

Raden Saleh's Resistance to Colonialism in the Painting "Between Life and Death" (1848)

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Abstract

Romanticism became a new cultural orientation in Europe in the 19th century. Through the exploration of tradition and history, romanticism gradually aroused nationalism, giving rise to a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, it fueled colonial expansion, on the other hand, aroused the spirit of resistance of colonized society. Raden Saleh was in Europe in this situation and became famous as a Romantic painter. This research departs from the assumption that Romanticism encouraged Raden Saleh to develop resistance to colonialism in painting. This study aims to prove the existence of signs of resistance to Colonialism in Raden Saleh's painting, entitled "Between Life and Death" (1848). This goal was achieved by analyzing the painting with CW Morris Semiotics, with the approach of Psychoanalysis Theory and Postcolonial Theory. Research shows that there are signs of resistance to Colonialism in the painting.

Keywords: Raden Saleh, romanticism in painting, semiotics, psychoanalytic theory, postcolonial theory.

Abstrak

Romantisisme menjadi orientasi budaya baru di Eropa dalam abad ke-19. Melalui penggalian tradisi dan sejarah, romantisisme secara gradual membangkitkan nasionalisme, sehingga menimbulkan situasi yang paradoks: pada satu sisi mengobarkan ekspansi kolonial, pada sisi yang lain membangkitkan semangat perlawanan masyarakat terjajah. Raden Saleh berada di Eropa dalam situasi demikian dan menjadi masyhur sebagai pelukis Romantik. Penelitian ini berangkat dari asumsi, bahwa Romantisisme mendorong Raden Saleh mengembangkan perlawanan terhadap kolonialisme dalam seni lukis. Penelitian ini bertujuan membuktikan adanya tanda-tanda perlawanan terhadap Kolonialisme dalam lukisan Raden Saleh yang berjudul "Antara Hidup dan Mati" (1848). Tujuan ini dicapai dengan menganalisis lukisan tersebut dengan Semiotika CW Morris, dengan pendekatan Teori Psikoanalisis dan Teori Poskolonial. Penelitian membuktikan, bahwa terdapat tanda-tanda perlawanan terhadap Kolonialisme dalam lukisan tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Raden Saleh, romantisisme dalam seni lukis, semiotika, Teori Psikoanalisis, Teori Poskolonial.

INTRODUCTION

Romanticism was originally a cultural movement that emerged in Germany in the late 18th century to oppose Neoclassicism. Romanticism restores awareness of German memories and emphasizes special qualities and special destinies of the German people. The Romans glorified Medieval Germany and valued hereditary monarchy and aristocracy as vital links to the nation's past. They see the existence of each individual

closely tied to the nation and the motherland, and they find the manifestation of the self they yearn for in uniting their ego with the soul of the nation.

Starting from a cultural movement, through the exploration of tradition and history, romanticism turned into a political movement that was anti-colonialism by calling for independence and the establishment of the state. According to Perry (2013: 95), a sense of nationality was indeed raised by the Romantic Movement. He even said, "The Romans were 'the apostles' of the beginning of German nationalism".

In the first half of the 19th century, Romanticism had expanded as a new cultural orientation in Europe (Perry, 2013: 73-74), and provided a paradoxical situation: fueling colonial expansion, but also arousing the spirit of resistance of colonized people (Fauzie, 2016: 40). In such a situation, Raden Saleh was in Europe, absorbing and animating the flow of romance and managed to become famous as a prominent painter in the theme of animal hunting.

Raden Saleh Syarif Bustaman (1811-1880) was born in Terboyo, Semarang, Central Java. After his father died young, from childhood until the age of 8, Saleh was taken care of by his uncle, the Regent of Semarang (Kraus, 2012: 23), Raden Adipati Surohadimenggolo (1765-1827), son-in-law of Mangkunegara I (Mas Said, 1726-1795), informant Raffles in writing the book History of Java (1817).

Surohadimenggolo likes to pursue texts on Islam, classical Javanese literature, and Western culture. More than a scholar, he was known to be a man who dared to behave and did not fall prey to gambling and the use of opium, so he was respected by high officials of the Dutch East Indies. He often interacted with high-ranking officials, while inviting Saleh, so that his nephew's great interest and talent in painting was known to the Dutch people.

