nodded, the tears glazing his eyes, where the past was reflected as well as the future*."

4.2 The Caribbean and Indonesian Civilizations in Creating Harmony

The depiction of the relation between the present and the past in *Omeros* proves how identity alienation occurs due to its consequence of displacement. The establishment of cultural identity for the Caribbean societies then comes not from "the past" but "the present" because of the nature of being displaced physically and culturally in the new lands. The interplay between the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer has resulted in the harmony of establishing identity among the tribal newcomers of the Caribbean lands, despite creating disharmony, or precisely discontinuity, undergone by the present against the past.

Meanwhile, dealing with the Indonesian fictions, *Jendela Tua* and *Batu Akik*, the other phenomena appear due to the relation of the past and the present, especially against identity. *Jendela Tua* (Iyut Fitra, published in Kompas, 26 October 2008) more or less is about the story of a lonely old mother, who is alienated from her own family. After the death of the husband, all children left her in the village because they should earn for their livings in cities. She always expected to meet and re-gather with all the members of the family, and that's why she also tried to keep maintaining all properties that everything should be similar with the past in order the children would always remember their past. Unfortunately, what she had in mind never happens because the children and grandchildren now have their own present. The old mother went deep sad and even displaced from her own family.

"*Kesunyian juga akhirnya yang menetaskan rindu. Suara anak-anak. Canda keluarga. Barangkali adalah arus kebahagiaan yang hanyut ke muara… Tiap hari dilalui oleh ibu tua seolah-olah waktu tak ada guna… Ketika anak-anak, menantu dan cucu-cucu yang ditunggu-tunggunya pulang, ia sama sekali tidak melihat sunyi yang pecah. Tidak menyaksikan lengang yang cair. Tak ada yang mengalir ke muara. Hanya diam yang kejam. Justru yang ditemukan adalah sebuah siksaan baru yang bernama keterasingan*".

(Loneliness finally gave birth to longing. The children's voices. The family's jokes. Perhaps, those were the waves of happiness which were drowned into the pool… All days were passed by the old mother and they seemed nothing… When the children, the children-in-law, and the grandchildren were home, she hardly found the silence broken. Failed to enjoy the melting lonesome. Nothing swam to the pool. Just the violent noiselessness. Even she got a new torture called alienation).

The present, represented by the mother's children and grandchildren, has created displacement for the past, represented by the old mother. Even, she suffers from identity alienation. "*Tapi ibu tua mungkin lupa dengan gerak yang bernama perubahan*". Explicitly, the text delivers the idea that the past could not bear the new era, called the present. The gap occurs due to the powerful present and the powerless past, and the latter becomes alienated. It seems the gap could not be solved since the past insists on strictly holding the conventional and traditional values by resisting the existence of the new values owned by the present.

Meanwhile, the next fiction, *Batu Akik* (Sule Subaweh, published in Kedaulatan Rakyat, 15 February 2015), delivers the relation of the past and the present in otherwise. The story of it is more or less about how a magical stone, called *batu akik,* could manipulate many people's mind, despite the fact that it is done by Pardi. People, who believed that Pardi's life was saved by the existence of his *batu akik,* a circling ring of his finger, decided to own such a stone in order that the stone would give them many benefits for their lives.

"…*Ada yang mencari di sungai, pantai, pegunungan, di pohon-pohon besar. Ada juga yang sampai bermalam-malam di kuburan kramat hanya ingin mendapatkan batu akik, terlebih pada malam Jumat…Begitulah Pardi menjawab pertanyaan. Membuat orang-orang itu semakin penasaran dan lebih bersemangat dalam perburuan batu akik".*
(Some hunted in the river, the beach, the mountain, and the big trees. Some also stayed overnights in the cemetery just to own the stones, moreover during the evening prior to Friday… That's how Pardi answered the question. It drove people into curiosity and exceed eagerness in their hunting of the magical stone).

The stone, *batu akik,* in this context, representing the past, gives "helps" mysteriously or in a magical way that is beyond the work of human mind. Its appearance must be related to the person/s of the past and their "powers" are still believed by the people of the present. "*Mungkin Pardi mendapatkan batu akik itu dari seorang kiai. Mungkin juga dari kuburan ibunya. Ibunya kan seorang dukun.*" It means Pardi's power was because of his *batu akik,* and this drove his friends to gain such power by undergoing illogical deeds. This phenomenon seems to suggest that the past still has the position in the present, or the past is the part of the present. The gap between the two is only chronological and the stress of alienation happens because the present still needs the past to complete. It means the establishment of identity refers to its concept of continuity in which harmony lies.

5. Conclusions

Globalization is the consequence of human civilization, and it creates the two existences dealing with "the past," or classical, and "the present," or modern. Due to the concept of identity, the two bring also prominent phenomena of conflicts or problems. One of them is about identity alienation. In the context of Caribbean's *Omeros*, due to its post colonialism, alienation is the result of physical and cultural/social displacement, completed by the notion of establishing harmony among several culturally alienated generations. Meanwhile, in the context of Indonesian fictions, due to its establishment of harmony between the classical and

the modern, in one hand the past is helpless in viewing the powerful present. *Jendela Tua* delivers how the past expects harmony with the present is in vain because the latter has its own way of creating harmony. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the present actually still needs the existence of the past, because the latter is an important part to create harmony or to solve the identity alienation of the present.

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