

## MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE: THE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN INDONESIAN NOVELS

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### ABSTRAK

*Artikel ini mendeskripsikan sastra multikultural sebagai studi yang penting dan strategis dalam ikut menjawab problem kebangsaan. Sastra multikultural dalam konteks demikian memfokuskan kajiannya pada isu utama problem multikultural yang seringkali dijumpai. Salah satu isu utama problem multikultural itu yakni persoalan identitas. Oleh karena itu, dalam tulisan ini secara spesifik dilakukan studi novel Indonesia untuk mendedah isu utama tentang persoalan identitas tersebut, yang mencakup: (1) problem identitas itu sendiri; (2) proses artikulasi identitas; dan (3) representasi teks atas wacana identitas. Untuk hal tersebut, pendekatan sosiologi sastra digunakan untuk memahami realitas teks sastra multikultural dalam novel Indonesia; sekaligus, hubungannya dengan gejala-gejala persoalan identitas yang terjadi di luar sastra. Selanjutnya, hasil kajian ini menyatakan bahwa persoalan identitas, proses artikulasi identitas, dan representasi teks atas wacana identitas dalam fenomena masyarakat multikultural penting untuk mendapat perhatian sungguh-sungguh. Hal itu dikarenakan bahwa masalah identitas memiliki relasi yang spesifik dengan dimensi kebangsaan. Ia tidaklah bersifat stabil, sebaliknya bersifat dinamis dalam menghadapi perkembangan bangsa. Oleh karena itu, kesalahan dalam memahami dan memosisikan identitas akan memberikan implikasi pada masalah integritas kebangsaan.*

**Kata Kunci:** artikulasi identitas, problem identitas, representasi teks atas wacana identitas, sastra multikultural

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines multicultural literature as a significant and strategic object of study in response to solving national problems. In this context, multicultural literature focuses mainly on multicultural problems frequently found in literary works. One of the main issues is concerned with identity. This article examines Indonesian novels, focusing mainly on the issues of identity: (1) identity and identity problems; (2) identity articulation; (3) text representation on identity discourse in Indonesian novels. The literature sociological approach was adopted to comprehend the reality in multicultural literary texts in Indonesian novels and its relation with the phenomena of identity problems in other field of studies. The results of study indicate that the process of identity articulation and text representation on identity discourse in multicultural social phenomena deserve more serious attention. Furthermore, the problems of identity and the process of identity articulation in multicultural society also require serious attention since identity problems are closely associated with nationality. National identity is not stable but dynamic in dealing with the development of a nation. The lack of concerns on this issue may cause a serious problem of national integrity.

**Keywords:** identity articulation, identity problem, multicultural literature, text representation on identity discourse

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Multicultural literature as one of the multicultural phenomena is important to study and set strategically. It is not only a challenge to the creativity of aesthetic interpretation but also worthy as a strategic instrument to reflect a multicultural society.<sup>1</sup> Socio-cultural problems including dynamic cultural relations as well as the emergence of identity problems serve as a central theme in the study of multicultural literature. Thus, identity problems play a significant role as a central theme in multicultural literary texts (Darma, 2004:2).

Multicultural literary texts are expected to reflect that central theme. Therefore, academic attempts to describe the pattern of relations and the existence of identity issues are necessary. More importantly, they can even become strategic means of describing multicultural phenomena in a particular society. They can also become means of multicultural articulation to express fundamental humanistic problems in the society.

Multicultural literature is a result of cultural construction. It is a given phenomenon. To support this issue, Darma (2004:1-2) claims that multicultural discourse has existed and developed since the migration process of people to other regions. This initiates social and cultural interaction between native and the new comers. This interaction then stimulates multicultural relation which is represented through a literary text.<sup>2</sup>

Based on these arguments, multicultural literature is then defined as a reflection of multicultural relations expressed in literary works. Starting with this point, the existence of multicultural literature in Indonesia has been initiated since the colonial era when there were a lot of literary works describing multicultural phenomena in Indonesian society.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the literary works of the Chinese of mixed Indonesian descents found in the phase of modern literary development have marked the growth of multicultural literature. They even have grown earlier and have been in a greater number than literary works published by Balai Pustaka.<sup>4</sup>

This shows that the development of multicultural literature in Indonesia took place earlier than colonial institutional imperialism marked by the use of texts as an instrument through the institution of Balai Pustaka. However, according to Ratna (2005:399), since there are various ethnic groups, races, religions, and customs, literature reflecting these diversities is then fundamentally multicultural.

