

The Subaltern and Failed Existential Resistance in Idrus's Short Story "Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek"

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the short story "Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek" by Idrus to uncover new interpretations regarding the representation of resistance carried out by colonial subjects or groups. The theoretical framework employed in this study is subaltern theory—an idea referring to groups considered voiceless or incapable of speaking—through a postcolonial critical reading inspired by Gayatri Spivak. The analysis method utilizes deconstruction to open up the possibility of generating new meanings from the discourse. The findings of this analysis reveal that there is resistance against colonial hegemonic power, as represented by Kusno, who stands as a figure of the subaltern. Interestingly, Kusno's resistance is shaped by an existential inner struggle, manifesting as overt defiance and quiet resistance. Unfortunately, this resistance is ambivalent, as it simultaneously offers hope while exposing the subject's powerlessness in facing reality. This, in turn, reaffirms the notion that the subaltern is perpetually trapped within the power hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

The study of socially, politically, and geographically positioned populations outside the hegemonic power structures of colonial nations has become a focus of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942). Postcolonial critics, including Spivak, offer different definitions and perspectives on imperialism. However, the general point is that the hegemony imposed by imperialism over the so-called 'Third World' is not limited to the economy, but its impact can be detected in other areas of culture, including literature. Imperialism was in fact motivated by "the desire for, and belief in, European cultural dominance a belief in a superior right to exploit the world's resources" (Bill Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 129). The discourse of imperialism is powerful and can monopolize modes of representation. Spivak, as Laura Chrisman puts it, discusses imperialism as 'a project that is territorial and shapes the subject' (Chrisman, 2003, p. 52).

Two concept that form part of Spivak's critique of imperialism are 'globalization' and 'epistemic violence'. She believes that it was European imperialism that produced a division of the world that did not exist before colonization. This globalization was

followed by epistemic violence which can be defined as “the construction of interest, rather than the ‘production of disinterested facts” (Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 165). In other words, the West began to create and maintain certain images of colonized societies. These images stereotyped European societies of the uncivilized Other and made them justify and support the civilizing mission that was the pretext for colonization. Epistemic violence is made possible by the subject/object binary. In claiming that the Other can be merged into the self, imperialism is based on the claim to know the Other in Europe and the right to represent it, as it is a technique of power to “know and represent the Other (Chrisman, 1990, p. 57).

For Spivak, the postcolonial issue lies in what she refers to as *subalternity*. Spivak notes that the term *subaltern* originates from the context of British military rankings to refer to subordinates (de Kock, 1992, p. 47). The term was also adapted by Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) to describe groups that are *othered*, excluded, and marginalized from the social order. The term was used by Gramsci in his book *The Prison Notebooks* (1978) which contains conflicts during Mussolini's fascist rule in Italy. In this context, Gramsci has actually shown that there is class inequality in his political theory (Green, 2011, pp. 385–402). In postcolonial terms, Spivak famously stated that *the subaltern cannot speak* to highlight the challenges marginalized groups face in articulating their experiences and identities within dominant discourse.

Furthermore, Spivak argues that the inability of the *subaltern* to speak is not merely because they lack a voice, but rather, it reflects power structures that silence them. Spivak emphasizes that speaking involves not only the capacity to speak but also the capacity to be heard, and in the subaltern environment, the possibility of such space for speaking and being listened to often does not exist (de Kock, 1992, p. 46). In other words, Spivak places the subaltern as the lower class that acts as the Other and as groups with restricted access.

Spivak seeks to reformulate the position of the *subaltern* by critiquing or rejecting the notion that the oppressed need to be protected. Instead, Spivak suggests that true activism should aim to bring subaltern voices into dominant discourse rather than keeping them within a space of difference. She believes working for the subaltern facilitates their ability to speak and engage with hegemonic structures (de Kock, 1992, p. 46).

Postcolonial literature often becomes a venue for the struggle to subvert colonial hegemony's embodied dominance. Literary texts trace how subaltern groups struggle against mainstream narratives. Within this struggle, subaltern groups find the possibility of having a voice to confront the dominant hegemony that restricts them.

