

Orientalism in Joseph Conrad's novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895): a post-colonial approach

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ABSTRACT

He represents the false critic toward colonialism which depicted him as the author in the neutral side in the history of colonialism. In this undergraduate thesis, the writer attempts to reveal the pattern of Joseph Conrad's Orientalism by find the image and stereotype of the Orient and Occident, the Fantasy of Western colonialism, the hegemony that legitimate the colonial authorities toward the Malay Archipelago and finds the evidence that proves him as the part of author who supports colonialism. The writer uses Edward's Said Orientalism theory as the major post-colonial theory in this study to investigate the pattern of Orientalism and the evidence of Joseph Conrad as the colonialist author. The writer uses the technique of writing this undergraduate thesis by dividing the extrinsic and intrinsic element of the novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895). In the finding and discussion of this undergraduate thesis, the writer reveals the pattern of Orientalism and the evidence of Joseph Conrad as the pro-colonialism author through the binary division in the novel which creates the stereotype of the Orient and compares to the ideal Victorian character depicted in his white characters in the novel. Then, Conrad creates the Western Fantasy toward the Oriental Malay Archipelago as the object for the Westerner in search of adventure, career and positioning the imaginary narrative of European territory as the happy land for the major characters.

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1. Introduction

Novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895) written by Joseph Conrad is one literary works that contain Colonial discourse as mentioned above. Conrad is a British author who lived in the late 19th century to the early 20th century. In his writing career, he was interested in the adventures and wanderings to the islands in Asia and Africa. Most types of the story are a story that presents a multi-ethnic and cultural atmosphere. The citizen of the world was encountered in the novel under the European colonial and imperial rule. The writer found that racism and white man superiority was evident scattered in the novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895) which will be discussed in the next chapter. Apart from just a question of racism, which is the main point of this study, is how the Western intellectuals who work for the colonizer occupation in the East occurs in the texts he wrote. The case of political aims in literature that is explained above is not easily recognized in literary reading.

Because of the difficulty to identify the workings of Orientalism within a literary work, the writer chose the post-colonial theory as a scalpel of the novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895). It is due to post-colonial theory which has required the writer to do an intensive reading, which is multi-textual reading. This demands the writer to dig into interdisciplinary readings toward history, biography, philosophy, and another social science.

The writer does not deny the history that has happened and does not want to blame Joseph Conrad. In this study, the writer will explain that Joseph Conrad was pure Orientalist and have a special relation with the imperialism and colonialism of British empire.

2. Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the literary works, it is generally based on intrinsic and extrinsic elements within literary works. Intrinsic approach to literature is centered only on the work, while the extrinsic approach expands into context outside literary works or science outside of literature. Rene Wellek and Austen Warren stated that the starting point in literary study is the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves. It is also stated that the study of literature should, first and foremost, concentrate on the actual works or arts themselves (Wellek, 1978).

In this study, two approaches that have been described above will be used for an advisory of objectivity research. To be able to determine the novel *Almayer's Folly* and its relationship with Orientalism, the writer will combine both intrinsic and extrinsic study of the literature. It is aimed to produce a strong enough and irrefutable evidence towards the author's alignments against colonialism on literary creation techniques that are influenced by the ideology of power colonialism that is reflected in *Almayer's Folly*. The main theoretical approach that is used in this study is Post-colonial approach, particularly Orientalism theory. By using Post-colonial perspective the writer will analyze the images building of Orient and Occident characters and another element in novel that related. in the novel and to analyze the significance of the fictional techniques and characterizations in the post-colonial literary criticism.

Basic material for this research is from both of Orient and Occident characters and another element that split each of those term. First is the stereotype of the Orient and Occident character. Second, the multicultural, religious and political background in the novel *Almayer's Folly* that represent Orient as the other to the Occident.

In Orientalism, Wightman examines the vast tradition of Western "constructions" of the Orient. This tradition of Orientalism has been a "corporate institution" for coming to terms with the Orient, for authorizing views about it and ruling over it. Central to Said's analysis is that the Orient is actually a production of Western discourse, a means of self-definition of Western culture as well as of justifying imperial domination of Oriental peoples (p. 3). Given his crucial treatment of Orientalism as a discourse, his aim is not to show that this politically motivated edifice of language somehow distorts a "real" Orient, but rather to show that it is indeed a language, with an internal consistency, motivation, and capacity for representation resting on a relationship of power and hegemony over the Orient (Wightman, 2016).

Based on Edward Said's Orientalism theory, the shape of Orientalism is split into 6 points: 1. Orientalism constructs binary division; 2. Orientalism is Western Fantasy; 3. Orientalism is an institution; 4. Orientalism is literary; 5. Orientalism is legitimating; 6. There are 'latent' and 'manifest' Orientalism. In this section, the writer will apply three points (1,2,5) above, into this study; because the other elements of the novel that become the field of analysis cannot complete the basic requirement of Orientalism, or in the other words, the evidence that the writer finds in the novel is too weak to be discussed and to avoid the lack of argument and etc.

The stereotype of the Orient based on Edward Said Orientalism theory split into 6 points: 1. The Orient is Timeless; 2. The Orient is Strange; 3. Orientalism makes assumption about 'race'; 4. Orientalism makes assumption about gender; 5. The Orient is Feminine; 6. The Oriental is Degenerating. Each of points will be find and discuss according to the analysis of *Almayer's Folly*.