Considering all this, the analysis of the development of multicultural literature can be based on those two perspectives. Thus, literature sociological approach is relevant to explain the phenomena of multicultural literature in Indonesian novels. Focusing on literary texts as the object of study and then deeply understanding sociological phenomena in other studies can be done by a researcher (Damono, 1978:2).

It means that multicultural literature covers all literary works which express multicultural issues and discourses published since the 1920's. The process related to the efforts of colonialism which gives particular diversity becomes an interesting aspect to study. However, the study of postcolonial literary texts cannot be neglected since it is associated with the development of existing multicultural discourse and the multicultural relation in the context of Indonesian national identity.

Therefore, it is important to make efforts to nurture a nationality and to overcome the dangers it deals with. The horizontal conflicts take place in several regions in Indonesia such as in Situbondo, Tasikmalaya, Sambas, Maluku, Sampit, Poso and so on are the evidence of those dangers. As a consequence, it is necessary to build a system to foster national understanding and awareness on the idea of nationalism (Gumelar, 2003:17).

Those cases should be addressed seriously by all elements of society to formulate alternative solutions. So, developing multicultural literature means functionalizing it in a contextual practice. This is obvious since multicultural literature is potential to provide alternative solution to those factual problems. Developing multicultural

perspective through the study of multicultural literary texts provides an instrument to build multicultural awareness and attitude (Liliweri, 2009:69). It is inevitable then to build three basic premises in developing the multicultural literary study: 1) giving experience about cross-cultural phenomena; 2) giving behavioral encouragement to other cultural groups; 3) giving adequate information about a cultural group (Albert and Triandis, 1998:432).

Multicultural literature is absolutely needed for the future development of national integrity, particularly national character building. However, it should be admitted that the number of local or multicultural literary works is limited. In order to achieve the goals, multicultural discourse should abandon its pretense to be merely analytical category and it should function as a category which can be analyzed in social and historical contexts (West, 1993).

This perspective is significant to develop critical discourse on multiculturalism which is represented through multicultural literature to distinguish between fascism and racialism. Multicultural literature in the further development is expected to prove its capability as a productive and constructive medium for national development. It is reasonable since literature is both a ideological site and an institution (Supriyanto, 2011:61).

The format of national integration is emergent to develop to the study of multicultural literature. This kind of study will not only function for the sake of literary study but also give the strategic importance to the nation. Otherwise, the lack of this study will eminently create literary works which encourage unproductive religious, ethnic, racial sentiments. Multicultural literature can serve as the power to build theoretical and functional elaboration to meet this national necessity. Thus, it is necessary to encourage common understanding and awareness to the plurality and foster moderation and tolerance.

Based on these arguments, this paper then focuses on three aspects: (1) identity and

identity problems; (2) identity articulation; (3) text representation on identity discourse in Indonesian novels. such Indonesian novels as Marco Kartodikromo's *Student Hijo*, Moeis' *Salah Asuhan*, Hamka's *Merantau ke Deli*, Lubis' *Maut dan Cinta*, Toer's *Bumi Manusia*, Mangunwijaya's *Burung Burung Rantau*, Sindhunata's *Putri Cina*, Clara's *Dimsum Terakhir*, and Khairil's *Tanah Air Beta* have their own importance in reflecting multicultural phenomena. These novels represent multicultural phenomena in the early phase of a nation which is narrowly defined as an ethnic-based nation state. This phase is obviously represented in the novel of *Student Hijo*. Furthermore, they also reflect the latest multicultural phenomena resulting from Timor-Leste's separation from Indonesia as expressed in Khairil's *Tanah Air Beta*.

