

COLONIAL TRACES IN FICTION: HOMI K. BHABHA'S POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORY COLLECTION "BEDIL PENEBUSAN" BY KIKI SULISTYO

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Abstract

This study examines colonial traces in Kiki Sulistyo's short story collection Bedil Penebusan through Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial perspective. Employing a qualitative approach, the study uses interpretive textual analysis through close reading and thematic coding to identify mimicry, ambivalence, and in-betweenness within the narratives. The findings indicate that colonial traces are reflected in the themes of power, social conflict, and the relationship between local communities and authority. In addition, the characters' identities occupy an ambivalent position between traditional values and modern influences. This reflects the dynamic process of post-colonial identity formation through cultural negotiation. Therefore, the short story collection Bedil Penebusan portrays social conflict and reveals the enduring influence of the colonial legacy on identity and power relations in society. This study contributes to post-colonial literary criticism by demonstrating how local Indonesian narratives negotiate colonial memory and cultural identity through ambivalent characterization and hybrid social realities. Furthermore, the findings reinforce Homi K. Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity as a relevant framework for understanding the persistence of colonial discourse in contemporary Indonesian literary texts.

Keywords: Post-colonial perspective, Bedil Penebusan, Homi K. Bhabha, Mimicry and ambivalence, Cultural identity

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INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field in the late 20th century, particularly through the works of foundational scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, who examined the cultural, political, and ideological impacts of colonialism and its continuing legacy, in contrast to other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology. This field emerged in response to colonial practices carried out by Western nations in the East (Nasrullah et al., 2025). Broadly speaking, post-colonial studies seek to examine the detrimental effects of colonialism. The primary focus of this field is on nations that have experienced colonization, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. This distinguishes postcolonialism from postmodernism, as post-colonial theory focuses on the historical and cultural impacts of colonialism, particularly issues of power and identity.

In contrast, postmodernism is more concerned with fragmentation and the critique of grand narratives, which have a broader scope as they examine various forms of oppression, dominant narratives, and marginalization, without being limited to the context of colonialism (Ștefănescu, 2022; Du Toit, 2023; Puspita, 2023). Generally, postcolonialism is understood as a theory, discourse, and concept used to analyze post-colonial societies, particularly after the end of modern colonialism. However, in a broader context, this approach encompasses the study of societal conditions before and during colonial rule (Ratnasari et al., 2024).

Homi K. Bhabha put forward several key concepts in post-colonial theory, namely hybridity, mimicry, difference, ambivalence, and in-betweenness. These concepts explain how formerly colonized societies can resist colonial power, which is not as stable or unified as it appears. In this study, mimicry is understood as the imitation of colonial culture or authority by colonised subjects. According to Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (2012), mimicry is “almost the same, but not quite,” a form of imitation that produces both resemblance and difference, thereby revealing the instability of colonial authority. This conceptualization is crucial for analyzing how power is reproduced and simultaneously destabilized in selected short stories. Ambivalence refers to contradictory attitudes towards colonial power, hybridity denotes the blending of local and colonial cultures, and in-betweenness describes identities that exist between traditional and modern cultural positions. These concepts function as analytical tools to examine the representation of identity, power relations, and cultural negotiation in the short stories’ narratives. This line of thought is also relevant to the contemporary world, where significant cultural differences coexist in complex global relationships. Homi K. Bhabha does not view colonialism merely as a historical event, but as an influence that continues to shape intercultural relations today. He also emphasizes that state power and dominant ideologies are never entirely stable, as they are always accompanied by uncertainty, which creates opportunities for resistance (Huddart, 2006). Post-colonial studies emerged as a critical approach aimed at explaining how colonial power influences the formation of culture and identity in colonized societies (Tokshylykova et al., 2024). This influence is evident in the use of language, narrative styles, and social structures represented in literary works (Novianti et al., 2026).