In 1819, Surohadimenggolo sent Raden Saleh to Batavia to get a better education. Governor-General Baron van der Capellen enthusiastically accepted Saleh and handed Saleh to Professor Reinwardt, founder of the Botanical Gardens in Bogor (Kraus, 2012: 25). Raden Saleh was educated to become a Dutch employee, but Saleh took advantage of the internship's opportunity to develop his talent for painting.

Saleh began to get basic drawing and painting lessons from a Belgian painter, AAJ Payen (1792-1853), who worked for Reinwardt. Payen became Raden Saleh's first teacher in painting. He often asked Saleh to help him paint the research objects that Reinwardt had assigned him (Bustaman, 1990: 4).

While Saleh in Bogor, the Java War (1825-1830) led by Diponegoro, erupted. This is the biggest war the Netherlands has ever faced during its rule in Java (Bachtiar, 2011: 23-24). Regarding this war, the Dutch East Indies government accused Surohadimenggolo's second son, Raden Sukur, of helping Prince Diponegoro. For his son's actions, Surohadimenggolo was arrested and exiled to Maluku until he died in 1827 (Kraus, 2012: 23).

The rapid development of Saleh's talent for painting attracted the attention of Jean Baptiste de Linge, Financial Inspector of the Dutch Colonial Government. Linge intends to return to the Netherlands, and needs an accompanist to teach him Malay and Javanese culture. The choice fell to Raden Saleh, to allow Saleh to study painting in the Netherlands as well. According to Marasutan (1973: 10), the Dutch motive to educate Saleh from the outset was colonial politics, which was to keep Saleh away from the influence of Surohadimenggolo who supported Diponegoro's physical resistance.

In 1829, teenager Raden Saleh was dispatched to the Netherlands. No one thought, the task of accompanying Linge, who had briefly been a wander for more than 20 years in Europe (Marasutan, 1973: 10-11). Saleh absorbed the Romantic Movement, which was at the end of its superiority. He received a scholarship to study painting in several countries, including Italy, Austria, Germany, France, and England. During that time, Saleh was productive in painting, exhibiting paintings, and associating with upper-class European society, both from the government/kingdom, intellectuals, business

people, and artists. The European public widely knew Raden Saleh as a romantic painter with Javanese-specific objects.

Raden Saleh was back in the country in 1852, bringing various awards for the quality of his art. He died in Bogor in 1880, leaving more than 60 paintings, most of which were scattered in Europe and some in the country, a collection of museums, palaces, and private. Unquestionably, Raden Saleh has managed to become a famous painter in Europe and his homeland, in the 19th century until now. He was the first ambassador of painting for his people, representing the success of Indonesian natives, even Archipelago, in mastering the tools, techniques, and styles of Western painting that century.

This research is based on the assumption that the good education and sentiment of Raden pious to Romanticism has led him to an early awareness of nationalism, which encouraged him to fight against colonialism. Not physical resistance, but symbolic resistance through painting.

Resistance is a necessity for colonized people. Edward Said (2010: 6) says that the power of Western imperialism always faces resistance. According to Edward Said, individuals in the community who were or were colonized experienced prolonged trauma. The trauma is marked by the ambivalent nature of the nation that colonized it because it is accustomed to being in tension between fear and the desire to fight. The ambiguity is reflected in the cultural products of the postcolonial society.

Edward Said has begun a study of cultural products of the colonized people as outlined in his book, Orientalism (1978). This book is a catalyst for the emergence of a new set of knowledge called the Postcolonial Theory. Said's theory of ambivalence was sharpened by Homi Bhabha (1995: 86,114) by identifying it into two categories: hybrids (mingling) and mimicry (imitating), which are essentially forms of resistance operating in the unconscious.

This research intends to dismantle (decoding) the ambivalence in Raden Saleh's painting entitled "Between Life and Death" (1848) as a form of resistance to colonialism which is afflicting his people. This painting was chosen because it marked the peak of his fame in Europe. This painting was destroyed in an exhibition building fire in Paris in 1931. "Between Life and Death" has been interpreted by several authors (Sudarmaji, 1974: 3; Winaya, 2007: 86-91; Achmad, 2012: 210-214), but still interesting and open to continue to be interpreted.

