
**REPRESENTATIONS OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA AND SOCIAL
VIOLENCE IN THE NOVEL *PEREMPUAN BERSAMPUR MERAH*:
STUART HALL'S PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of collective trauma and social violence in the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* by Intan Andaru using the perspective of Stuart Hall's theory of representation. The focus of the study is directed at how literary texts reconstruct social violence events related to the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in Banyuwangi and form the meaning of trauma in the social space of society. The method used is qualitative descriptive, with a literary-sociological approach, particularly the study of cultural representation.

The results of the study show that this novel reflects social reality, producing meaning through representational practices that involve discourses of fear, social stigma, and accusation-based violence. Social violence is represented in the form of mass violence, symbolic violence, and marginalization of individuals who are stigmatized as *dukun santet*. Collective trauma is constructed through the narrative of loss, fear, and helplessness of people who experience situations of systemic violence. These representations show that violence is shaped by social marking systems that operate within society.

The novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* serves as a medium for the production of social meaning, revealing how collective trauma and social violence are represented and negotiated in cultural spaces. This study emphasizes that literary works play an important role in shaping critical awareness of the history of violence and social dynamics. Keywords: collective trauma, literary sociology, representation, social violence,

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are understood as products of the author's imagination, serving as a medium for representing social reality and recording the dynamics of people's lives. Through language, characters, conflicts, and constructed narratives, literary works present social, cultural, and historical experiences in an aesthetic form that readers can understand. In this context, literature serves an important role as a space for social reflection because it can highlight various humanitarian problems, social inequality, violence, and collective trauma in society. Literary works are often seen as a representation practice that describes reality and forms meaning in that reality.

The approach of literary sociology demonstrates a close relationship between literary works and society. Ratna (2015) explained that literary works are born of social reality because authors are part of society and draw on social experiences as material for creating literary works. Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology emphasizes that the relationship between authors and society strongly determines the content of works. The type of society the author addresses affects how the author represents social reality in literary texts (Damono, 1978).

One of the contemporary Indonesian literary works that represents the complexity of social reality is the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* by Intan Andaru. This novel presents a narrative of the life of the people of Banyuwangi, which is motivated by the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in 1998. This event has become one of the dark histories in Indonesia because it gave rise to a wave of social violence, mass fear, and stigma against individuals who are considered to be related to supernatural practices. It is a representation of the social experience of people living in collective power, stigma, and trauma. In this novel, violence is present in physical form and the production of stigma, fear, and social marginalization experienced by society. This situation shows that social violence works through complex social and cultural mechanisms.

The novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* presents historical events as background and shows how collective trauma shapes people's lives. The trauma arises through the experiences of loss, fear, and helplessness experienced by the characters in the novel due to social situations full of suspicion and violence. The fear of being accused of being a witch doctor creates a tense social condition and gives birth to acts of mass violence committed on the basis of prejudice. In this context, the novel shows that trauma is an individual and social experience that is inherited and remembered collectively by the community.

The problem of collective trauma and social violence in literary works is important to study because it can shape the reader's understanding of historical reality. Literary works produce

meaning through certain representations. Hall states that representation is the process of producing meaning through language, symbols, and signs used in culture (Hall, 1997). Representation serves to reflect reality and shape how society understands a social event. The violence and trauma depicted in the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* can be understood as the result of the construction of meaning through narratives, characters, and various cultural symbols in the text.

The study of Stuart Hall's representation is relevant in this study because it is able to explain the novel that represents the social fear, stigma, and violence that developed in Banyuwangi society during the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet*. Through this representation, the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* shows that society builds meaning to the terms *dukun santet*, *ninjas*, and traditional medicine practices such as *suwuk*. These social labels function as markers of identity and become a tool of legitimacy for acts of social violence. In this context, representation works as a cultural practice that produces ideological meanings regarding who is considered dangerous and who should be removed from the social environment.

In addition to representing social violence, this novel contains various elements of Banyuwangi's local culture, such as the *Gandrung* Dance, the *Kebo-keboan* tradition, and various beliefs of the Using people. The presence of these elements shows that the cultural identity of the Banyuwangi people is shaped by the relationship among tradition, spirituality, and the community's social life. However, amid this cultural richness, the novel reveals social conflicts born of collective fear and prejudice. This shows that culture is not always a space of harmony. Sometimes, culture becomes an arena for the production of stigma and social violence.