Colonialism, which played a part in the emergence of cultural studies, began to decline around the mid-20th century. A similar phenomenon also occurred in the realm of colonial literature (Basundoro et al., 2025). Generally, postcolonialism can be understood as a theory and discourse used to examine the conditions of societies that have experienced colonization, particularly following the collapse of modern colonial powers (Dasuki, 2025). The impact of colonialism in Indonesia did not disappear immediately after the physical end of the colonial era. Its legacy is still felt today and continues to give rise to various issues in post-colonial societies (Kristiadi & Rengganis, 2025). Some Indonesians’ identities continue to be influenced by the legacy of colonialism, particularly through cultural values, social hierarchies, language practices, and patterns of authority

shaped during the colonial period. These influences can still be observed in contemporary social relations and cultural expressions, including those represented in literary works (Ramadhany, 2025). The decline of colonialism in literary works gave rise to a new current of thought known as postcolonialism (Saputri, 2019). This movement is characterized by a growing individual awareness of personal identity, a desire to break free from domination, and efforts to restore rights to land and cultural heritage to Indigenous populations. The term 'colonial' itself derives from the word 'colony', which refers not only to the physical occupation of territory and claims to power, but also implies domination in cognitive aspects or ways of thinking. One of the main characteristics of colonialism is the existence of a clear boundary drawn between groups considered 'civilised' and those considered 'uncivilised' (Rushdie, 2020).

Literary works often reflect social realities, cultural conditions, and ideological issues that develop within society (Al-Ma'ruf, 2009). Literary texts also function as creative and imaginative representations of human experience and social life (Marsyanda et al., 2025). In post-colonial studies, literary texts are an important medium for examining how colonial power, identity, and cultural conflict are represented through narratives and characters (Branach-Kallas, 2022). According to Stanton (2007), narrative elements, such as plot, theme, and literary devices, contribute to the construction of meaning within a text. Short stories, as concise fictional narratives, are often used to effectively portray human experience and social dynamics (Agustin, 2025). Similarly, Tarsinih (2018) explains that short stories generally focus on limited characters and a central conflict, allowing narratives to present social and psychological issues compactly. The short stories in *Bedil Penebusan* portray various social tensions and identity negotiations that reveal the continuing influence of the colonial legacy on contemporary Indonesian society.

The short story highlights a slice of a character's life that is rich in conflict and touching or joyful events, leaving a profound impression that is hard to forget. (Wulandari et al., 2025). Literature is often used to depict the social and cultural life within a society. In post-colonial studies, literary works reveal traces of colonialism and explore the changes that occurred after the end of the colonial era. Furthermore, literature illustrates how local and foreign cultures interact, adapt, and even influence one another in shaping a new identity within society (Nabilah, 2025).

Based on a review of previous research, post-colonial literary studies in Indonesia have generally drawn upon Homi K. Bhabha's theory to analyze colonial power relations and the construction of identity in literary texts. The study "Postcolonialism in the Short Story Anthology Semua untuk Hindia" by Ratnasari et al. (2024) demonstrates that the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity are effectively employed to interpret short stories explicitly set in a colonial context. However, the scope of this study is limited to texts that directly represent colonialism through historical settings and discernible colonial relations.

The second study, "Representations of Indigenous Resistance to Colonialism in the 1890s Novel," by Churin'n and Sudikan (2025), focuses on the strategies of cultural resistance employed by Indigenous characters in the novel genre. This study asserts that mimicry and ambivalence can function as symbolic resistance to colonial domination. However, research on short stories as a literary form, characterized by a shorter yet densely meaningful narrative, remains limited.

Another study examining colonial traces in the short story "Batavia yang Tak Sesuai Rencana" by Lucretia, conducted by Abdullah (2023), demonstrates that short stories can represent the ambivalence of identity and the intermingling of colonial and local cultures. Nevertheless, this study remains focused on a single short story and has not yet situated these stories within the broader and thematically diverse context of contemporary Indonesian literature.

Thus, research gaps can be identified in three areas: First, previous studies have rarely examined *Bedil Penebusan* from a post-colonial perspective, particularly through Homi

K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and in-betweenness. Second, the short story collection is significant as a post-colonial text because it portrays social tensions, cultural negotiations, and identity conflicts shaped by the continuing influence of colonial legacy in Indonesian society. Third, the narratives present characters who occupy unstable cultural positions between tradition and modernity, making the text relevant for analyzing the formation of post-colonial identity and power relations in contemporary literature. First, post-colonial studies that specifically analyze collections of contemporary Indonesian short stories as a unified body of text remain scarce. Second, previous research has tended to highlight colonialism that is explicitly present. At the same time, studies of implicit colonial traces, such as through historical memory, trauma, symbols, and characters' inner conflicts, remain relatively rare. Third, the concept of 'in-betweenness' as a space of identity, which lies at the heart of Homi K. Bhabha's thought, has not yet been explored in depth and in an integrated manner in studies of contemporary Indonesian short stories.

