

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The historical context is crucial in influencing how colonialism and identity are portrayed in contemporary English literature. Postcolonial literature is relevant to the discussion of colonialism and identity because it provides an avenue for marginalized communities to share their experiences. These pieces of literature work often explore the continuing influence of colonialism on identity, culture, and social life. They examine how individuals and communities negotiate their sense of self after colonial rule, as well as how they endure, resist, and adapt to its lasting effect.

Among the communities frequently discussed in postcolonial literature are Native Americans, whose lives continue to be shaped by the historical consequences of colonization. Issues such as racism, addiction, poverty, social isolation, and cultural erosion remain important concerns in many Native American communities. According to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 10% of Native Americans experienced substance use disorders in 2018, compared to 7.7% of the general U.S. population. These conditions are often linked to historical trauma caused by violence, oppression, and forced displacement, as well as ongoing inequalities in education, healthcare access, and socioeconomic opportunities. While these issues are social in nature, they also form part of the broader colonial condition that continues to influence Indigenous experiences and identity.

These concerns are portrayed in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez* (2022), a collection of interconnected short stories that follows the life of David, a young Penobscot man raised on a reservation. Although the work consists of multiple short stories, David functions as the central narrative figure because each story portrays different experiences from his life, which create a continuous perspective through which issues of identity, belonging, addiction, and colonial influence are explored. These experiences are significant because they shape the way David understands and negotiates his Indigenous identity. Through David's experiences, the text portrays the tensions between Indigenous identity, reservation life, and the continuing influence of dominant American culture.

To examine these tensions, this research employs Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and anti-colonial resistance as discussed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Mimicry refers to a form of imitation in which the colonized subject adopts aspects of the dominant culture while never becoming fully identical to it. Ambivalence describes the contradictory attitudes that emerge in the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Anti-colonial resistance refers to the ways colonized subjects challenge colonial authority, whether through direct opposition or subtle everyday actions. These concepts are useful for examining the complex process through which identity is negotiated under colonial influence.

This topic is chosen for several reasons. Firstly, David is an interesting character to analyze because his experiences reveal ongoing tensions between his Indigenous background and the influence of dominant American culture. Secondly, Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and anti-colonial resistance provide

an effective framework for examining how identity is negotiated rather than simply formed or inherited. Finally, the topic is significant because it explores how *Night of the Living Rez* portrays the process of Indigenous identity negotiation within a postcolonial context.

Therefore, the writer in writing this research thesis analyzes mimicry, ambivalence, and the anti-colonial resistance of David as it is portrayed in *Night of the Living Rez*. Through these concepts, this research examines how David negotiates his Indigenous identity under the influence of colonialism.

1.2 Research Question

The writer examines what questions arise in the story that deserve a solution.

1. How does mimicry contribute to David's negotiation of Indigenous identity in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*?
2. How does ambivalence emerge from David's negotiation between Indigenous and dominant American cultural influences in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*?
3. How does anti-colonial resistance emerge from David's negotiation of Indigenous identity in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The writer describes the goal of the research which the writer tries to obtain.

1. To reveal the role of David's mimicry of dominant American culture in the negotiation of his Indigenous identity in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*.
2. To reveal how ambivalence emerges from David's negotiation between

Indigenous and dominant American cultural influences in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*.

3. To demonstrate how anti-colonial resistance reflects David's negotiation of Indigenous identity in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*.

1.4 Previous Studies

Below are several previous studies that use Homi K. Bhabha's concepts in postcolonial study.

The first previous study is an international journal article entitled *Mimicry, Hibridity, and Ambivalence In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah and Purple Hibiscus* conducted by Asmarawati, Kurnia, and Darma in 2017. It explains how characters in both novels imitate Western culture (mimicry), develop mixed cultural identities due to colonial influence (hybridity), and experience conflicting feelings between accepting and resisting Western values (ambivalence) (Asmarawati et al., 2017).

The second previous study is a national journal article entitled *Mimicry and Resistance in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Bumi Manusia: A Postcolonial Reading Through Homi K. Bhabha Theory* conducted by Nensilanti, Ridwan, and Sakti in 2025. It analyzes how colonized characters imitate colonial culture while at the same time resisting colonial authority (Nensilanti et al., 2025).

The third previous study is an international journal article entitled *Bhabha's Notion of 'Mimicry' and 'Ambivalence' In V.S Naipaul's A Bend In The River* conducted by Kumar in 2011. It examines how colonial influence shapes the identities of characters living in postcolonial Africa. The study shows that the

colonized subjects imitate Western language, behavior, education, and cultural values (mimicry) in order to gain social acceptance and power (Kumar, 2011).

The fourth previous study is an international article entitled *Hibridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence: Re-Evaluation of Colonial Identity In Nadine Gordimer's Selected Short Stories* conducted by Babaei and Pourjafari in 2022. The paper shows that colonized characters are often adopt the language, educational, and behavioral patterns of colonial elites (mimicry) in order to gain access to social mobility, yet this imitation also produces a hybrid cultural identity which is neither fully colonial nor fully indigenous (Babaei & Pourjafari, 2022).

The fifth previous study is an international journal article entitled *Ambivalence, Mimicry, and The Third Space: Homi K. Bhabha's Theory In Dear Martin* conducted by Annisa and Suardi in 2025. The paper examines how the protagonist had to adopt dominant norms yet experiences conflicted feelings about belonging and resistance (Annisa & Suardi, 2025).