Previous research on *the novel Perempuan Besampur Merah* has focused on cultural values (Violentina & Subandiyah, 2022), criticism of humanity (Saputra, 2023), social values (Dewi et al., 2022), ideological clashes (Sulistiyo et al., 2022), inner conflicts of the main characters (Fachrudin, 2020), and literary ecology (Sundari et al., 2021). However, research that specifically examines the representation of collective trauma and social violence through Stuart Hall's representation still does not exist. This research is considered important because it will examine how novels construct meanings of trauma, fear, and social violence in the context of Banyuwangi's 1998 history. Through the study of Stuart Hall's theory of representation, this research is expected to contribute to the development of literary studies, especially in understanding the relationship between literature, collective trauma, and the construction of social meaning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to examine Stuart Hall's representation from the perspective of literary sociology. This method is used because the research focuses on the meaning, interpretation, and understanding of the representation of collective trauma and social violence in the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* by Intan Andaru. The approach of literary sociology is used to see the relationship between literary works and the social reality of society, especially the events of social violence related to the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in Banyuwangi in 1998.

The main data source in this study is the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* by Intan Andaru published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2019. The research data consists of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, and narratives from the novel that represent collective trauma, social violence, community stigma, social fear, and the cultural practices of the Banyuwangi community. In addition to primary data, this study uses secondary data sources in the form of books, journals, scientific articles, and other references related to Stuart Hall's theory of representation, literary sociology, collective trauma, and the history of the massacre of *dukun santet* in Banyuwangi in 1998.

Data collection is carried out through reading and note-taking. The researcher reads the novel intensively and repeatedly to understand the story's overall structure, the social context, and the meaning embedded in the text. The researcher notes important parts related to the focus of the research, in particular, the data that shows the representation of collective trauma and social violence in the novel. The data are classified by the problem category found in the text. The data analysis technique in this study uses Stuart Hall's representation analysis. The analysis was carried out through three stages, namely: (1) identification of forms of representation of collective trauma and social violence in novels, including physical violence, symbolic violence, social stigma, mass fear, and marginalization of certain characters, (2) analysis of the process of production of meaning through narratives, characters, dialogues, symbols, and cultural backgrounds used by the author in representing these social events, (3) interpretation of the ideological meanings that appear in the text, especially related to power relations, the practice of social stigma, and the construction of fear in Banyuwangi society during the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in 1998.

The validity of the data in this study was established through triangulation of theories and references. Theoretical triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of the analysis using Stuart Hall's representation theory with concepts in literary sociology and social trauma studies. Reference triangulation was conducted using relevant literature to strengthen the

interpretation of the research data. This method is expected to produce an in-depth analysis of the representation of collective trauma and social violence in the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* by Intan Andaru.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Novels as a System of Social Representation

The novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* by Intan Andaru is present as a work of fiction that tells the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in Banyuwangi in 1998, functioning as a social representation system that produces meaning regarding trauma, violence, and collective fear in society. In Hall's perspective, representation is not only the process of reflecting reality as a whole. Representation can be understood as the practice of producing meaning through language, signs, and cultural symbols (Hall, 1997). The social reality depicted in the novel is a reflection of historical events and the author's narrative construction of the social experience of the people of Banyuwangi.

From the perspective of the character Sari, the author builds a narrative of fear that slowly develops into a form of social trauma. The choice of the first-person perspective strengthens the reader's emotional closeness to the character's experience of violence. When Sari's house is invaded by a mob that accuses her father of being a witch doctor, the reader can see violence as a social fact and feel the psychological tension experienced by the character.

That night, I saw with my own eyes, that they dragged you – taking you away from us. The man who howled for help was not bothered at all. Even my close neighbors who woke up from the hustle and bustle that night could do nothing but look at us with their mouths shut. (*Perempuan Besampur Merah*: 65)

The language used by the author creates an atmosphere of panic, helplessness, and social anxiety that pervades society. In the novel, violence is built through social symbols that affirm the atmosphere of collective fear. The *figure of a ninja*, depicted in all black, becomes an anonymous symbol of social terror, lacking clarity of identity. The presence of these symbols shows how society lives in a condition of uncertainty and paranoia.

I found our house surrounded by unknown people. The very front, dressed in black and with a head covering so that I didn't recognize them at all. (*Perempuan Besampur Merah*: 65)

Hall explains that representation operates through a system of signs that shape how society understands reality. In this context, *ninjas* can be interpreted as murderers and collectively produced symbols of social fear.