Abdullah Idrus (1921–1979), or Idrus, is recognized as an Indonesian writer who consistently addressed social issues, particularly during the revolution and the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (Nitayadnya, 2013). In the field of literature, Idrus is known for his novels, such as *Aki* (1949), *Perempuan dan Kebangsaan* (1949), *Hati Nurani Manusia* (1963), *Hikayat Putri Penelope* (1973), and his short story collections, *Dari Ave Maria ke Jalan Lain ke Roma* (1948), *Dua Episode Masa Kecil* (1952), and *Dengan Mata Terbuka* (1961). The short story “*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*” was first published in *Majalah Gema Suasana*, No. 01 and 02, January 1, 1948, and is one of the stories compiled in *Dari Ave Maria Ke Jalan Lain Ke Roma* (Idrus, 2008, pp. 115–118).

The short story “*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*” [The Tale of a Pair of Shorts] (2008) tells the inner conflict of Kusno, a 14-year-old boy who has just finished elementary school. On the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, his father bought him a new pair of 1001 khaki shorts made in Italy despite his family's economic hardships.

Although the political situation outside was tense, Kusno's father felt a sense of joy from purchasing the shorts for his son. Kusno then wore the shorts to look for a job as an act of gratitude for his father's kindness. However, as Kusno began searching for work, he faced a harsh reality. Many offices were not hiring new workers due to the uncertain economic situation caused by the war. Kusno was forced to accept a job as a janitor with a meager salary. Working as a janitor only further trapped him in the cycle of poverty. The 1,001 khaki shorts, which initially symbolized a promising future, began to fade and lose their worth, reflecting Kusno's struggles. Despite his hardships and frequent despair, Kusno continued to fight against his circumstances. He did not want to surrender to his fate, even though his hopes for new shorts and a better life seemed increasingly distant.

As someone living during the tensions of the colonial war, the main character, Kusno, and his family can be seen as representations of the *subaltern*, a group marginalized in society with no voice in the colonial power structure. They did not understand the meaning of the war or grand politics, but they directly experienced its effects. Their lives, filled with poverty and limitations, as well as their inability to voice their desires and rights, reflect the subaltern position within the narrative of colonization. If framed through Spivak's perspective, How does Kusno speak and engage with the dominant structure to represent the subaltern group? In other words, what is the form of symbolic resistance from the subaltern?

As far as the author's observation, the short story "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" has not received academic attention. However, several literary works by Idrus have been analyzed in journal form, as conducted by Nitayadnya (2013). Through an analytical-qualitative approach, aided by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Nitayadnya attempted to uncover the forms of Japanese colonial political propaganda in Idrus's short story "*Ave Maria*" and the drama "*Kejahatan Membalas Dendam*" and how that propaganda functioned to encourage the Indonesian people to support Japan's struggle against its enemies. The author demonstrates that Idrus's works reflect historical facts and contain imaginative elements and symbolism that align with the writer's worldview and ideology. Additionally, the study found that these works contain various forms of propaganda supporting the Japanese government's efforts and depict the author's internal journey and the historical context of his time.

At least three researchers have engaged with this theme in studies using Spivak's perspective, particularly regarding the subaltern: Lestari et al. (2019), Putri et al. (2021), and McFluvia HY (2021). Their studies, published in journal form, contain the following insights.

Using a postcolonial and feminist approach, the work of Lestari et al. (2019) focused on the efforts of characters as subalterns, particularly women, in resisting oppression from colonizers and their own culture, specifically Javanese culture. This analysis reveals that female characters become subalterns because they are marginalized, labeled, and impoverished by social status and prevailing customary law. Putri et al. (2021) highlighted the forms of exploitation and violence experienced by the subaltern in Lan Fang's novel *Perempuan Kembang Jepun*. Their analysis reveals that there are two primary forms of exploitation experienced by the subaltern characters: sexual exploitation and economic exploitation. Moreover, the study identifies various forms of violence, including physical and psychological violence. It emphasizes that the Dutch and Japanese colonial backgrounds contributed to the exploitation and violence experienced by the people in Surabaya, as reflected in the novel's characters.