This study aims to bridge the existing research gap by analyzing Kiki Sulistyono's short story collection *Bedil Penebusan* from the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory. This study focuses on revealing the representation of colonial traces in short stories, particularly through social conflict, power relations, and the relationship between local communities and authority. It also examines the representation of mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and in-betweenness, as reflected through the characters, narratives, and social dynamics within the stories. These concepts are employed to explain how the characters negotiate identity amid encounters between traditional values and modern influences that form part of the colonial legacy.

Furthermore, this study seeks to explain how Bhabha's post-colonial concepts can be applied to understanding the formation of identity and power relations represented in this short story collection. Although the stories in "*Bedil Penebusan*" do not always directly depict colonialism, the narratives symbolically and psychologically reflect the continuing influence of colonial discourse on contemporary Indonesian society. This approach is expected to contribute to the development of post-colonial literary studies in Indonesia, particularly in understanding the representation of the colonial legacy, cultural negotiation, and the complexity of identity in contemporary short stories.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using interpretive textual analysis to examine traces of colonialism in Kiki Sulistyono's short story collection, *Bedil Penebusan*. The analysis is conducted from the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, particularly the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and in-betweenness. Bhabha's framework was selected because it provides a relevant analytical lens for examining cultural negotiation, identity formation, and the continuing influence of colonial discourse, represented symbolically and psychologically, within contemporary literary texts. The theory is particularly suitable for this corpus because the short stories do not always depict colonialism directly but instead reveal post-colonial tensions through characterization, narrative conflict, and social relations.

The primary data of the study consist of excerpts, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character representations found in the short stories. In contrast, secondary data are obtained from relevant books, journal articles, and previous studies related to post-colonial criticism and Indonesian literature. Data were collected through close reading and note-taking. The selected excerpts were chosen based on their relevance to the representation of colonial traces, power relations, cultural hybridity, and identity negotiation in the narratives. The analytical procedure involved several stages: identifying relevant textual passages, classifying the data into thematic categories based on Bhabha's concepts, interpreting the symbolic and psychological meanings of the narratives, and

relating the findings to the historical and sociocultural context of post-colonial Indonesian society.

To ensure data validity, this study employed theoretical triangulation by comparing the interpretations with relevant post-colonial theories and previous scholarly studies. In addition, repeated reading and cross-checking of textual evidence were conducted to minimize subjective interpretation bias. The interpretation process focused on maintaining consistency between textual evidence, theoretical concepts, and contextual analyses, thereby strengthening the credibility of these findings.

RESULT

The results should be presented in the same part, clearly and briefly. The research results could be supplemented with tables, figures, or graphs (separate writing terms) to clarify. Avoid presenting similar data in a separate table. The analysis should address the stated gap. The qualitative data, e.g., interview results, should be discussed in paragraphs. The references contained in the introduction should not be rewritten in the discussion. A comparison to the previous studies should be presented.

This section presents the research findings and their discussion based on the analysis of a collection of short stories. The analysis was conducted using the post-colonial theoretical perspective proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, particularly regarding the concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and the negotiation of identity within the context of post-colonial societies. The data analyzed consisted of narratives, dialogues, and character portrayals that reflected colonial experiences and the dynamics of identity emerging after the colonial era. Through this approach, this study seeks to uncover how colonial traces are represented in themes and characters and how post-colonial identity is constructed and negotiated within the texts. The results of the analysis are then presented under two main focuses: (1) colonial traces in themes and characters, and (2) representations of post-colonial identity.

Colonial Traces in Themes and Characters

“Pilih mana, masuk penjara atau pindah dari sini. Ini sudah keputusan pemerintah. Kita sebagai warga negara yang baik harus menerima. Kami sudah berusaha untuk mencegah, tetapi apalah daya kami,” kata kepala dusun. (Kiki, 2021: 18)

The above quote illustrates how the village head conveys government decisions in a tone that demands obedience from the community, positioning himself as an extension of the institutional authority within the village. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this situation reflects the concept of mimicry because the village head adopts the language, attitudes, and mechanisms of power associated with colonial authority. This imitation is visible in the way he reproduces hierarchical patterns of command and places the community in a subordinate position, as though authority must be accepted without negotiation. However, the imitation does not demonstrate complete authority. Instead, it reveals ambivalence within the local subject, as the village head's power remains dependent on the legitimacy of external authority and the compliance of the villagers. This condition reflects Bhabha's notion of mimicry as “almost the same, but not quite,” in which colonial patterns are imitated yet never fully stabilized. Consequently, the village head's imitation simultaneously reinforces and destabilizes authority, revealing uncertainty and contradiction within the structure of power. In this context, the local subject negotiates colonial discourse by internalizing dominant forms of authority while exposing their instability through the contradictions embedded in social relations. Therefore, the quotation represents not only obedience to authority but also the continuing influence of colonial power structures and the ambivalent position experienced by post-colonial subjects in contemporary society.