The author seeks to present various elements of Banyuwangi's local culture, such as the *Gandrung Dance*, *Kebo-keboan*, and *suwuk* practices, as part of constructing the community's social reality. The presence of these cultural elements shows that the identity of the Banyuwangi people is shaped by the interplay among spirituality, tradition, and social life. However, in a social situation filled with fear, these elements shift in meaning.

It was very painful. I remember that you often received guests who asked you to nurse a child who had a seizure. They did not come to my house to ask you to send a disaster to others. I know that, because I am always by his side when you receive guests and do treatment. What are these people really saying? Who keep inferring and spreading news that they never really know (*Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, 134-135).

Tukang suwuk is a term in Javanese culture that refers to a person who has expertise or practice in performing *suwuk* or treating using certain mantras or prayers. This term is often associated with spiritual practices or traditional medicine that use mystical or spiritual elements. Perceptions of *suwuk* can vary depending on context and a particular community's views.

On the one hand, there are people who consider *suwuk practitioners* to be spiritual practitioners or alternative medicine practitioners who can help overcome various physical or spiritual problems. Perceptions of *suwuk* practitioners can vary across society because they are shaped by the beliefs and experiences of certain individuals or groups regarding spiritual practices or traditional medicine. Some societies hold negative views, associating *suwuk* practitioners with *santet* or other religious practices considered incorrect or misleading. The practice of *suwuk*, which was originally understood as traditional medicine, has turned into a source of social stigma because it is associated with the practice of *santet*. This shows that cultural meaning is dynamic and shaped by the social discourse that develops within society. The novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* shows that literary works serve as spaces for the production of social meaning. The author seeks to document historical events and develop a perspective on the violence, stigma, and social trauma that occurred in Banyuwangi society in 1998.

Representation of Social Violence in Novels

Social violence is the dominant representation in the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah*. The violence is carried out physically, through social stigma, exclusion, and collective fear that develops in society. From Stuart Hall's perspective, the representation of violence operates through the production of meanings shaped by specific social discourses. Violence is not born

naturally; violence is produced by social systems that construct *harmful* categories against certain individuals or groups.

One form of violence represented in the novel is mass violence against individuals accused of being *dukun santet*. Sari's father, who works as a *witch* doctor, becomes a victim of violence because society associates traditional medicine practices with black magic. The accusation develops into a social legitimacy to commit murder. In this context, society no longer needs rational evidence because fear has become a widely believed social truth.

The problem of social violence can be understood as part of social problems arising from specific social processes and conditions. According to Soekanto (2015), crime and violation of social norms are related to social structures, community relations, and collective conditions that develop in a community. In the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, the act of mass violence against individuals accused of being *dukun santet* shows how social fear and collective stigma can give birth to legitimacy against the practice of violence in society. This situation shows that social violence is a product of social construction shaped by social relations, collective prejudices, and specific societal value systems.

Mass violence in the novel shows a society that loses the ability to think critically when in a social situation filled with paranoia. The author describes a society that is easily provoked by the issue of witchcraft and ninja terror. The news, spread by word of mouth, creates a social panic that encourages acts of collective violence. This situation shows that social violence can be produced by a social system that builds fear continuously.

In addition to physical violence, the novel also represents symbolic violence through the use of social labels such as *dukun santet*, *ninjas*, and *dangerous people*. These labels serve as stigmatizing tools that separate certain individuals from society. In Hall's theory, language has ideological power because it can shape how society views reality. When a person has been labeled *a witch doctor*, society will not see the person as an ordinary human being; society will consider the person as a threat to be eliminated.

"They were killed. Not only Mr. Muhidin, but also his son and wife. The corpse..." He began to take a deep breath and shook his head, his eyes closed, "Oh Allah, it's a pity, ma'am. They were dragged on the streets until their skin was covered like peeling areca nut shells." (*Perempuan Bersampur Merah*: 60)

The novel's representation of symbolic violence shows that language can be an instrument of social power. The stigma attached to a particular character creates moral legitimacy for acts of violence. This shows that violence in the novel occurs through acts of murder and through the process of meaning-making that constructs a person's social identity.

This novel represents structural violence through the state's absence in protecting the community. The security apparatus is described as unable to control the situation, leaving people in prolonged fear. The inability of the state to create space for mass violence to develop systematically. In this context, people feel that violence is the only way to maintain their social security.

The novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* shows how social violence operates through the relationship among stigma, fear, and social power. Violence also emerges as both a physical act and the result of meaning produced through social discourse. The representation of social violence in this novel aligns with Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology, particularly regarding the relationship between literary works and the society the author aims to address. The author presents the massacre of *dukun santet* as a social reality that is close to the collective experience of society.