Meanwhile, McFluvia HY (2021) revealed that the novel *Nyai Dasima* by S. M. Ardan represents a cognitive failure in the context of resistance against colonialism. Although Nyai Dasima attempts to rebel and seek liberation from colonial oppression, her actions and thoughts instead lead to a repetition of existing power structures, including patriarchal and local imperialism. This research emphasizes that the liberation offered to Nyai Dasima is conditional and does not reflect a sovereign subject with privileged rights. Additionally, the analysis shows that the nationalist movement emerging in that context was often controlled by nationalist elites whose goals were similar to those of the colonial powers, resulting in resistance that was not entirely effective in achieving true liberation for the subaltern, particularly women.

The literature review above demonstrates that the short story "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" has not yet been examined using a discursive approach, as this article intends to do. Furthermore, the focus of the three previous studies using Spivak's perspective tends to focus on the experience of women as subalterns, particularly in the context of women and patriarchal exploitation. Meanwhile, this study provides an opportunity to analyze the experience of male characters as subalterns, which is rarely discussed in the context of Japanese colonialism. The previous studies also primarily emphasize physical and sexual exploitation. Through the material object of Idrus's "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*," this study instead offers a new focus on other material symbols, such as "*celana pendek*," which represent both limitation and symbolic resistance for the subaltern character.

In this study, the character Kusno in the story "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" is viewed as a representation of the subaltern. The term subaltern should not be synonymous with "oppressed" or "other." Furthermore, the term has a specific academic history and should not be reduced to a simplistic definition. The subaltern includes those with limited or no access to cultural imperialism, complicating their representation and voice (Spivak, 1994, p. 95).

In her essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1994), Spivak critiques postcolonial research approaches that focus on colonial issues or representations (Spivak, 1994, p. 47). Postcolonial studies demonstrate that societies previously colonized by imperial powers have been significantly influenced by colonialism or imperialism. One example is the phenomenon of anticolonial movements based on nationalism, which suggests that indigenous communities will resist colonial forces. However, such movements or ideologies ultimately normalize the ruling class's power and extend colonial power. The concept of nationalism appears to be an attempt to replicate power domination. This indicates that nationalism is a colonial product and results from imperialist or colonial ideologies.

Therefore, Spivak offers a deconstructive perspective to examine the presence of subaltern subjects by critiquing representatives who purport to understand the subaltern. According to Morton (2003), Spivak seeks to identify aspects of Derrida's work that can be employed for the long-term benefit of societies outside the "First World." The influence of Derrida's deconstruction serves as a critical foundation for Spivak to examine the issues and impacts of colonialism on Third World societies, not from an external standpoint but from within the societies themselves (Setiawan, 2018). Spivak emphasizes the provisional use of categories that are thought to be essential or fixed (for example, gender identity or race) are actually constructed and not fixed (Abdalkafor, 2015, p. 45). Spivak uses this approach in her engagement with feminism, where it is sometimes necessary to acknowledge essentialism in political practice in order to

achieve certain outcomes, even though theoretical deconstruction teaches that such essentialism can be dismantled.

Spivak's perspective critiques an anticolonial political movement dominated by elite nationalist groups. This movement exploits the struggles of the subaltern to attain a dominant position that, in terms of objectives, is fundamentally akin to colonialism. Such political discourse tends to represent these powerless groups as if they speak collectively as a unified political subject. However, for Spivak, coherent political identities always affect the dominant discourse representing these groups rather than transparent portraits of actual workers or women (i.e., subaltern groups) (Morton, 2003).

METHOD AND THEORY

This study is a qualitative descriptive analysis utilizing the material object of the short story *Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek* (Idrus, 2008) by Idrus and the formal object of Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial approach regarding the subaltern. In this research, the term subaltern refers to subjects or groups that are unable to voice their concerns. Spivak sees that the reality of a subject or group is a connectedness that is built by the relations of colonial power domination relations. In that context, Spivak specifically highlights the subject formation of "third world women" by Western feminists in the discourse of global political economy (1990, p. 8). This means that the deconstruction analysis method in this research is important.

The data collection method employed in this study uses the observation method to identify significant linguistic units. This method involves attentive listening and analysis of the language and narrative found within the text based on the theoretical concepts utilized in the research analysis (Faruk, 2012, p. 168).

