

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter discusses the theories that are related and useful in the continuation of this research.

2.1 Previous Studies

Several prior studies have investigated *This Earth of Mankind* using postcolonial frameworks, offering valuable perspectives on themes of power, identity, and resistance though few address the intertwined nature of love, identity, and tragedy in one unified analysis.

One notable example is the recent article by *Ningsih, Karomah, Nabila, & Mas'odi (2025)* in the *Student Research Journal*, titled “*Analisis Ideologi Kolonialisme Dalam Novel Bumi Manusia.*” Using a descriptive-analytical method, the authors apply theories from Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak to demonstrate how Pramoedya portrays structural inequalities and the conflict between colonial power and native agency. A sample excerpt from their analysis (Chapter IV) reads:

Data 1: Minke, as a native, was accepted into HBS, a school for Europeans. This shows the existence of cultural hybridity because Minke, who is a native, can be in a European environment. However, in that environment, Minke still feels discrimination, as seen when his European friends mock him.

Analysis: This proves that although Minke is given access to a European school, colonial ideology still positions natives as inferior. The hybridity experienced by Minke does not eliminate the discrimination he faces. This aligns with Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, where hybridity contains both acceptance and rejection.

This aligns closely with my interest in how Pramoedya stages resistance through personal relationships, though their study emphasizes identity and ideology more than emotional or tragic dimensions.

Another study by Windiyarti (2014) examines multiculturalism in the novel, focusing on Nyai Ontosoroh's hybrid cultural identity as a symbol of the marginalized native experience. Meanwhile, Gari et al. (202X) provide deep character analysis of Minke, Annelies, and Nyai, highlighting how Minke embodies resistance to injustice.

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Susanto (2018) provides an insightful reading of identity construction in Pramoedya's works, drawing on Frantz Fanon's theory

of colonial psychology. He finds that Minke's position as a colonized intellectual represents the fractured identity of natives educated in Western systems but excluded from their privileges. Similarly, Wibowo (2021) emphasizes the theme of resistance, showing how the characters confront injustice through personal and collective acts that undermine colonial authority.

Beyond Indonesian scholarship, several postcolonial theorists also provide useful comparative insights. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002), in *The Empire Writes Back*, argue that postcolonial literature often rewrites the narratives of empire by foregrounding the voices of the colonized. Their ideas help situate *This Earth of Mankind* within a global canon of resistance literature. Robert J.C. Young (2001) further contextualizes postcolonialism as a historical and cultural project that destabilizes colonial authority, which resonates with Pramoedya's critique of Dutch domination.

In addition, comparative studies of Southeast Asian literature also highlight similar struggles. For instance, José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) from the Philippines has been widely studied as a nationalist text exposing colonial injustice under Spanish rule.

Scholars such as Anderson (2006) have noted how works like Rizal's and Pramoedya's contribute to the emergence of national consciousness by blending personal narratives with political critique.

Gap in the literature: These studies offer valuable insights into ideological critique, hybridity, and cultural identity. However, none integrate the emotional theme of love and its tragic dimensions with identity and structural violence into a cohesive analytical framework. My research fills this gap by exploring how love becomes a site of resistance and tragedy under colonial power, using four complementary theories: Eva Illouz (love), Frantz Fanon (identity), Homi Bhabha (hybridity), and Johan Galtung (structural violence).

2.2 Indonesian Postcolonial Literature Context

Indonesian literature during and after the colonial period reflects complex negotiations between traditional values and imposed Western frameworks. Scholars such as Teeuw (1994) and Foulcher (2000) have established that Indonesian writers of the post-independence era, particularly Pramoedya, developed distinctive narrative strategies to address colonial trauma.

Anderson (2006) in "Imagined Communities" provides crucial context for understanding how Indonesian national consciousness emerged partly through literary expression. Pramoedya's *Buru Quartet*,

according to Lane (2003), represents "the most significant attempt in Indonesian literature to reconstruct the psychological and cultural foundations of colonial resistance."