From Ian Watt's perspective, the form and content of the work are influenced by the social conditions of the community that is the author's setting and target. The representation of mass violence, social stigma, paranoia, and collective fear shows that literary works are a medium that records and constructs certain social experiences. Through its depiction of social violence, this novel shows literature's role as a space for social reflection, revealing the dynamics of community relations, the practice of stigma, and the humanitarian crisis that unfolded in the social life of the people of Banyuwangi during the tragedy of 1998.

Collective Trauma as a Social Construct

In addition to depicting social violence, the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* presents the collective trauma of the Banyuwangi people. The trauma in this novel is experienced individually by certain characters. In fact, the trauma becomes a social experience that is felt by the community. Fear of murder, accusations of witchcraft, and ninja terror create a gripping psychological condition and affect the social life of the community at large.

The collective trauma in this novel is built through repeated experiences of loss. The character Sari is traumatized by the death of her father, who was brutally murdered by the mob. The trauma does not stop at personal experiences. The fear Sari experiences is also felt by others living in an atmosphere of suspicion. This situation shows that social trauma functions as a shared experience inherited through the community's collective memory.

The author describes how society lives in constant fear. When night falls, people are wary of the possibility of the appearance of a group of ninjas who will commit murder.

Some of the teachers, whether they received the terror of canned letters or not, were rushed out of town. The rest were under strict guard. The ninja terror became more and more tense, shocking every corner of the village that was originally calm. People did not understand the truth of the story about ninjas, but we were forced to believe. Everything that was ignited at that time became more and more inflamed. Fear was rampant from village to village. (*Perempuan Bersampur Merah*: 77)

The spread of provocations and news about the practice of *santet* creates a period of hysteria. When one individual is accused of being a witch doctor, others who have similar relationships or characteristics are also targeted, including respected community leaders. Unstable security conditions prevent the security forces from controlling the situation and protecting citizens. The community feels it must take action on its own, so more and more innocent individuals become victims of the chaos. Murder begins to spread to different layers of society that are considered related to the practice or considered a threat in the broader social context. The fear develops into a kind of social epidemic that affects people's mindsets and behaviors. In this context, trauma can be present through psychological wounds and social conditions that shape human relationships.

The representation of collective trauma is also evident in changes in social relations. This shows its relationship to Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology, which views literature as a reflection of society. Individuals who had previously coexisted began to suspect one another. Fear of accusations of witchcraft made people lose trust in their own social environment. This situation shows that social violence can damage the social structure.

The trauma experienced by the characters in the novel represents the social conditions of the people of Banyuwangi during the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in 1998. The author presents fear, suspicion, loss of security, and the breakdown of social relationships as a reflection of the social reality of people living in situations of collective violence. From Ian Watt's perspective, literary works can serve as a medium for understanding the social dynamics of their time, even though the reality depicted has undergone an artistic process through the author's point of view.

Collective trauma shows that the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* represents the community's social memory shaped by conflicts, stigma, and fears that arise in social life. In Stuart Hall's perspective, collective trauma in the novel can be understood as the result of cultural representations constructed through social narratives and symbols. The novel serves as a medium for recording and reproducing collective memories of the violent tragedy of 1998.

Discourse on Fear and the Production of Social Stigma

One important aspect of the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* is its representation of the discourse of fear that develops in society. The fear is produced through various labels attached to specific individuals, such as *dukun santet*, *tukang suwuk*, and *ninjas*. From Stuart Hall's perspective, representation functions ideologically because it shapes how society understands and assesses social reality.

The term *dukun santet* in the novel refers to a specific profession and serves as a symbol of social threat. The community interprets the label as a dangerous identity, so that individuals who are accused of being witch shamans lose their social position as ordinary human beings. The label then becomes moral legitimacy for acts of violence committed by the masses.

The term *ninja* is often used as a symbol of anonymous fear, lacking a definite identity. The author shows how society builds a collective imagination of the ninja as a mysterious killer who can appear at any time. Based on this, the discourse of fear is produced through rumors, news, and stories that develop in society.