Considering the theory used, this study employs a deconstructive analysis method to unpack the symbolic meanings at the narrative's center. Julian Kristeva (1980, p. 133) explains that deconstructive criticism highlights the limits of metaphysics in the process of signification (sign and meaning). Spivak's ongoing engagement with deconstruction has not only enabled her to produce a theoretical vocabulary with which to criticize the cultural, political and economic legacy of colonialism, but it has also allowed her to develop an ethic that is sensitive to the singular position of the subaltern (Stephen Morton, 2007, p. 69). Deconstruction is not only shown against writing, but all cultural statements because the whole statement is a text that itself already contains certain values, preconditions, ideologies, truths, and goals. Deconstruction is thus needed to identify hidden meanings related to power relations and resistance that are subtle in narratives, as well as to provide new interpretations of subaltern experiences. However, before the analysis, this research begins with a critical reading focused on minor characters or specific situations that illustrate how marginalization is formed. Additionally, this critical reading centers on narrative elements often silent or hidden within the short story, reflecting subordinates' experiences that are not always explicitly articulated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Representation of the Subaltern and the Hegemony of Colonial Power

The short story *Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek* (Idrus, 2008) narrates Kusno's life amidst World War II's global tensions. The story begins with Kusno receiving a pair of shorts as a gift from his father, coinciding with the day of the Japanese military attack on the American military base at Pearl Harbor. Despite the tense global political

situation, Pak Kusno—Kusno's father—feels happy because he can buy shorts for his son. At the age of 14, Kusno has just graduated from elementary school. He quickly applies for a job to repay his father's kindness. Armed with his new shorts, he believes that all types of employment will be available.

However, Kusno's hopes of securing a new job proved more challenging than anticipated. Many offices are not hiring due to the political and economic uncertainties stemming from the war. Ultimately, Kusno is compelled to accept a position as an opas with a meager salary. Amid his struggles and disappointment, Kusno feels trapped in misery and uncertain about his future.

Pak Kusno buta politik. Tak tahu ia, betapa besarnya arti penyerangan itu. Yang diketahuinya hanya, bahwa anaknya sudah tidak mempunyai celana lagi yang pantas dipakai. Setiap orang yang sedikit banyak kenal politik di seluruh dunia mengernyitkan keningnya, karena dendam, karena khawatir, karena marah. Tapi Pak Kusno tersenyum senang pada hari itu. Ia berhasil, apa yang disangkanya semua sesuatu yang tidak bisa, membelikan Kusno sebuah celana pendek.

Pada waktu itu Kusno berusia 14 tahun. Baru tamat sekolah rakyat. Sekarang hendak melamar pekerjaan. Dan dengan celana baru, rasanya baginya segala pekerjaan terbuka. Ia akan membuktikan pada ayahnya, bahwa ia adalah anak yang tahu membalas guna. Pendek kata, keluarga Kusno pada hari itu bergirang hati seperti belum pernah sebelumnya. Dan kabar-kabar tentang Pearl Harbour tidak bergema sedikitpun juga dalam hati orang-orang sederhana ini.

Demikian benarlah ucapan, hanya orang besar-besar yang mau perang, rakyat sederhana mau damai Cuma!

The excerpt above presents a narrative regarding the living conditions of Pak Kusno's family. This narrative highlights the family's precarious economic situation and illustrates that the Kusno family belongs to a group that lacks access to knowledge, dominating social-political discourse. Pak Kusno is depicted as a politically "blind" subject who does not comprehend the implications of the Pearl Harbor attack as a global event that alters the escalation of world politics. From Spivak's perspective on colonial hegemony, this ignorance is not Pak Kusno's fault; instead, it reflects a reduction of his position as part of the subaltern group. He does not have access to knowledge relevant to the global political and social situation.

On December 9, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor—specifically in Hawaii, which was the U.S. Navy Base—prompting Governor-General Tjarda Van Skarkenborgh Stachower to declare war on Japan via radio broadcast (Nurrahma, 2023) This retaliatory broadcast by the United States was perceived globally as a significant moment that would generate anxiety, resentment, and anger among politically aware groups or individuals. However, for Pak Kusno, the only important thing was purchasing a pair of shorts for his child. This reflects the information isolation experienced by individuals or groups like Pak Kusno, who focus on simple everyday issues while disconnected from broader political discourses.