The research question is "Is it true that Raden Saleh showed signs of resistance to colonialism in the painting 'Between Life and Death'?" Research Problem Formulation are 1) What are the signs of resistance in the painting "Between Life and Death" ?; 2) How are the signs of resistance described? 3) Why were the signs chosen?

METHOD

Formal objects of research are signs of resistance to colonialism. Material objects are "Between Life and Death" paintings (1848). The data analysis method in this qualitative research is, at the same time, a data collection method (Bungin, 2007: 79). Signs of resistance to Colonialism were found through analysis of paintings using the CW Morris Semiotic Taxonomy (with some adjustments, see Table 1). The theoretical approaches are The Postcolonial Theory Homi Bhabha, to uncover signs of resistance, and; C.G. Psychoanalysis Theory Jung (1989: 146-147) to recognize the existence of forms of unconsciousness.

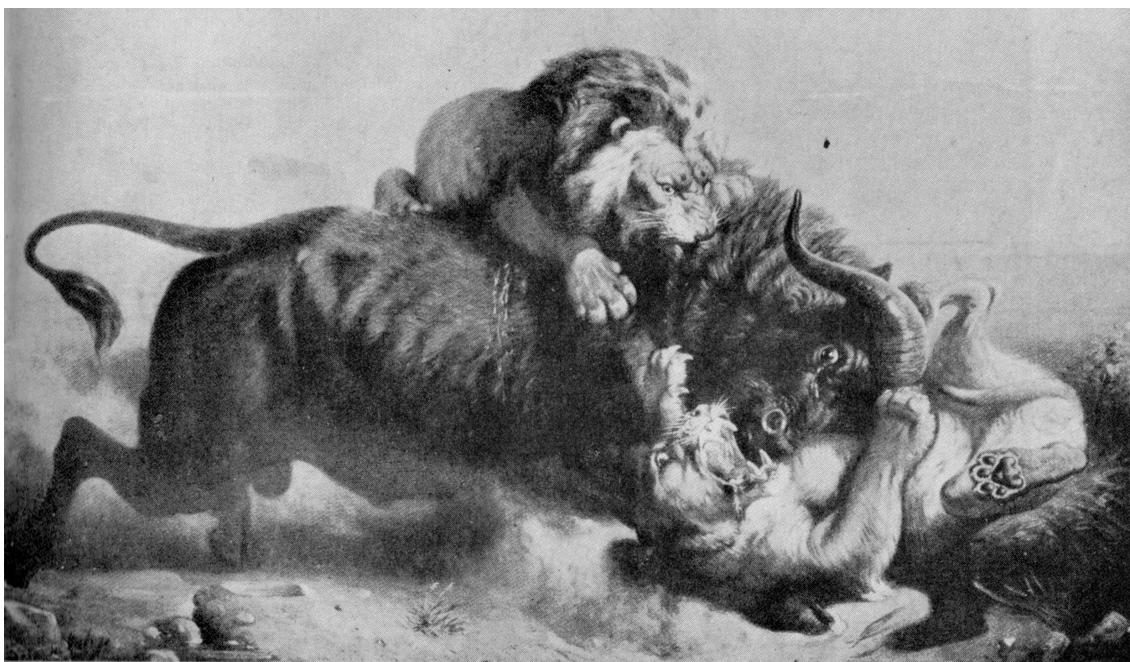


Figure 1. "Between Life and Death", oil on canvas, 181 cm x 293 cm, Raden Saleh, 1848

Table 1. Analysis of the Signs of Resistance to Colonialism

Level	SYNTACTIC	SEMANTICS	PRAGMATIC
Object	Sign structure of Raden Saleh's Painting	The meaning of the sign of Raden Saleh's painting	Sign effect
Element	Sigifier/Signified Sintagma/system Connotasi/denotation Metaphoe/metonymy	Structural Context / history Denotation Connotation Ideology / myth	<i>Postcolonial Theory:</i> mimicry, hybridity or forms of ambivalence <i>Psychoanalysis Theory:</i> suppressed memories, maternal archetypes, shadow archetypes, imago archetypes, persona archetypes and anima-animus archetypes

Research is in the qualitative-constructivist paradigm, in which the researcher is in a free area in viewing the object of research as well as in using dialectical and subjective theories and methods, constructed through the interpretation of objects, theories and methods, and values. As a study, research is limited and classified as qualitative research.