The sixth previous study is a national journal article entitled *Poskolonialisme Dalam Antologi Cerpen Semua Untuk Hindia Karya Iksaka Banu: Kajian Teori Homi K. Bhabha* conducted by Ratnasari, Wahab, and Muhri in 2024. This study applies Bhabha's mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence to a short story collection about Indonesian colonial encounter. It shows how colonial narratives and local responses create ambivalent cultural expressions in characters which illustrating conflicting feelings towards colonizers while blending indigenous and foreign influences in identity formation (Ratnasari et al., 2024).

The seventh previous study is an international journal article entitled *Colonial*

Legacies and the Third Space: A Comparative Study of Hybridity and Mimicry in Moni Mohsin's Novels conducted by Khan and Nayab in 2025. It shows how elite Pakistani characters imitates Western lifestyles while remaining culturally rooted in local traditions, producing hybrid identities which reflect lingering colonial influence and identity negotiation in postcolonial society (Khan & Nayab, 2025).

The eighth previous study is a national journal article entitled *Postcolonial Views on the Application of Mimicry in My Name is Khan* conducted by Anggraeni in 2022. It shows that mimicry functions as an ambivalent strategy where it is reflecting adaptation to dominant culture and also serving as a subtle form of resistance against marginalization (Anggraeni, 2022).

The ninth previous study is an international journal article entitled *Identity Construction in the Post-Colonial Period: Hybridity and Third Space in Abdulrazak Gurnah* conducted by Xu in 2023. It analyzes characters in Gurnah's novel (*By the Sea*), demonstrating how refugees negotiate identity through cultural storytelling and interaction between colonial and indigenous cultural spaces, resulting in reconstructed hybrid identities (Xu, 2023).

The tenth previous study is an essay entitled *Colonial Mimicry and Hybridity in the Selected Works of Jhumpa Lahiri: A Postcolonial Study* conducted by Khyati in 2024. It examines how immigrant characters attempt to assimilate into American society by adopting Western cultural practices while simultaneously maintaining connections to their Indian heritage (Khyati, 2024).

This research thesis differs from the previous studies mentioned above in both its object and its theoretical contribution. The first difference lies in the literary

work analyzed. While previous studies examine various postcolonial texts, none of them analyze Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez* (2022), particularly within the context of contemporary Native American literature. However, the significance of this research does not lie solely in the choice of literary work. Previous studies have commonly applied Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence to examine colonial relationships in different postcolonial contexts. In contrast, this research focuses on mimicry, ambivalence, and anti-colonial resistance in order to explore how Indigenous identity is negotiated in a contemporary Native American setting. Therefore, this research contributes to postcolonial literary studies by demonstrating how Bhabha's concepts operate within the context of contemporary Native American literature and how they help explain David's negotiation of Indigenous identity throughout the narrative.

1.5 Research Methods

1.5.1 Research Approach

Based on the background of the research thesis, the writer uses a postcolonial literary approach. Postcolonial literature is commonly described as "that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship" (Boehmer, 2005:3). Thus, a postcolonial literary approach refers to an analytical framework that critically examines the colonizer's and the colonized's relationship. Related theory of postcolonial phenomena in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez* is Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and the anti-colonial resistance.

1.5.2 Method of Collecting Data

In this research thesis, the writer uses library research as a data collection

method. George describes that library research is a structured inquiry that follows specific tools, rules, and techniques. It involves locating and utilizing credible sources that provide factual information or expert perspectives to answer research questions (George, 2008:8). This data collection fall within the scope of the qualitative method category.

The object of this research thesis is an interconnected short story entitled *Night of the Living Rez* (2022). The writer uses two sources, which are primary and secondary data. Primary data is the information obtained first-hand by researchers for the specific purpose of the study, meanwhile secondary data is the data that already collected by others and available from existing sources such as journals, reports, or archives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009:180). The primary data the writer uses in this research thesis is Morgan Talty's novel *Night of the Living Rez*. As for the secondary data, the writer uses books and journal articles related to the theory of the research thesis.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Regarding the topic of this research thesis, the writer focuses on examining David, the main character in Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*, through a postcolonial theoretical framework, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and anti-colonial resistance. The research is limited to David's character as portrayed throughout the narrative and does not examine other characters in depth. In conducting the analysis, the writer examines character and characterization, setting, and conflict as textual elements that contribute to the portrayal of David's identity. These elements serve as entry points for analyzing

how David negotiates his Indigenous identity under the influence of colonialism. Through Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and anti-colonial resistance, this research explores the process of identity negotiation as represented in *Night of the Living Rez*.

1.7 Writing Organization

The writer explains how to structure the content of this research thesis across its chapters, from Chapter I to Chapter IV.

Chapter I:

It presents the introduction of the research thesis. This includes the background, the research questions, the objectives, the previous studies, the research methods, the scope of the study, and the writing organization.

Chapter II:

It presents the theoretical framework that is used to analyze the object of the research thesis.

Chapter III:

It presents the analysis of the analyzed object, focusing on intrinsic elements and a postcolonial theoretical framework.

Chapter IV:

It presents the conclusion of the analysis.