## **IDENTITY AND IDENTITY PROBLEMS**

In the multicultural literary study, identity problems are actually the main issue. These problems are always eminently present in multicultural literary texts. This issue is also academically challenging to study. Identity problem is not an isolated problem. It has a specific context, a real context presented in a literary text. Therefore, it can be considered as the reflection of social reality. Multicultural literary text is an effort to uncover identity as a fundamental problem for mankind.

On the other hand, this problem is often linked to the socio-cultural and practical cohesion. It is reasonable then that it is sometimes invisible and terrifying in other occasion. In this case, identity is something forceful and unavoidable as a necessity. There are two perspectives which try to pose the identity: the first is the perspective of the essentialists who claim that identity is a universal and permanent essence of human being. They believe that the projection of the self reflects a person's essential identity. Secondly, it belongs to the anti-essentialist who claims that identity is cultural and has cultural relevance (Barker, 2005:218-219). This means that identity is

conjunctive to the social and cultural formation of the society. It is the result of a cultural construction.

Those two perspectives are able to give conceptual framework to explain identity. Both of them are possibly present at the same time or one of them is absent. In one hand, it is undeniable that it ontologically represents the essential characteristic of human being. But in another hand, it reflects a socio-cultural phenomenon. As a cultural phenomenon, it is affected by political, socio-cultural situation, and society's ideological imagination.

Identity formulation in this context then should be explained in the framework of those two perspectives. Each of them has its own problem and complexity.<sup>5</sup> The frequent debate about human being as an autonomous subject is evidently complicated (Supriyono, 2004:139-140). Identity formulation is, therefore, challenging for a person to build his own existence since identity is assumed as an identical existence.

So the discussion of identity issue cannot be separated from the position of human being as an autonomous subject. In this case, Barker's opinion on this topic (2005:217) can be applied. He suggests that the concepts of subjectivity and identity are closely connected. Subjectivity refers to the existential process of a person. As a subject (person), he submits himself to the social processes.

According to Baker (2005:217), the concept that we have about ourselves can be our self-identity, while our hope and other people's opinion will form our social identity. This is also associated with Collier's concept of cultural identity (1998:39). He describes cultural identity as particular characters of a group communication system that emerges in a particular situation.

This concept shows that social, cultural, and self identities have different domains.<sup>6</sup> They have their own positions which contribute to the complication of a person's effort to define his existence and identity. In practice, there are two directions of contribution. The first is that of existence and the second is that of identity.

It is logical since it will not make sense to build existence without any established identity. Meanwhile, an established identity will contribute to the established existence.

Below are the excerpts from the Indonesian novel texts that show us the phenomena of identity problem.

*Juga sepanjang hematku, tentu engkau sudah lebih daripada insaf, bahwa aku sangat menyalahi perkawinan campuran itu. Aku heran bagaimana engkau sendiri tidak memikirkan sampai ke sana. Meskipun banyak orang sedang berusaha akan merapatkan Timur dan Barat, tapi buat jaman ini bagi bahagian orang yang terbesar masalah, Timur tinggal Timur, Barat tinggal Barat, takkan dapat ditimbuni jurang yang membatasi kedua bahagian itu.*

*Jika engkau beristrikan aku, terlebih dahulu engkau harus bercerai dengan bangsamu dengan keluargamu dengan ibumu. Sudah berkali-kali engkau berkata, bahwa engkau tidak mempedulikan hal itu sekalian, tapi janganlah engkau gusar, bila aku berkata bahwa sifat serupa pada hematku amatlah rendahnya teristimewa karena masih banyak kewajibanmu terhadap bangsa dan tanah airmu, terutama pada keluarga dan ibumu. Aku tak dapat mengindahkan dan memuliakan sifat laki-laki yang serupa itu! (Moeis, 2006:56-57).*

*Sia-sialah segala kerinduan untuk pulang ke tanah air yang tidak ia ketahui di mana. Di sinilah, di Tanah Jawa ini, ia harus melengkapi takdirnya, dengan hidup sebagai Putri Cina, entah ia keturunan Cina asli dari Negeri Cina, entah ia keturunan Jawa, yang diperanakan oleh anak cucu Jaka Prabangkara di Negeri Cina. (Sindhunata, 2007:24-25).*