2.2.1 Theory of Love by Eva Illouz

Eva Illouz (2007, 2012) argues that love is not merely a private, emotional experience, but a phenomenon shaped by social, cultural, and institutional forces. According to her, emotions are deeply embedded in social structures, meaning that even intimate feelings such as love cannot be separated from broader systems of law, economy, and ideology. In this perspective, love is socially constructed and regulated, rather than existing as a purely spontaneous or natural emotion.

Illouz highlights the idea that modern love is deeply influenced by institutions that establish boundaries of legitimacy. For instance, marriage, family, and legal systems play a crucial role in determining which relationships are recognized and which are erased. In her book *Why Love Hurts* (2012), she emphasizes that love is entangled with systems of power and inequality. This is particularly relevant in colonial contexts, where law and social hierarchy often dictate whose love is visible, valid, and respected.

She also introduces the concept of the *institutionalization of love*. This term refers to the way love becomes tied to bureaucratic and

legal structures, turning what should be a personal experience into a matter of regulation and control. Illouz explains that the boundaries of acceptable love are not neutral; rather, they reflect the values and interests of those in power. As a result, love can both reproduce and resist systems of domination.

In the context of colonial societies, Illouz's theory is highly relevant. Relationships across race, class, and legal status are often shaped by discriminatory laws that invalidate native customs and prioritize colonial authority. Romantic and maternal love, therefore, are not merely emotional bonds but also political acts. For example, a marriage between a native and a European, or the maternal care of a concubine, may be deeply genuine yet denied legitimacy by colonial law. Illouz's framework helps illuminate how these relationships simultaneously embody intimacy and resistance, as they challenge the systems that seek to erase them.

Thus, Illouz's theory provides a crucial foundation for analyzing the theme of love in *This Earth of Mankind*. It allows this study to interpret love not only as a personal emotion but also as a site of negotiation, conflict, and resistance within colonial structures. This framework underpins the following sub-sections on love and resistance as well as love and legal boundaries in the novel.

2.2.2 Love and Resistance

While love under colonial rule is often constrained by legal and social barriers, it can also become a subtle yet powerful form of resistance. In *This Earth of Mankind*, love is not always portrayed as passive or submissive to the colonial order; instead, it sometimes becomes a way for characters to challenge and defy those very restrictions.

Eva Illouz's framework helps to understand how emotions, though shaped by institutions, can also inspire acts that go against dominant power structures. When love exists between people whom the colonial system seeks to separate whether because of race, class, or legal status it automatically carries a political dimension. Such relationships undermine the idea that colonial authority can fully dictate human connections.

In the novel, Minke's love for Annelies is more than a romantic attachment; it is also a refusal to accept the Dutch colonial view that native customs and unions are inferior. By marrying Annelies through native tradition, Minke affirms his cultural identity and rejects the notion that colonial law is the only source of

legitimacy. Similarly, Nyai Ontosoroh's devotion to her daughter is an act of resistance against a legal system that denies her status as a mother. Her efforts to protect and educate Annelies, despite her lack of legal recognition, defy the intended subjugation of native women in colonial society.

This form of resistance is not always loud or confrontational. It often happens in the quiet persistence of love that refuses to disappear despite institutional attempts to erase it. In this way, love becomes both personal and political an intimate act that disrupts the intended order of colonial control.

Having outlined Eva Illouz's theory that love is socially constructed and shaped by institutional power, the following subsections will examine how this framework helps interpret the representation of love in *This Earth of Mankind*, particularly in relation to resistance and legal boundaries.

2.2.3 Love and Legal Boundaries

In a colonial society, love does not exist in a vacuum it is deeply affected, and often limited, by the boundaries set by law. In

This Earth of Mankind, legal structures are not neutral; they function to maintain the colonial hierarchy and to determine which relationships are legitimate and which are invisible.

Eva Illouz's perspective on the institutionalization of love explains how the state's legal apparatus shapes and constrains intimate relationships. In the Dutch East Indies, colonial laws did not simply regulate property or commerce; they extended into the personal sphere, deciding whose love could be recognized and whose could be erased.