In syntax, a description of the visual structure of a painting is done by identifying clusters of markers that can be: objects, atmosphere, settings, composition and others. In the paradigmatic axis includes identifying associations, such as connotation, metaphor and metonymy. In Semantics, paintings are interpreted as denotative and connotative, related to context, ideology (romanticism; colonialism; nationalism) and myths. At the Pragmatic level, paintings are interpreted in the perspective of postcolonial theory and psychoanalytic theory. Postcolonial theory to identify forms of resistance Raden Saleh,

whether hybrid mentality, mimicry or other forms of ambivalence. Whereas Psychoanalysis Theory to recognize the psychological motives that work behind the creation of paintings, such as suppressed memories, maternal archetypes, shadow archetypes, imago archetypes, persona archetypes and anima-animus archetypes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The forms that are imaged in the observer's cognition when looking at Raden Saleh's paintings are forms that resemble the results of eye view. In other words, forms that describe their objects realistically or representatively (Sahman, 1993: 70). The reading of the visual aspects of this painting is based on black-and-white photographs published in the Marasutan book (1973: 43).

Syntactic Analysis

"Between Life and Death" presents several optical markers, consisting of (Figure 2): two lions, a buffalo, and flat ground with rocks, bushes and dust. This painting depicts two lions fighting with one buffalo. The position of the buffalo body is depicted parallel to the horizontal edge of the painting, the buffalo tail on the left, while the head is on the right. One male lion is depicted as being on the buffalo's back, as if he was holding a pouncing position, biting the back of a buffalo, as his legs gripped the buffalo's back strongly. Some of the body is not visible because it is behind the buffalo body. His eyes are depicted expressing cruelty, ferocity and suspense.

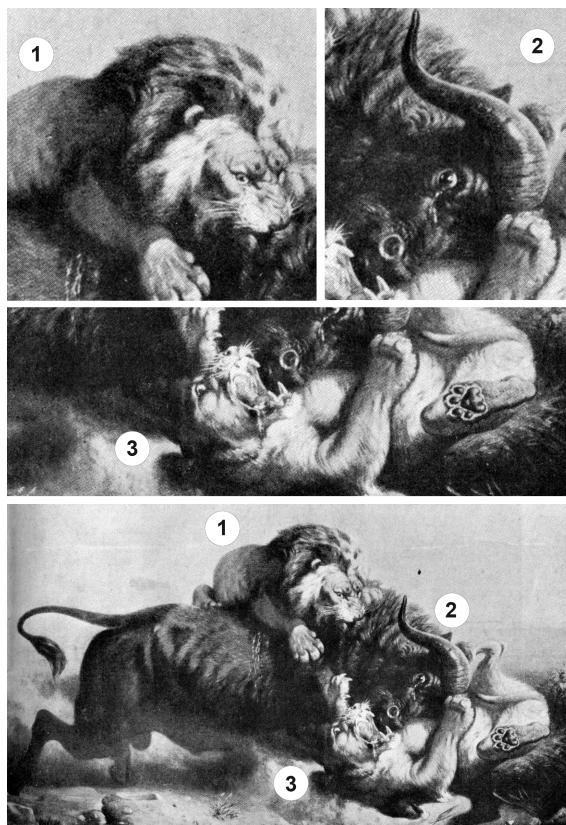


Figure 2. Objects in the painting "Between Life and Death":
(1) male lion, (2) buffalo, (3) male lion

Meanwhile, the buffalo is pictured butting toward the ground so that its neck forms

a diagonal line. The eyes of the buffalo are depicted in a full circle but with tears in their eyes, signifying complications: peaked grief, sadness and anger. Its large horns form a diagonal line parallel to its neck. At the bottom of the buffalo ramming is a lioness. This lion has its mouth wide open, revealing sharp teeth. The front left leg tries to stick his nails into the buffalo's neck, while the other hand is on the side of the buffalo horn. The lion's body shows the position of the buffalo so that the back of its body touches the ground. Both hind legs can not help him from the strong push buffalo head. But the buffalo itself is unable to protect its body from being torn apart. The two lions flanking him from above and below his body, forming a diagonal locking formation. In the foreground depicted rocks, grass, earth, and dust that flew due to the movements of the fighting animals. The sentence to describe the syntax in this painting is the fight of two lions against a buffalo.