*"Kita harus praktis kini, Maria," kata Sadeli. "Aku seorang Islam, engkau Katolik, Mungkinkah di sini kawin di kantor catatan sipil?"*

*"Oh, ya, tentu saja ibu ingin kita kawin memakai upacara katolik di gereja."*

*"Oh, ya, hampir aku lupa ibumu," kata Sadeli tersenyum tersipu. "Aku harus memininangmu esok. Apakah akan bikin susah ibumu?"*

*tanyanya kemudian khawatir.*

*Maria tertawa kecil, "Tidak, ibu seorang perempuan tua yang bijaksana!"* (Lubis, 1993:394).

The excerpts of novels Moeis's *Salah Asuhan*, Sindhunata's *Putri Cina*, and Lubis's *Maut dan Cinta* show how sophisticated and complicated the identity problem is. For example, the difference between eastern and western identity problem, confusing identity on the subject, and the identity problem based on the religion. Each of the problems is not easy to overcome. It cannot be refused that complicated identity problem may create fundamental humanity dilemma over the subject. Subject goes through the identity problem particularly. Wherever the subject exists, he is still an individual or a representation of particular culture group in the effort of reaching an established identity. The characters Hanafi in *Salah Asuhan*, Putri Cina in *Putri Cina*, and Sadeli in *Maut dan Cinta* experience particular sophisticated and complicated identity problems, implying that the identity has distance from the established existence.

In this context, the identity problem becomes sensitive and difficult to solve. Identity conflict often occurs merely to get and establish certain existence. Hall finds out three ways to conceptualize the identity which later he calls them as (1) an enlightened subject, completely centered, logical in mind and attitude; (2) sociological subject, achieved when a person completely socializes with his cultural environment; (3) postmodernist subject, a situation occurs when a person is not completely centered, continuously broken and has an identity of mass (Barker, 2005:221-223).

As a matter of fact, identity becomes a crucial and complicated issue. Budianta (2008:314-315) describes that the complexity emerges since it is a result of construction. Budianta suggests that there is a limit for a person to get a particular social stratum, a constructed social class in the society.

## IDENTITY ARTICULATION

The act of articulation considers social aspects. For example, the identity which is at first assumed as a constant and single is actually a result of temporary, specific and historical stabilization as an arbitrary closure (Barker, 2005:233). Meanwhile, Hall argues that articulation is a relation between two different elements in a specific situation. The unity of identity is an articulation of two separated and different elements in different historical and cultural environment. These can be articulated in differently (Barker, 2005:233). Thus, individual identity is resulted both from specific, historical and unstable discourse articulation and from social determination. This means there is no automatic correlation among the discourse of identity, social class, gender and race. Those elements can be articulated differently. Therefore, individual who has similar racial background is possible to have different identity.

Identity articulation plays significant role in determining a subject.<sup>7</sup> In the context of continuously changing culture, it is important to note the articulation process. A subject's identity is not merely determined genetically since the cultural background of the subject becomes changeable whenever he articulates his identity.

Furthermore, this concept can be viewed in novels Kartodikromo's *Student Hijo*, Toer's *Bumi Manusia*, and Clara Ng's *Dimsum Terakhir* below.

*"kalau negeri Belanda dan orangnya itu Cuma begini saja keadaannya, betul tidak seharusnya kita orang Hindia mesti diperintah oleh orang Belanda," begitu kata Hijo di dalam hatinya.* (Kartodikromo, 1993:59)

*"Kalau memang kau sudah sepakat menghadapi mereka di sampingku, Minke, Nak, Nyo, kau hadapi mereka sampai selesai. Kalau mereka nanti kewalahan—hati-hati—mereka akan mengeroyok. Sudah beberapa kali itu terjadi. Berani kau?"*

...