Minke and Annelies' marriage serves as a key example. Although they marry according to native customs, their union is considered invalid in the eyes of colonial law because it is not registered through Dutch procedures. This legal non-recognition has devastating consequences: the marriage is treated as if it never happened, allowing the court to separate them without legal resistance. Minke's personal loss is thus a direct result of legal boundaries designed to uphold colonial dominance.

Similarly, Nyai Ontosoroh's motherhood is not acknowledged because she is a concubine without formal legal status. Her love and

care for Annelies are disregarded in court, highlighting how legal frameworks can erase emotional bonds when they do not align with the colonial definition of legitimacy.

By illustrating these cases, Pramoedya reveals that the law is not a neutral arbiter but an active participant in sustaining oppression. Love, when it falls outside the boundaries approved by the legal system, is not just ignored it is actively dismantled

2.2.4 Identity Theory by Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha

Frantz Fanon (1961, 1967) is one of the most influential thinkers in postcolonial studies, especially in relation to the psychology of the colonized subject. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon argues that colonialism does not only exploit material resources but also deeply shapes the consciousness of colonized people. He introduces the idea of the “colonized intellectual,” a figure who has been educated in the colonizer’s system and internalized its values, but who is never fully accepted as equal. This figure lives in a state of double consciousness: torn between the cultural world of the colonizer and the traditions of their own people. For Fanon, this

fractured identity is both a form of alienation and a potential site of resistance.

Homi Bhabha (1994), meanwhile, expands the discussion of identity through his concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry. According to Bhabha, colonial encounters create “in-between” spaces where new identities emerge, blending elements of both colonizer and colonized cultures. Hybridity is not simply assimilation, but a negotiation that produces something unstable and often disruptive to colonial authority. Ambivalence refers to the contradictory feelings and positions that colonized subjects occupy they may admire the colonizer while simultaneously resisting them. Mimicry describes how colonized individuals imitate the colonizer’s language, manners, or customs, but in ways that never achieve full equivalence, thus unsettling colonial hierarchies.

Taken together, Fanon and Bhabha provide complementary perspectives on identity in colonial contexts. Fanon emphasizes the psychological trauma and alienation caused by colonial domination, while Bhabha highlights the fluid, hybrid nature of identity that emerges in cultural contact zones. Their theories show that identity

under colonialism is never fixed, but fragmented, contested, and continually reshaped.

This theoretical foundation is crucial for analyzing the characters in *This Earth of Mankind*. Minke's experience as a Western-educated Javanese intellectual illustrates Fanon's "colonized intellectual," while Nyai Ontosoroh's negotiation between her native position and her acquired knowledge embodies Bhabha's hybridity and ambivalence. These theories thus provide the lens through which this study examines identity in Pramoedya's novel.

With Fanon's concept of the colonized intellectual and Bhabha's notions of hybridity and ambivalence as the theoretical background, the next section explores how identity is represented under colonialism and how these dynamics appear in Pramoedya's narrative.

2.2.5 Identity under Colonialism

Colonialism does not only control land and resources but also deeply affects the way people see themselves. For colonized subjects, identity is often shaped through a constant tension between imposed colonial categories and their own cultural roots. Frantz Fanon (1967)

explains that colonial education and culture create what he calls the condition of the “colonized intellectual.” Natives who receive colonial education may gain knowledge and prestige, but they are never fully accepted by the colonizers. At the same time, they may also feel alienated from their own community, producing an ongoing crisis of identity.

Homi Bhabha (1994) extends this discussion through his concept of hybridity and ambivalence. He argues that colonial identity is never fixed but exists in a space of “in-betweenness,” where colonized subjects are both resisting and imitating colonial culture at the same time. This hybridity shows how identity under colonialism is not simple, but layered and shifting, often creating psychological and cultural conflicts.

In the context of *This Earth of Mankind*, these theories are important because the characters particularly Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh struggle with how they are defined by colonial authority while also asserting their own sense of self. Their stories illustrate how identity under colonialism is marked by conflict, negotiation, and resistance.