Shadows of that night almost always swirl in my memory. It goes on and on like that. I can't think calmly. I get afraid to go out of the house. I get afraid of the dark. I get scared when night starts. So much so that I feel like the room is the only safest place after my mother's hug. (*Perempuan Bersampur Merah*:71)

The data shows how trauma and social fear are represented as psychological experiences born from the social conditions of society. Sari experiences constant fear until she loses her sense of security. This fear shows that social stigma and mass terror have formed a deep psychological pressure on individuals. In Ian Watt's perspective, the author presents the traumatic experiences of the characters as a reflection of the social situation of the people of Banyuwangi who live in an atmosphere of fear due to the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* in 1998.

This shows that literary works serve as a medium representing the social experience of the people of their time. Through the depiction of the psychological trauma of the character Sari, the author shows that social relations, stigma, and collective fear in society can deeply affect the emotional state of individuals.

Negotiation of Meaning in Novels

In Stuart Hall's concept of encoding-decoding, meaning in literary texts is not singular because the reader can accept, negotiate, or reject the meaning constructed by the author. In

the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah*, the author encodes social criticism regarding mass violence and community paranoia in the 1998 Banyuwangi tragedy.

News about ninjas is indeed shocking our village. Newspapers are busy reporting on the murder of dukun santet, ninja terror, and several teachers who were killed. From the newspaper, we learned that not only did our village lose residents who were accused of dukun santet, several other villages experienced similar things. Various news very quickly shot from word of mouth. People who are ignited by emotions are increasingly easily incited (*Perempuan Besampur Merah*: 75-76).

Through the narration by the character Sari, the author shows that the victims of the witch accusation are ordinary individuals living in society. The author builds a criticism of society that is easily provoked by stigma and collective fear. In the *dominant reading position*, the reader can receive the message that the tragedy of the massacre of *dukun santet* is a form of social violence born from paranoia and social manipulation.

Readers can also be in a position of negotiated reading by recognizing that local spiritual practices and culture occupy an ambiguous position in society. Meanwhile, *oppositional reading* can arise when readers reject the author's views and regard community actions as a form of social protection against the threat of *dukun santet*. The diversity of possible meanings shows that the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* is an arena for negotiating social meaning regarding violence, trauma, and collective fear in Indonesian society.

The analysis of the negotiation of meaning in the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* aligns with Ian Watt's perspective that literary works serve as a medium of social communication that relates to specific communities. This can be seen through various possible meanings that emerged in the tragedy of the massacre of Banyuwangi *dukun santet* in 1998. The author presents a critique of social paranoia, the spread of stigma, and mass violence. However, readers still hold diverse positions in understanding these meanings, depending on their respective social, cultural, and experiential backgrounds. The novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* proves that literary works serve as a space for social dialogue among authors, texts, and readers' communities in interpreting social reality, violence, and collective trauma in the lives of Indonesian people.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the novel *Perempuan Besampur Merah* by Intan Andaru represents the tragedy of the massacre of the Banyuwangi *dukun santet* in 1998 as a social construction formed through the discourse of fear, stigma, and collective violence. Based on Stuart Hall's

perspective, the representation in this novel re-presents historical reality and produces meaning about who is considered dangerous and how violence gains social legitimacy.

The main findings of the study show that stigmas such as *dukun santet*, *tukang suwuk*, and *ninjas* function as ideological markers that form mass fear and encourage the occurrence of social violence. These labels operate through language and social narratives, so that the accused individual loses his or her human standing in society. In this condition, violence is not just a personal act. Violence is considered the result of the construction of a social discourse that is collectively produced and trusted.

Collective trauma in the novel is built through the experience of loss, fear, and damage to social relations due to growing paranoia. Trauma is present as an inherited social memory and forms public awareness of violent events. Through Stuart Hall's concept of encoding-decoding, this novel opens a space for readers to negotiate meaning in understanding the 1998 Banyuwangi social violence tragedy. Readers can accept, negotiate, or reject the author's constructed meaning regarding social paranoia and mass violence. This research emphasizes that literary works play an important role as a medium of cultural representation, helping to build critical awareness of the history of violence, collective trauma, and the social dynamics of Indonesian society.

This research shows the relationship between literary works and society in accordance with Ian Watt's theory of literary sociology. This novel is shaped by the experiences and conditions of society in his time. Through the representation of social violence, collective trauma, and stigma against individuals accused of being *dukun santet*, the author presents the social reality of the Banyuwangi community as an important material in the formation of the content and meaning of literary works. From Ian Watt's perspective, the relationship between the author and the community greatly determines the form and direction of literary works. Therefore, this novel can be understood as a medium of social reflection that records the dynamics of fear, humanitarian crises, and changes in social relations in Banyuwangi society in 1998.

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