Based on the principle of equivalence, "fighting" in syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations can be associated with: competition, battle, war. Based on the principle of similarity in the axis of selection (paradigmatic) to the combination axis (syntagmatic), the "lion" has the potential to become a metaphor of: the king, Europe (West), the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the invaders. Lions are often considered to be the king of the jungle; lion images are abundantly present in the symbols of European countries, not least in the symbol of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Figure 3). It is also based on associating lions with invaders, because most European countries are colonizing nations.

Table 2. Lions metaphor

Paradigmatic	Syntagmatic	→
A fight of Two	Lions <i>king/ nobleman</i> <i>Europe (West)</i> <i>Tha Kingdom of Netherlands</i> <i>The Invaders</i>	against a buffalo



Figure 3. The symbol of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the 19th century
(sumber: <http://www.humanline.com>, diunduh 20 Juni 2014)

Based on the principle of contiguity, some metonymy can be derived from "lions",

such as: aggressive, savage, ferocious, cruel, controlling, aggressor, fighter, superior. All of them are very relevant to be associated with the behavior of the West towards the East or narrower than that: the behavior of the Dutch towards the indigenous people.

Tabel 3. Lions Metonymy

Paradigmatic	Syntagmatic
	A Fight of two
	Lions
	<i>aggressive</i>
	<i>wild</i>
	<i>malignant</i>
	<i>cruel</i>
	<i>dominate</i>
	<i>aggressor</i>
	<i>figgter</i>
	<i>superior</i>

Next is about buffalo. Some writers call the opponent the fight of two lions in the painting "Between Life and Death" not a buffalo. Marasutan (1973: 13) called it a bull; the same person in Sudarmaji's book (1974: 3) mentions bison; Bustaman (1990: 65), Winaya (2007: 90) and Katherina Achmad (2012: 210) recognize it as a "bull". The author tends to identify it as "buffalo", but not of ordinary buffalo types. This is an African buffalo, one of the largest, strong and dangerous herbivorous animals.

Becker (2006: 32-33) explains: African buffalo is the largest bovidae family in Africa; weighing up to 800 kg; length up to 3 meters; age 15-25 years; live in swampy and wet areas and savannahs; a very dangerous animal, even though it looks calm, it is stiff when disturbed and never hesitate to attack; the horn is a lethal weapon because it is very strong and can penetrate as deep as one meter; reportedly more hunters died from African buffaloes killed than by other Afika beasts.



Figure 4. African Buffalo
(sumber: hewan.co, diunduh 20 Juni 2014)

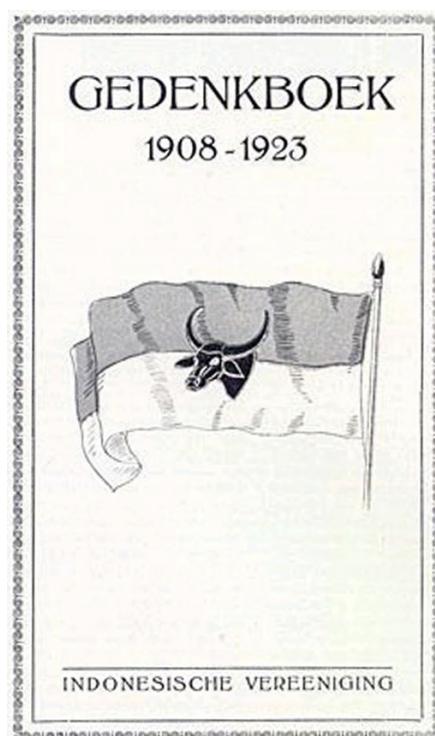
Based on the principle of similarity in the axis of selection (paradigmatic) to the combination axis (syntagmatic), "buffalo" can produce metaphorical meanings, such as: natives, ordinary people, farmers, workers, colonized people, Eastern people. In fact, the word "buffalo" is often used by people as a metaphor of "humiliated people", as in the term "gathering kebo [buffalo]" for a pair of people who live at home without marriage ties.