What Pak Kusno understands is also transferred to the knowledge held by his son, Kusno. After receiving the new trousers from his father, Kusno, at 14 and freshly graduated from primary school, seeks to find a suitable job. Armed with his new trousers, he is confident he will quickly secure employment. Like his father, Kusno

lacks sufficient knowledge about the impact of war. Consequently, he is trapped within a self-created paradigm of prosperity. This prosperity is an illusion arising from the representation of the trousers. For Kusno and his family, trousers are not merely clothing; they represent symbolic capital that carries the potential for transforming self-hope, social recognition, and even dignity. However, Kusno overlooks the dominance of colonial power that dictates the fate of the lower class. Ultimately, the decent job Kusno aspires to eludes him. Instead, he works as a servant, perpetuating the hereditary occupation passed down through his family. The data below will reinforce how the impact of war or colonial political power influences and controls how the world operates, including the lives of lower-class groups.

Tapi Kusno tak selekas seperti sangkaannya mendapat pekerjaan. Kantor-kantor tahu, apa arti penyerangan pulau Mutiara itu. Mereka tidak menerima seorang pekerja baru pun juga lagi. Di atas kantor itu bergumpal awan hitam dan dari sela-sela awan itu menjulur muka malaikat maut.

Kusno terpaksa menurunkan barang dagangannya, dari juru tulis menjadi portir dan dari portir menjadi opas. Dan setelah sepuluh kantor dinaikinya, akhirnya berhasil juga ia mendapat pekerjaan...sebagai opas. Dengan gaji sepuluh rupiah sebulan.

Pak Kusno bersusah hati. Ia sendiri seorang opas. Mestikah anaknya menjadi opas lagi? Dan anak kusno kelak opas pula? Turun temurun menjadi opas? Tidak pernah tercipta-cita olehnya, keluarganya akan menjadi keluarga opas. Tapi, seperti juga orang-orang kampung lain dalam kesusahan, Pak Kusno ingat kepada tuhan, manusia berusaha, tuhan menentukan!

The condition of groups or subjects such as this gives rise to one of the critical concepts in Spivak's postcolonial studies: the subaltern. The subaltern is not only unheard but also lacks access to knowledge and informational spaces in which to speak. However, access to knowledge and informational spaces is crucial for them to understand or participate in the grand narratives that govern the world. Discourses such as war and politics are consumed only by those who possess power and knowledge. Pak Kusno and his family represent the lower-class groups living amid the turmoil of war. They have no control over their lives, not even their existence. Thus, all they can do is nurture hope. Read the following excerpt about how groups like Pak Kusno and his family are treated as objects of colonial politics.

Tidak, rakyat sederhana tidak mau perang, ia hanya mau hidup sederhana dan hidup bebas dari ketakutan esok hari tidak mempunyai celana.

Tapi orang tinggi-tinggi dan besar-besar mau perang, yang satu untuk demokrasi dan yang lain untuk kemakmuran bersama di Asia Timur Raya.

Kusno tidak tahu arti demokrasi dan perkataan kemakmuran sangat menarik hatinya. Ia sebenarnya ingat kepada celananya. Kemakmuran baginya celana. Dan sebab itu disambutnya tentara Jepang dengan peluk cium dan salaman tangan.

Dan seperti kebanyakan bangsa Indonesia hidup dengan pengharapan kemerdekaan, Kusno hidup dengan pengharapan akan celana baru, terus-menerus berharap selama tiga setengah tahun.

This excerpt can be identified as illustrating how Kusno becomes a political object of colonialism. Democracy is a concept championed by the Allied nations, particularly the United States and other Western countries. In contrast, Japan promotes the prosperity of Greater East Asia. These represent two opposing ideologies in the global politics of World War II. In other words, colonial politics instrumentalizes subaltern groups like Kusno as propaganda objects to create an illusion of prosperity, welfare, and even independence while simultaneously obscuring the primary objectives of colonial political propaganda, which is part of a strategy to reinforce dominance. Such propaganda becomes increasingly hegemonic due to the subaltern's limited access to knowledge and information. The statement that "...only the powerful want war, ordinary people want peace..." reflects how marginalized societies do not understand or even care about the goals or ideologies that incite war. Consequently, the awareness that arises for subaltern groups—such as Pak Kusno and his family—remains merely a hope for peace and a tranquil life.