Aku menjadi bagian dari kemenangan itu karena akulah yang ditugaskan menyusup ke masyarakat untuk menggali informasi. (Kiki, 2021: 26)

In this excerpt, the first-person narrator gathers information from the community, reflecting the operation of a surveillance system resembling colonial mechanisms of control. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, this condition can be interpreted through the concept of mimicry, as the narrator unconsciously reproduces patterns of authority associated with colonial power by monitoring and regulating the community's behavior. The narrator's role positions the local subject not only as an individual under control, but also as an agent who internalizes and perpetuates dominant systems of surveillance. However, this imitation simultaneously produces ambivalence because the narrator occupies an unstable position between authority and subordination. While appearing to exercise power over the community, the narrator's actions remain dependent on a larger structure of authority that legitimizes such control. This reflects Bhabha's notion that mimicry is never entirely complete, but instead creates contradictions that expose the instability of power itself. Consequently, surveillance in the narrative does not simply represent obedience to authority but also reveals how colonial discourse continues to shape social relations, identity formation, and mechanisms of control in post-colonial society.

Mereka yang cermat tentu dapat melihat dalam kegelapan sepasang mata anjing itu tampak purba, hijau menyala. (Kiki, 2021: 20)

The figure of the green-eyed dog in the story can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of power that simultaneously evokes fear and curiosity in the community. This interpretation is supported by the narrative atmosphere surrounding the figure, in which the community responds to the dog with uncertainty, suspicion, and fascination, suggesting the presence of an authority that is both threatening and difficult to understand. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this condition reflects the concept of ambivalence because colonial power often operates through contradictory emotions, attracting the colonized subject while also generating fear and anxiety. The green-eyed dog is not merely a narrative ornament or mystical element, but becomes significant through its repeated association with tension, control, and the community's psychological unease. This symbolic function indicates how authority is perceived as both powerful and unstable. In Bhabha's framework, ambivalence emerges because colonial discourse can never fully secure obedience; instead, it produces uncertainty and contradiction within the relationship between power and the colonized subject. Consequently, the community's reaction to the green-eyed dog reflects a process of negotiating authority in which fear coexists with curiosity and submission coexists with resistance. Through this symbolic representation, the text reveals the continuing psychological influence of colonial power structures on post-colonial society.

Para pemuda kocar-kacir, sebagian berusaha melawan, tapi langsung tumpas oleh satu-dua gerakan. (Kiki, 2021: 24)

This quote illustrates how a dominant force can easily suppress a group attempting to resist it. In this context, violence functions not only as a physical act to control a situation but also as a mechanism of power used to maintain hierarchy and create fear in society. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this condition can be linked to the continuation of the colonial legacy because colonial power fundamentally operated through repressive forms of control that forced communities to submit to dominant authorities. This connection is reflected in the representation of those in power as entities

possessing the legitimacy to use violence to preserve social stability. At the same time, the resistant groups are positioned as subjects that must be silenced. This demonstrates how colonial logic continues to operate within modern power relations, not through direct colonization, but through the reproduction of domination, intimidation, and social control. Furthermore, the violence represented in the story produces ambivalence because the repressive actions simultaneously reveal the strength and instability of authority. On the one hand, power appears capable of controlling society through fear; however, on the other hand, the use of violence exposes the anxiety towards the possibility of resistance from the community. Therefore, the text does not merely portray social conflict but also represents how the legacy of colonial mechanisms of power continues to shape the relationship between authority and society in a post-colonial context.