*Tidak diduga dalam koran Melayu milik orang Eropa muncul tulisan yang membela diriku, ditulis oleh seorang yang mengaku bernama: Kommers. (Toer, 2006: 416-417)*

*Banyak yang akhirnya menjadi lebih Indonesia daripada orang Indonesia asli. Tapi, mereka masih tidak dianggap sebagai tuan di negara kelahiran mereka sendiri. Bahkan beberapa puluh tahun lalu, mereka tidak berhak menyandang tiga-nama-Cina. Mereka harus mengubah nama mereka menjadi lebih "Indonesia".*

*Wie menjadi Widjaja. Han menjadi Handoyo atau Handoko atau Hanan. Tan menjadi Tanujaya atau Tanuwijaya. Sue menjadi menjadi Sucipto. Dan lain-lain. Sebagian lagi tidak memedulikan nama keluarga dalam bahasa Indonesia. (Ng, 2006:134)*

From the excerpts above, some interesting things can be found. Firstly, in *Student Hijo* and *Bumi Manusia*, we can find that identity articulation process in the concept of nation is still narrow. Java, understood as a 'nation', is created to be a resistance energy to the ethnic identity that is viewed more established and dominant, i.e. the Netherlands, a western nation (Europe). There is a movement when the identity is articulated by the subject. Javanese people are viewed as traditional and less confident, whereas they are modern and have bravery to articulate themselves. Such a phenomenon is found in the characters Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh in *Bumi Manusia*. Similarly, it is also found in the character Kommers in *Bumi Manusia* in which Europe is not always depicted as an oppressor identity. Kommers is an example of someone who cares about the inlanders so they are able to establish their new identity.

Secondly, *Dimsum Terakhir* shows different phenomenon when the identity articulation process looks more adaptive as a result of the political oppression over Chinese descent in Indonesia as a minority ethnicity. Such a phenomenon depicts an ethnic discrimination process against the identity

articulation which leads more to the context of cultural group as the active silent power (silent minority). It is often more dangerous to the social context in the long run.

Identity articulation possibly occurs since there is a subject's interaction which sometimes involves a friction. It does not only concern with the process of the existence of construction but also contributes to stimulate friction, from the artificial to the most complicated one. Its continuum scale, therefore, can describe the production of articulation and its impacts.

The struggle for identity, as it is described earlier, can be placed in such a context. Identity articulation is the subject's effort to define his imaginary existence in individual, social, political and ideological sphere. As a consequence, identity articulation implies the formation of perception either as a member of the majority or minority group as explained by Liliweri (2009:111-112). The identity of a majority group is developed unconsciously when the group initiates racial category. They want their privilege acknowledged whenever pseudo independency and racial resistance exist. Meanwhile, identity of a minority group is defined as the unfortunate class in a social structure. This group becomes the object for the dominant group, both physically and culturally. The minority group often experiences discrimination in their efforts to articulate their identity. It is often limited by the majority group which later stimulates a variety of conflicts.

## TEXT REPRESENTATION ON IDENTITY DISCOURSE

It is important to understand that multicultural literary texts should be read as a representation of identity. Various cultural expressions and values represented in a literary work as described by Darmoko (2006:68) should be read as the process of identity articulation. Thus, their meanings are dynamic since they are articulated in various methods.

This process is unavoidable in reading literary

works since it is related to the existence of the subject. Darma (2004:2) argues that the dominant problem expressed in multicultural literature is identity problem. He also links this problem to the existence of human being.<sup>8</sup> The struggle of subject to define his self-identity then becomes complicated matters.

This struggle can be experienced in personal, social, and ideological spheres. Such a complexity then becomes inherent in multicultural literary texts so identity has a complex domain. It is not merely essential, single, and established (Budianta: 2005). In this case, multicultural literature presents multiple and complex identity problems. An author in this context has strategic position in developing the text construction by representing identity discourse in his/her creative works as his/her own social, political, and ideological hopes.

The following novel texts can be read deeply as the form of text representation on identity discourse.