Subaltern and Failed Existential Symbolic Resistance

Kusno, as a subaltern in the story, appears to take no resistant actions to voice his concerns or be heard. Engaging in resistant actions is precisely how hope for liberation from a hegemonic symbolic order can manifest. However, the following analysis will reveal that Kusno makes a "silent" effort to enact counter-hegemonic actions. The deconstruction offered by Spivak facilitates such readings. For Spivak, deconstruction is an approach that disrupts and dismantles established systems of meaning, particularly authoritarian systems. She refers to deconstruction as a negative science because its aim is not merely to construct new meanings but to dismantle the hierarchies and dominant meanings that exclude subaltern groups. The deconstruction of despair and symbolic play, such as "*celana*" (shorts), indicates a form of resistance that allows the discourse of domination to be challenged by the subaltern. The despair reflected in Kusno's attitude of persevering in life and the symbolism of shorts as an identity marker suggests that Kusno's resistance is existential rather than overtly confrontational.

Idrus, as the author, skillfully positions the symbol or sign of "*celana*" as a representation of subaltern existence. For Kusno's family, the shorts—despite their simplicity—embody what they consider vital in their daily lives. Observe how the Kusno family prioritizes buying shorts over other needs amidst the turmoil of war. The shorts serve as a representation of their hopes, successes, and existence in the world. The term "*celana*" effectively positions itself in opposition to words like "democracy," "prosperity," and "justice," which are propagated by colonial states.

For Kusno, the shorts symbolize simple happiness and a sense of achievement, even though they are misaligned with the dynamics of global politics. In a similar vein, for subalterns like Kusno and his father, "democracy," "prosperity," or "justice" offered through war do not address their existential concerns. Their existential issue revolves around sustaining their presence, existence, and life goals while meeting their daily subsistence needs. Although Kusno does not engage overtly in the discourse of colonial power, he still possesses a means of expressing resistance. Through his psychological struggle, Kusno positions the shorts as a symbol of his existence. This is reflected in his continued hope to own a new pair of shorts, even when he later realizes that this hope

may never materialize. Even at the peak of his suffering, Kusno strives to maintain his dignity by refusing to sell the shorts.

Dan seperti kebanyakan bangsa Indonesia hidup dengan pengharapan kemerdekaan, Kusno hidup dengan pengharapan akan celana baru, terus-menerus berharap selama tiga setengah tahun.

Tapi seperti kemerdekaan itu, celana itu pun tak terbayang. Dan waktu kusno melepaskan harapannya itu, celana 1001 itu sudah tidak seperti celana lagi. Di sana-sini benangnya sudah keluar dan apa yang dulunya putih, sekarang kuning kehitam-hitaman. Dan karena itu tidak pantas lagi dipakai oleh seorang opas. Waktu Kusno memberanikan hatinya meminta kepada sepunya, ia di bentak demikian hebatnya sehingga pada waktu itu hilang semangatnya.

.....

Pada suatu hari Kusno sakit kepala. Ia tahu, bahwa sakit kepala itu segera akan hilang, jika ia dapat mengisi perutnya. Dua hari dua malam tak ada lain yang dimakannya selain daun-daun kayu. Ada terlayang di pikirannya untuk menjual celana 1001 itu, guna membeli sekedar makanan yang pantas dimakan manusia. Tapi lekas dibuangnya pikiran itu. Jika celana itu dijualnya, perutnya kenyang buat beberapa detik, tapi sesudah itu dengan apa akan ditutupnya auratnya? Sekali pula ada niatnya untuk mencuri barang orang lain, tapi Tuhan berkata, jauhi dirimu dari curi mencuri. Dan keluarga kusno turun temurun takut kepada tuhan itu, sungguhpun belum pernah dilihatnya.

Begitulah kusno tidak menjual celana, tidak mencuri, sering sakit kepala dan hidup dengan daun-daun kayu. Tapi ia hidup terus, sengsara memang, tapi hidup dengan bangga.