Semua senjata, yang dulu mereka kumpulkan untuk memburu anjing besar itu, mereka keluarkan. Lantas mereka bergerak bagai pasukan perang mendarangi kantor sementara urusan pembuatan dana di mulut dusun. (Kiki, 2021: 20)

The quote depicts the collective action of a village community striving to defend their living space against external threats, particularly through resistance to the lake development project that threatens their environment and social life. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, the development project can be interpreted as a representation of modern forms of power that reproduce colonial patterns of domination. This connection is reflected in the way the project prioritizes external interests and positions the local community as passive objects that must adapt to decisions imposed from above. Such a condition mirrors colonial discourse, in which authority legitimizes intervention and control by claiming to bring progress and development while simultaneously marginalizing local voices and cultural spaces. Therefore, the community's collective resistance becomes a form of negotiation against dominant power, revealing that post-colonial subjects are not entirely submissive but continue to contest structures that threaten their identity and living space. Furthermore, this situation reflects ambivalence because the development project is presented as a symbol of progress and modernity, yet it also generates fear, displacement, and social tension within the community. Through this contradiction, the text demonstrates that contemporary development can function as a continuation of colonial logic, where authority maintains control through policies that appear beneficial while simultaneously reinforcing unequal power relations.

Representations of Post-colonial Identity

Seorang lelaki tua memberiku mantra itu ketika secara tak sengaja aku bertemu dengannya. Waktu itu hari Kamis, menjelang magrib, hujan turun demikian bengis. Aku sedang berjalan pulang dan merasa harus menepi; kaki hampir kram dan badan seperti kapal yang akan karam. (Kiki, 2021:29).

The protagonist's encounter with the old man who bestows the incantation highlights the continuing presence of traditional knowledge in the protagonist's life amidst changing social conditions. The incantation functions not only as a mystical element in the narrative but also as a symbol of local cultural continuity that persists despite the pressures of modernity and social transformation. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this situation reflects the concept of in-betweenness, which refers to a liminal cultural space in which post-colonial subjects negotiate multiple identities and values simultaneously. Bhabha explains that post-colonial identity is never fixed or entirely stable but is continuously formed within the "third space," a space in which traditional and modern influences intersect and interact. In this context, the protagonist occupies an

in-between position because they are emotionally vulnerable while also confronting conflicting cultural influences represented by modern social realities on the one hand and traditional beliefs symbolized by the incantation on the other. The encounter with the old man, therefore, becomes a significant moment of identity negotiation, as the protagonist neither fully rejects nor completely accepts either cultural position. Instead, the protagonist exists within a transitional space where identity is shaped by tension, uncertainty, and cultural interaction. Through this representation, the text demonstrates that post-colonial subjects experience identity formation not as a stable condition but as an ongoing process of negotiation between local traditions and external influences.

Sebuah pedang tegak berdiri... berpendar ke sekitar dan membuat pedang itu tampak seperti berada dalam lingkaran kabut cahaya. (Kiki, 2021: 24)

The sword can be interpreted as a symbol of local cultural strength that continues to survive despite the pressure from dominant external powers. Its presence in the narrative suggests that local identity has not disappeared entirely but remains preserved in symbolic and cultural forms. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, this condition reflects not only cultural hybridity but also the concept of in-betweenness, which refers to the liminal space where post-colonial subjects negotiate between local traditions and external influences. Bhabha argues that identity is formed within a "third space," a cultural space that emerges from the interaction and tension between different cultural systems. In this context, the sword symbolizes more than resistance to external domination; it also represents the unstable and negotiated nature of post-colonial identity. The local subject is neither entirely bound to traditional values nor fully absorbed into dominant modern structures but exists within an in-between position where cultural meanings are continuously reconstructed. Consequently, the sword functions as a symbolic marker of identity negotiation, demonstrating how local culture adapts, survives, and transforms through interactions with external forces. Through this representation, the text reveals that post-colonial identity is not fixed or pure but is constantly shaped through processes of tension, hybridity, and cultural negotiation within the third space described by Bhabha.

Ambil pedang itu, cuma kau yang bisa mengambilnya... Dengan bimbang, aku mendekat... (Kiki, 2021: 24).

The character's doubts reflect an internal conflict concerning identity and belonging, as the character occupies a position that does not fully align with the dominant authority while also failing to represent local cultural values completely. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this condition illustrates the concept of in-betweenness, which refers to the liminal position experienced by post-colonial subjects within what Bhabha describes as the "third space." In this space, identity is not fixed, stable, or entirely rooted in a single cultural position but is continuously produced through negotiations between competing cultural influences. Therefore, the character's uncertainty reflects more than personal hesitation; it symbolizes the fragmented condition of post-colonial identity shaped by the interaction between local traditions, external systems of power, and modern social values. Bhabha argues that the third space destabilizes rigid cultural boundaries because post-colonial subjects exist between imitation and resistance, acceptance and rejection, and tradition and modernity. Consequently, the character's doubts reveal how identity is constructed through ongoing tension and contradiction rather than through a unified or pure cultural identity. Through this representation, the text demonstrates that post-colonial identity emerges from a continuous process of negotiation within an unstable cultural space where conflicting influences intersect and reshape the subject's sense of self.