Tabel 4. Buffalo metaphor

Paradigmatic	Syntagmatic	→
	A Fight of two lions against a buffalo <i>indigenous</i> <i>ordinary people</i> <i>the farmer</i> <i>the workers</i> <i>colonized</i> <i>insulted person</i> <i>Eastern people</i>	

Buffalo is a livestock that is very close to the people, especially farmers in Java. While the majority of Javanese indigenous people are farmers. The life of farmers is almost inseparable from buffalo. He was a good friend of the farmer to plow the farm, pull the cart, and the grazing vehicle. The closeness between the buffalo and the farmer, makes buffalo as an indigenous Javanese metaphor acceptable.

As far as is known, buffalo as a Javanese or Indonesian native metaphor began in 1908, when Indonesian student organizations in the Netherlands, the Indonesian Association (PI) or Indonesische Vereeniging (historical report. Blog-spot.com, accessed October 25, 2019), included pictures of buffalo heads into the symbol of the organization. Even the Dutch cartoonist, Wim van Wieringen (Asikin and Erkelens, 2006: 90), in his opinion cartoon in 1948, used buffalo as a metaphor for the Indonesian people.



Gambar 5. Symbol of the Indonesian Association, 1908
(Sumber: id.wikipedia.org dan nrmnews.com, diakses 25 Oktober 2019)



Figure 6. Cartoon opinion by Wim van Wieringen (Netherlands), 1948
(Hasan, Asikin dan Erkelens. 2006:90)

Based on the principle of contiguity, some metonymy can be derived from "buffalo", such as: stupid, easy to throw a tantrum if disturbed. In the context of African buffalo, the metonym can refer to the character: fierce, wild, but loyal friend.

Tabel 5. Buffalo Metonymy

Paradigmatik	Sintagmatik
	Perkelahian dua singa melawan seekor <i>kerbau bodoh pemberang mengamuk jika diganggu liar; berbahaya setia kawan; menggerombol</i>

Semantic Analysis

The painting "Between Life and Death" contains markers consisting of two lions, a buffalo, weeds, stones and dust. At the level of significance the first layer of markers becomes Expression (E), while Content (C) or its signifier, is the peak scene of a fight between two lions against a buffalo. At the second level of significance, the scene becomes E and produces a new C in the form of connotative meaning, is a critical point of Dutch colonialism in the Dutch East Indies, where the lion is the connotator for the "colonizing nation", while the buffalo is the connotator for the "colonized nation". This significance naturally shows the ideologies that operate, namely: colonialism-imperialism-supported by feudalism if it is associated with the Netherlands as a kingdom.

"Between Life and Death" was painted by Raden Saleh in 1848, the same year as the outbreak of the February 1848 Revolution. This year and beyond is often called the years of the revolution, because in many countries in Europe there were rebellions demanding political and national independence (Perry, 2013: 110-124). As for Java, what happened was the opposite of social dynamics in Europe. Java is in an anti-climax of resistance after the end of the Java War in 1830. Thus, the existence of fierce resistance from the Javanese natives as connoted by painting is a myth.

While Saleh was in Europe, Java was in force Cultivation (Cultuurstelsel) which

made the Netherlands a developed country because of the abundance of capital from Java. As for Java, forced cultivation results in a fragmented population and extreme poverty. In short, from 1830 to decades later, the Netherlands was at the height of its imperialism on Java. Java took more than 70 years since the end of the Java War for the emergence of new resistance marked by the activities of H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto and his friends at the beginning of the 20th century. The painting "Between Life and Death" was clearly not contextual with the situation in Java in the years around 1848. The painting did not reflect reality, but rather was a kind of prediction, "early warning", even "threat", or "psychological terror", that Dutch colonialism will arrive at a critical point, the point between life and death.

Pragmatic Analysis

It has been said that "Between Life and Death" at the level of significance of the first layer means the battle of two lions and a buffalo. Whereas in the second tier significance, the painting can be placed in a synchronous context in Java. In this context, the connotative meaning of painting is: the war between the Kingdom of the Netherlands as colonizers against Javanese natives (Dutch East Indies; Indonesia) as colonized. In reality, there was no resistance in Java, as Raden Saleh said. Java was paralyzed until the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, the metaphor in this painting is more reflective of Raden Saleh's own inner riot of something he imagined could occur in Java. This is a kind of early warning, threat, or even "psychological terror" to the invaders, to pay more attention to the fate of the colonized or indigenous Javanese. "If not, then be prepared to welcome unexpected and deadly native tantrums," it is as if this painting gave a message.