From a deconstructive perspective, shorts represent a form of resistance, albeit not through overt political and confrontational means. Kusno and his shorts do not refer to the collective prosperity understood by the (elite) power as something grand linked to economic and political control. Instead, the broader meaning of prosperity is distilled into a primary, simple material object, such as the ability to own decent shorts. This, in turn, dismantles the illusion of colonial prosperity that has never materialized and highlights the growing chasm between colonial power interests and the lower classes. In this way, Kusno is not entirely silent; he speaks through the symbol of shorts that resonates with the daily life of the lower class rather than through abstract ideas about democracy or prosperity in East Asia.

However, the symbolism of shorts that Idrus embeds in this short story also possesses an ambivalent side. On one hand, the shorts represent a source of pride, while on the other, they reveal the subject's powerlessness. This powerlessness takes the form of hope that attempts to defer reality. Kusno's hope for new shorts symbolizes a postponement of the bitter reality he faces. The aspiration for a better future represents a deferral of meaning, in which dreams and hopes continuously obscure the reality that Kusno confronts.

Tentang celana kepar 1001 itu, tak ada yang diceritakan lagi. Pada suatu kali ia pasti hilang dari muka bumi. Dan mungkinkah ia bersama-sama dengan kusno hilang dari muka bumi ini?

Tapi bagaimanapun juga, Kusno tak akan putus asa. Ia dilahirkan dalam kesengsaraan, hidup bersama kesengsaraan. Dan meskipun celana 1001-nya lenyap jadi topo, Kusno akan berjuang terus melawan kesengsaraan, biarpun hanya guna mendapatkan sebuah celana kepar 1001 yang lain.

Hanya yang belum juga dapat dipahami Kusno ialah, mengapa selalu saja masih ada peperangan. Kusno merasa seorang yang dikorbankan.

The excerpt illustrates the contradiction between hope and reality in Kusno's life. Through a critical approach based on Spivak's framework, it becomes evident that this hope reflects the subject's powerlessness. Individuals like Kusno lack access to comprehend the political narratives stemming from the power structures that cause their suffering. Although Kusno ultimately chooses to cling to hope, implicitly, he surrenders his fate to colonial power. In Spivak's critical analysis, Kusno experiences depoliticization. He loses the awareness necessary to oppose the oppressive colonial forces and instead accepts that this suffering is an integral part of his life. Spivak elaborates that depoliticization is a strategy the colonial power employs to manipulate the minds of subordinate subjects, rendering them unresisting and resigned to a life of marginalization and powerlessness.

Based on the analysis of the data presented, it can be concluded that the character Kusno in Idrus's short story "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" does not adequately depict the subaltern's liberation from the dominance of colonial power. The existential resistance demonstrated by Kusno is trapped by his powerlessness concerning hope for the future. This powerlessness ultimately leads him to a state of depoliticization. Kusno loses his political consciousness due to the limitations imposed on colonial power's circulation of knowledge and information and his superficial and materialistic hopes. This condition perpetuates the hegemonic position of colonial power, dictating the fate of subaltern groups based solely on the interests of that power.

CONSLUSION

In the analysis, it has been elucidated that the symbolic resistance enacted by Kusno does not alter his status as a subaltern. This is due to the ambivalent nature of Kusno's symbolic resistance. On the one hand, the "celana" (shorts) serves as an existential symbol representing hope, success, and existence, simultaneously opposing terms such as "democracy," "prosperity," and "justice," which are propagated by colonial states. However, the shorts also signify Kusno's powerlessness and superficial, materialistic aspirations. Ultimately, "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" reflects the deferred reality that Kusno experiences. In other words, the resistance demonstrated by Kusno does not provide a discourse of unconditional liberation for the subaltern.

Therefore, it can be concluded that through Spivak's reading, the discourse offered by Idrus's "*Kisah Sebuah Celana Pendek*" remains entangled in the power hegemony. The resistance Kusno represents through his hope for a new pair of shorts signifies a deferral of meaning regarding the reality that ultimately reveals his life is dictated by the dominant power. Thus, Kusno's actions consistently culminate in powerlessness and resignation, suggesting that the power itself eventually determines the fate and existence of the subaltern.

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