Kereta masih bergerak ketika lelaki bermahkota menyambar lenganku dan terjun dari kereta. (Kiki, 2021: 22)

A moving train can be interpreted as a symbol of a structured system of power that regulates and determines the direction of people's lives through rigid social mechanisms. Within the narrative, the character's decision to jump from the train signifies more than a physical escape; it represents an attempt to detach themselves from the dominant structures that limit personal freedom and identity formation. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theory, this condition reflects the concept of in-betweenness, in which the post-colonial subject occupies a liminal position between submission to dominant systems and the desire for self-determination. Bhabha explains that post-colonial identity emerges within the "third space," a transitional cultural space where subjects negotiate conflicting influences rather than fully belonging to a single identity or authority. In this context, the train symbolizes the dominant social order that seeks to direct and stabilize identity. At the same time, the act of jumping from it illustrates the subject's effort to move beyond imposed structures and seek an alternative space of existence. However, the act does not necessarily produce complete liberation because the character remains suspended between the old structure that has been abandoned and the uncertain identity that has not yet been fully formed. This ambiguity demonstrates that post-colonial identity is shaped by continuous negotiation, uncertainty, and movement between competing cultural and social forces. Through this representation, the text reveals that resistance in post-colonial contexts often occurs within unstable transitional spaces, where subjects attempt to redefine themselves outside dominant structures while never entirely escaping their influence.

DISCUSSION

Colonial Traces in Themes and Characters

Colonial traces in *Bedil Penebusan* are evident in the themes of power, social conflict, and the relationship between local communities and the authorities that govern their lives. The short stories in this collection do not always depict colonialism directly through historical colonial settings; rather, they reveal how colonial patterns of domination continue to operate within contemporary social structures in the Caribbean. This finding supports previous post-colonial studies that argue that colonialism persists not only through political occupation but also through systems of authority, social hierarchy, and cultural control embedded in post-colonial societies. However, unlike earlier studies that primarily focus on the explicit representations of colonial history, this study demonstrates that colonial discourse in *Bedil Penebusan* is represented symbolically and psychologically through everyday social relations and conflict.

One manifestation of the colonial legacy is seen in the village head who conveys government decisions to the community using coercive language. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this condition reflects mimicry because the local authority reproduces hierarchical patterns of colonial power while simultaneously revealing the instability of that authority. This finding expands Bhabha's concept by showing that mimicry in the stories is not limited to the imitation of colonial culture but also appears through the reproduction of authoritarian practices within local systems of governance. Therefore, the analysis suggests that colonial power continues to survive through local intermediaries who internalize the dominant structures of control. This interpretation is consistent with previous post-colonial discussions of the continuity of colonial authority in post-independence societies. However, this study offers a new perspective by emphasizing the psychological and symbolic dimensions of power as represented in contemporary Indonesian short stories.

Furthermore, the conflict between village communities and external development projects demonstrates how modern development systems reproduce colonial patterns of domination. Previous studies on post-colonial literature have often interpreted development as a symbol of modernity. However, this study reveals that the development of *Bedil Penebusan* simultaneously functions as a mechanism of exclusion that marginalizes local communities and threatens their cultural spaces. Through this representation, the stories illustrate that colonial logic continues to operate through unequal power relations disguised as modern social progress. This finding contributes to post-colonial literary criticism by showing how contemporary Indonesian literature critically portrays development discourse as part of a continuing colonial legacy rather than as a purely neutral process of social transformation.

Colonial traces are also represented through symbolic figures such as the green-eyed dog, which evokes fear and fascination within the community. Through Homi K. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, the symbol can be interpreted as representing the unstable nature of authority in post-colonial society. The community's contradictory response to the figure demonstrates that colonial power does not merely rely on coercion but also operates through psychological attraction and uncertainty. This interpretation deepens previous discussions of ambivalence by emphasizing the emotional and symbolic dimensions of post-colonial authority in literary narratives. In addition, the economic disparity between the characters further reflects the social inequalities inherited from colonial structures. The unequal distribution of opportunity and social mobility portrayed in the stories indicates that colonial influence continues to shape class relations and economic conditions in post-colonial society. Therefore, the themes and characters in *Bedil Penebusan* reveal that the colonial legacy persists not only through political domination but also through social, economic, and psychological structures that continue to influence everyday life.