Figure 7. Fighting lions and buffalo in Africa
<http://www.tempo.co/read/beritafoto/12194>, diakses 20 Juni 2014

In the perspective of Postcolonial theory, painting technically shows a perfect imitation or mimicry of optical painting techniques; realistic; naturalistic. This marked the success of Raden Saleh's efforts to become equal to the ability of the best painter techniques in the West at that time. However, the selection of objects shows the combination (hybridity) of objects from the East (buffalo) with objects from the West (lions). Interpreting these objects as metaphors means that there is content that has been constructed by Raden Saleh as a covert resistance strategy to the domination of colonial culture in painting.

In addition, the painting signifies Raden Saleh's ambivalence through the depiction of situations that hang from the climax scene of the fight, where it is unclear who will be the winner. This ambivalence shows Raden Saleh's slippiness in responding to the cultural domination of the colonizers. This is a form of subversive resistance that Lacan

said, by portraying the invaders (lions) in a threatened or critical situation, and unfairly playing against the Javanese pibumi (buffalo). The depiction of this critical situation invalidates the myth, that lions always win. In the context of fighting African buffalo, this myth does not apply. A visual report made by an online press in 2013 shows (Figure 7), that buffalo is able to defeat a lion.

In the perspective of the theory of psychoanalysis, the painting "Between Life and Death" signifies the tendency to predict the future as Jung (1989: 32) says as a form of personal unconsciousness. Besides that, there is a sign of the nature of the collective unconscious, which is a shadowy archetype of a hidden and oppressed personality. As Hartono (2003: 15) said, shadows are an expression of animal instincts inherited from ancient times; is a very strong and dangerous archetype, because it has always determined the survival of organisms which must be ready at all times to fight danger or escape and must be able to adapt to various environmental demands. The shadows are also marked by a strong emotional charge in this painting through moving scenes, wide-eyed animal eyes, and open lion snouts. The *Imago* archetype is also seen in this painting, where Saleh unconsciously places or projects his own inner contents on objects outside of himself, are animals fighting.

Anima and *Animus* appear balanced and synergistic in this painting, *anima* is represented by feelings (emotions) that swell through the depiction of fight scenes, while *animus* is represented by rationality and logic as seen from Saleh's success in portraying objects realistically.

CONCLUSION

Research has found signs of Raden Saleh's opposition to colonialism in the painting "Between Life and Death". This painting is a sign system which in its unity becomes a metaphor of Raden Saleh's own inner raging for something that he imagined could occur in Java. This painting gives early warnings, threats, even "psychological terror", to the invaders, that a critical situation will occur, the natives will fight fiercely.

This painting is recognized by many observers as one of Raden Saleh's best achievements. In Postcolonial theory, achievement shows the perfect mimicry of naturalist painting techniques. This marks the success of Raden Saleh's great efforts to become on par with the best Western painters. The selection of objects shows the hybridity of objects from the East (buffalo) with objects from the West (lions). Interpreting these objects as metaphors means that there is content that has been constructed by Raden Saleh as a covert resistance strategy to the domination of colonial culture.

The unclear description of the situation who will win the fight signifies the ambivalence of Raden Saleh. Critical scenes implicitly dispel the myth, that lions always win. The ambivalence and attack on this myth mark Raden Saleh's slippage in behaving towards colonial rule. This is a metaphorical form of subversive resistance.

In the perspective of the theory of psychoanalysis, painting signifies the tendency to predict the future as a form of personal unconsciousness. There is a sign of the contents of the nature of the collective unconscious, is the shadow archetypes are characterized by a strong emotional content through the depiction of scenes full of motion, eyes that widen, and the lion's snout is open. The *Imago* Archetype, which is characterized by the projection of Saleh's inner contents in fighting animals. *Anima* and *Animus*, appearing balanced in the paintings; *anima* is represented by emotions that swell through the depiction of fight scenes, while the *animus* is represented by the rationality and logic that appear from Saleh's success in describing objects optically.

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