2.2.6 Identity of Theory Tragedy by Johan Galtung

The concept of tragedy has a long tradition in literary studies. In classical Aristotelian terms, tragedy is understood as the downfall of a protagonist due to a personal flaw (*hamartia*) or a fatal error in judgment (*Poetics*, Aristotle, 335 BCE). This form of tragedy emphasizes the role of individual agency, where suffering is the consequence of character weakness, moral failing, or mistaken choices. The tragic hero, in this sense, experiences loss and downfall as a result of internal causes rather than external structures.

However, Johan Galtung (1969) redefines tragedy within a modern sociological and political framework through his theory of structural violence. Unlike direct physical violence, structural violence is embedded in laws, institutions, and social systems that systematically deny people equal rights and opportunities. In this sense, tragedy is no longer seen as an outcome of personal weakness, but as the inevitable product of oppressive systems that limit human freedom. The suffering of individuals is thus a reflection of the inequalities built into social and political structures.

Applying Galtung's concept to literature allows us to recognize forms of tragedy that transcend individual characters and point instead to systemic injustices. In colonial contexts, tragedy often arises not because of a protagonist's flaw but because of discriminatory legal systems, racial hierarchies, and institutionalized oppression. The colonial subject suffers loss, alienation, or grief not as a matter of personal failure but as the unavoidable consequence of existing within a violent system.

This distinction is crucial for understanding Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind*. The tragedies experienced by Minke, Annelies, and Nyai Ontosoroh are not the result of their personal decisions or weaknesses, but of the Dutch colonial legal system that invalidates their love, erases their identities, and dismantles their family bonds. By using Galtung's framework, tragedy in the novel can be seen as a collective, structural experience, fundamentally different from the individualized downfall of classical tragedy. In this way, Pramoedya situates personal suffering within a broader critique of systemic colonial violence.

After contrasting classical notions of tragedy with Galtung's structural perspective, the following section will analyze how tragedy is portrayed in *This Earth of Mankind*, particularly through collective grief and cultural disruption as consequences of colonial violence.

2.2.7 Collective Grief and Cultural Disruption

The consequences of structural violence extend beyond individual suffering to the community as a whole. In the novel, the loss of Annelies is not only a personal tragedy for Minke and Nyai Ontosoroh but also a source of collective mourning for the household and the broader community around them.

Pramoedya uses evocative imagery such as the “grieving walls” of the house to show that colonial interventions fracture more than just families; they disrupt the social and cultural fabric of entire communities. This grief becomes an inherited trauma, echoing across generations and shaping collective identity.

In Galtung's terms, this is the cultural dimension of structural violence: the erosion of communal bonds and the normalization of loss under oppressive systems. The portrayal in *Data* 23–25 in Chapter IV

demonstrates that grief, in a colonial setting, is both personal and political it is a shared burden that testifies to the pervasive reach of colonial power.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study employs an integrated theoretical framework that combines postcolonial theory, feminist criticism, and narrative analysis to examine the interconnected themes of love, identity, and tragedy in *This Earth of Mankind*. The framework is designed to capture the complexity of colonial experience while analyzing how personal relationships and individual development reflect broader historical and political processes.

The theoretical integration follows three primary analytical movements: first, postcolonial theory provides the foundational framework for understanding how colonial power structures shape individual and collective experience; second, theories of love and identity examine how personal relationships and individual development both reflect and challenge colonial constraints; and third, tragedy theory analyzes how systematic oppression creates suffering that transcends individual agency while providing foundations for resistance and transformation.

This study employs what Spivak (1999) terms "strategic essentialism" - using multiple theoretical lenses to avoid the trap of singular interpretive frameworks. The integration works as follows:

- Primary lens: Postcolonial theory (Fanon, Bhabha) for cultural and psychological analysis
- Secondary lens: Feminist critique (through Nyai's character) for gender dynamics
- Tertiary lens: Structural violence theory (Galtung) for institutional analysis
- Integrative lens: Love sociology (Illouz) for emotional-political connections

This integrated approach allows the study to examine how Pramoedya employs personal narratives to illuminate broader political and historical processes, demonstrating how individual experience serves as a lens for understanding colonial oppression and the possibilities for liberation.