*Tapi dalam hati, terus terang, Nung khawatir. Hari ini Imlek, Tahun Baru Cina. Hari raya besar dalam kebudayaan Cina. Tidak ada bedanya dengan muslim yang merayakan Lebaran. Pemerintah zaman itu telah mengancam setiap sekolah diseluruh Jakarta agar memberikan peringatan keras kepada para murid keturunan Cina yang mencoba-coba tidak masuk sekolah dengan alasan Imlek.* (Ng, 2006:218)

*"Tanah Deli chususnja dan Sumatra Timur umumnja telah terbuka sejak seratus tahun yang lalu, terbuka bagi pengusaha-pengusaha besar bangsa asing, menanam tembakau, karet, benag-nanas dan kelapa sawit. Maka, berdujunlah datang ke sana orang jang mengadu untungnja, dari setiap suku bangsa kita. Kuli-kuli kontrak dari Djawa, saudagar-saudagar ketjil dari Minangkabau, Tapanuli, Bawean, Banjar dan Betawi (Djakarta) dan lain-lain. Setelah menempuh berbagai matjam kesulitan, timbullah suatu asimilasi (perpaduan bangsa). Timbullah achirnya suatu keturunan (generasi) baru jang dinamai "Anak Deli". Dan "Anak Deli" inilah suatu tunas jang paling mekar daripada pembangunan bangsa Indonesia!* (Hamka, 1959:6).

*"O, tadi itu? Tentang Mas Bowo dan Agatha? Baik. Mesra. Cocok rupa-rupanya. Pasangan ideal, Oast-Indisch-Yunani. Anak-anak mereka berbangsa Indoyun, Pasca-Indonesia, cucu-cucu mereka ... Ndoyuntah, Indonesia-Yunani-entah."* (Mangunwijaya, 1992:120)

*Di sebuah Jembatan, tempat perbatasan Timor Leste dan Indonesia, orang-orang yang mengungsi kembali bertemu dengan keluarganya. Mereka saling berpelukan, saling menangis, penuh haru. Beberapa tentara terlihat berada di sekitar untuk menjaga keadaan.*

*Di jembatan Montain bukan sekadar penghubung dua wilayah yang telah berpisah. Lebih dari itu, jembatan itu menjadi penghubung bagi sanak saudara yang terpaksa hidup terpisah karena harus mengungsi. Pasca jajak pendapat memang melahirkan duka yang mendalam bagi banyak keluarga. Sayangnya, tidak banyak orang yang mau tahu, atau bahkan memahami nasib mereka yang hidup dalam pengungsian. Sebagian pagar, jembatan itu dipasang kawat berduri dan garis kuning sebagai batas daerah. Benar-benar sebuah jembatan yang penuh air mata, penuh kerinduan dan keharuan.* (Khairil, 2010:9).

From the excerpts of four novels *Dimsum Terakhir*, *Merantau ke Deli*, *Burung-burung Rantau*, and *Tanah Air Beta* above, it can be inferred that the authors have a strong position in the process of developing social imagination on identity discourse in their works. For example, in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, the author tries to take the issue of discrimination against Chinese people that is viewed crucial. Based on that argument, as explained by Faruk, Soemanto, and Purwanto (2002:21), Chinese people should review their identity and the novelists should create novel to question those identity problems.

On the other side, the novels *Merantau ke Deli*, *Burung-burung Rantau*, and *Tanah Air Beta* are more relevant as a text construction that focuses on the problem of nation development. Therefore, as claimed by Salam (2003:15), identity and nationality issue serve as the main element for supporting the national continuity in dealing with separation. Meanwhile, in the novel

*Merantau ke Deli*, Indonesian concept as a nation identity is constructed by the author in the form of assimilation which is shown by the existence of “anak Deli” as the young bud of Indonesian development future. In the novel *Burung-burung Rantau*, the author constructs Indonesian concept in the “post-Indonesia”, whereas Indonesian children are not limited in such a narrow understanding about Indonesian nationality. They are Indonesian generation who are able to make global interaction. National discourse in this context should be understood and interpreted in the global context. Moreover, in the novel *Tanah Air Beta*, the author tries to construct a text describing the chaotic feeling of a multicultural nation as the result of the Timor-Leste’s separation from Indonesia.