Representations of Post-colonial Identity

In addition to portraying colonial influence through themes and social conflict, *Bedil Penebusan* presents a complex representation of post-colonial identity. The characters in the stories are frequently depicted as occupying unstable cultural positions between local traditions and modern social systems. This condition reflects Homi K. Bhabha's concept of in-betweenness, which refers to the liminal "third space" where identity is continuously negotiated rather than fixed within a single cultural framework. While previous studies often discuss post-colonial identity in terms of resistance to colonial domination, this study demonstrates that ongoing tension, uncertainty, and interactions between multiple cultural influences shape identity in *Bedil Penebusan*.

The protagonist's encounter with an old man who imparts a spell illustrates the continuing influence of traditional knowledge on contemporary social realities. The spell symbolizes the persistence of local culture amidst social transformation, while the protagonist's emotional uncertainty reflects post-colonial identity instability. This finding supports Bhabha's argument that post-colonial subjects exist within a transitional cultural space where traditional and modern values intersect. However, this study further suggests that the negotiation of identity in the stories is not merely ideological but also deeply psychological, as the characters experience internal conflict and uncertainty in response to competing cultural influences in their lives.

Similarly, the glowing sword's symbolic presence reflects both cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. The sword represents the local cultural strength that survives despite external pressure, yet interactions with dominant systems of power shape its meaning. In this sense, the stories illustrate Bhabha's concept of hybridity as the creation of new cultural meanings through the interaction of different cultural elements. Unlike previous post-colonial readings that often interpret hybridity as cultural fusion alone, this study demonstrates that hybridity in *Bedil Penebusan* also involves instability, tension, and the

continuous reconstruction of one's identity. The hesitation experienced by the character asked to take the sword further reinforces this interpretation, as the character occupies an ambivalent position between submission to authority and attachment to local identities. Moreover, the moving train represents a structured system of power that regulates individual lives and social direction. The character's decision to jump from the train symbolizes an attempt to escape dominant structures and seek an alternative identity. From a post-colonial perspective, this action reflects the subject's efforts to negotiate freedom within the restrictive systems of power. However, the text also demonstrates that liberation is never entirely complete because the subject remains influenced by the structures they attempt to escape. This finding contributes to post-colonial literary studies by emphasizing that post-colonial identity is not a final or stable condition but a continuous process of negotiation within unstable cultural and social spaces. Consequently, this study offers a new perspective on contemporary Indonesian short stories by demonstrating how symbolic narratives, psychological conflict, and everyday social relations are important sites for representing the colonial legacy and post-colonial identity formation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that Kiki Sulistyو's collection of short stories, "*Bedil Penebusan*", represents colonial traces through its themes, characters, symbols, and the social conflicts experienced by its protagonists. Colonial traces in the short stories are not always presented directly in the form of a colonial historical setting but are present through patterns of power, social structures, and the relationship between local communities and the authorities governing their lives. Through Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial approach, this study identifies the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and in-betweenness in the stories. Mimicry is evident in the local characters' imitation of colonial power structures, reproducing systems of societal domination. Ambivalence is apparent in the community's attitude, which oscillates between fear, admiration, and a desire to resist the authority. Meanwhile, in-betweenness is evident in the characters' identities, which exist between local cultural values and the influence of the modern system developing within society.

Thus, the collection of short stories "*Bedil Penebusan*" not only depicts social conflicts within society but also illustrates how the colonial legacy continues to influence the formation of identity and power relations in post-colonial society. This demonstrates that the short stories portray the persistence of hierarchical power relations and identity conflicts through symbolic representations connected to post-colonial experiences.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Disclosure Statement

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Author Contribution

Conceptualization: Author 1, Author 3; methodology: Author 1, Author 2, Author 3; research: Author 1, Author 2, Author 3; writing—drafting: Author 3, Author 2; writing—review and editing: Author 3; and visualization: Author 2, Author 1. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Data Availability

The data generated in this study were drawn from the short story collection “*Bedil Penebusan*” by Kiki Sulistiyo, which is publicly available and may serve as a reference for future research relevant to this study.

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