Following above explanation, multicultural literary text certainly presents two aspects. Firstly, the identity representation and construction of the novelist whereby the novel is used as a means to explore his/her identity. Secondly, the novel serves as the reality representation of identity.

## CONCLUSION

The study of multicultural literature has an important and strategic position in understanding identity problems which later become the primary issues in the study. It is not single and permanent, but complex and dynamic. Therefore, the study of multi-cultural literary texts is relevant and strategic to give an alternative solution to such national problems as a variety of conflicts among cultural and ethnic groups.

Kartodikromo’s *Student Hijo*, Moeis’ *Salah Asuhan*, Toer’s *Bumi Manusia*, Mangunwijaya’s *Burung Burung Rantau*, Sindhunata’s *Putri Cina*, and Clara’s *Dimsum Terakhir* represent multiple aspects of identity problems. The novels *Student Hijo*, *Salah Asuhan*, and *Bumi Manusia* mostly illustrate the debate over traditionalism versus modernism in the context of nationality orientation. Meanwhile, Mangunwijaya’s *Burung-burung Rantau* reflects a broader perspective. This novel puts the problem of national identity in the global

context. Furthermore, *Putri Cina* and *Dimsum Terakhir* mostly depict an existential problem of identity, both as an individual and as a member of a nation. These two novels represent the existential problem of being a Chinese in Indonesia from which the main characters face psychological conflicts caused by the racial discrimination. A psychological chaos also appears in Khairil’s *Tanah Air Beta*. It happens due to Timor-Leste’s separation from Indonesia.

Based on these phenomena, it can be concluded that identity discourse has a specific relation with nationality issues. Identity is not stable but dynamic in relation with nationality. Therefore, we should pay more serious attention to multicultural literary study including identity problems, identity articulation, and text representation on identity discourse. This is because such a field of study certainly has a strategic contribution to national integrity.

## Notes:

- 1 In this writing, the term multicultural literature refers to two aspects: (1) multicultural literature as a study, focuses on identity problem as its main issue; (2) multicultural literature as an object of study points out to Indonesian novel texts, whereas implying some multicultural issues of problems.
- 2 Multicultural literature is fundamentally all kinds of literary works describing the interaction pattern of two or more cultural groups. This kind of literature can be in the form of local, ethnical, national regional or world literature. Budi Darma (2004) states that it is an expression of multicultural problem automatically formed whenever newcomers want to live in a specific different cultural group’s region.
- 3 There two multicultural paradigms: first, global multicultural paradigm and second, national multicultural paradigm. In this article, the writer tends to apply national multicultural paradigm without neglecting global dimension that may exist.

- 4 it can be further read in Mahayana's article (2011) entitled "Perintis Sastra Modern". Mahayana states that Chinese of mixed Indonesian descent's publishing companies have published a hundred of novels written by Chinese of mixed Indonesian descent from 1903 to 1928. Meanwhile, Balai Pustaka could only published not more than twenty novels in the same period.
- 5 Sutrisno (2003) states that the struggle defining identity becomes more complicated in the globalizing world. This argument is reasonable since there are massive humanistic affairs which lead to a particular problem for the people.
- 6 the identical statement is also underlined by Adian (2011:361). He states that identity itself should not be regarded as constraint to rational reflectivity.
- 7 The term "subject" in this article does not merely refer to rational subject; but it is more a cultural and psychological subject. As a cultural subject, it is constructed culturally. Moreover, it is psychologically built on the foundation of psychological instincts which are led by the feeling of lost, failure or inability to define his self. This view is stated by Lacan. Further he states that subject is firstly formed by the feeling of lost. It refers to the feeling of when a person loses his mother. This experience then affects his entire life. As consequences, he tries to built his identity based on this experience of lost. Moreover, Lacan states that subject is not only in the process of signifying but further a signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier (Lacan, 1977:316).
- 8 Darma (2004), in his article, claims that the manifestation of identity and character is actually this following question: who really am I? Let us consider, for example, series of Amy Tan's works, a Chinese-American novelist, basically depict the same problems: I am a Chinese, but is it true? No, it is not. I'm actually an American, am I? Oh, No. I am a Chinese!"

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