In this undergraduate thesis, the writer uses the theory of Orientalism to find the pattern of Orientalism and the evidence that Joseph Conrad is the part of Colonial instrument in colonizing the Oriental by discussing the variable Orientalism explained above. The writer explains the Eastern characters that become the model of Orientalism during that time which are reflected in the novel and also this opposite side, the deemed superior West. The writer will also reveal Conrad's perspective toward the Oriental land, particularly Malay archipelago (now: Indonesia) in this thesis by using this theory.

3. Method

In this thesis, the writer uses qualitative research method and analytic strategy. Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things (Wallek, Mayer, & Pfennig, 2018). In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things (Berg, 2015). The writer emphasizes on historical analysis (historiography) and document and textual analysis for the methodological strategies.

Research strategy that will be used for this research is data gathering technique. The writer gathers enough information from the novel and biography document written by the author and by some scholars. Information about social setting at the time when the novel was written will be taken from historical texts and documents to analyze its influence in the novel. In analyzing data, the writer uses descriptive technique. Descriptive technique is an explanation and interpretation the data related to the topic (Wallek et al., 2018).

Qualitative data will be obtained primarily through some sources. Primary data will be taken from the copy of novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895) in the form of words, dialogue, phrases and sentences. Secondary data will be taken from biography document of the author, other writings by the author, historical text, movie and video about the subject and various studies about the subject by some scholars.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the writer will find the pattern of Orientalism based on Edward Said's Orientalism theory which split into: Binary Division in *Almayer's Folly* (1895), Western Fantasy in *Almayer's Folly* (1895), Orientalism: Legitimizing. The second Problem is to find the evidence that prove Joseph Conrad as the author who takes side in Colonialism, which split into: (a) Joseph Conrad's Moralism, (b) *Almayer's Folly* as the False Critic of Colonialism and Imperialism

A. Binary Division in *Almayer's Folly* (1895)

In Binary opposition/division, the element of Western and Eastern in the Novel Always have a contradictory and clash, those two elements never have a good relation, even the relation was legitimized by married or the trade between them. In the novel, Conrad make West never meet East and East never have a same statue with West. The Writer will explain about it in the following section below.

a. *Stereotype of the Orient*

1. *The Orient: Timeless*

In Orientalism, "... the orient was considered as 'primitive' or 'backward' (J. McLeod & Pan, 2005). The West assumed that the Orient was cutting from the Western history. In the novel, it was represented trough the generalization of Malays native character as a lazy slave. The Malay are barbaric and cruel and poisonous is the way that the Malay solved the problem. The marriage between the white settle and native Malay is to buttress that the colonized must be represented by the colonizer.

2. *The Orient: Strange*

The Orient is the part of the bizarre in the Western eyes. In this part, the author was described the part of Orient character as the oddly different from the West. In novel, it was represented trough the ambivalence of the author in depicted the colored brown skin of the native people. The term "Brown" is the categorization which split the White "Nina" and the Brown "Native child". The author portrayed his ambivalence as white men by making the contrast when the native dark finger pulling the white Nina's white robe.

3. *Orientalism and Gender*

In the novel, the writer find that the Oriental male was frequently deemed insufficiently 'manly' and displayed a luxuriousness and foppishness that made him appear a grotesque parody of the (itself stereotype) 'gentler' female sex (S. McLeod, 2018). Dain Maroola as effeminate Oriental male in novel. The shape of his face and the way he was dressing represented by the author as

different and effeminate. The writer argues that the effeminate Oriental male was created to support the idea of 'gentle' look of Occident character in novel. The author described the expression of Dain Maroola of being "half-savage" and generalized the character of the race which have a "feminine eye".

4. *Orientalism and Race*

The Orientalist was made the assumption about the inherent racial characteristic. In the novel, the author represent the Arab are coward, the Chinese as subordinate labor and Drug dealer, while the Malay is intrigues and untrusted. They are all on the antagonist side against the protagonist Almayer. The author's assumption about race is "defined within the general negative representational framework typical of Orientalism" (John McLeod & McLeod, 1981).

5. *The Orient: Degenerating*

The word 'savages' was repetitiously implemented in the novel. All the elements of the opposite toward Europe are degenerated by the word of 'savages' and other words which have a close meaning with savages such as poisonous and swamp and so forth. KasparAlmayer, as the representation of European or the author in the novel became the character to make the Oriental are savage and need to be civilized.

b. *The Ideal of British Victorian Character*

The Western in the novel are depicted as superior and civilized that need to bring the civilization toward the Orient and Oriental. The West in the novel is the West based on the aim of colonialism that shows the reason to be a colonizer. In Almayer's Folly, the Europeans are represented as an ideal of British Victorian character. There are three major Western characters and two extras in Almayer's Folly: 1. KasparAlmayer, 2. Captain Lingard. Each of them is represented the characteristics of Victorian Imperialism.

1. *Kaspar Almayer*

In the story, the author put the point of view in the contrary, which means that the colonizer became a protagonist and the colonized are the opposite. Thus, all images of Almayer from the imaginary of his look like until his behavior is appropriated with the Western superiority which is popular in the colonial time. Almayer becomes the portrait of the common Victorian characters: strong, good looking, have an active imagination and ready to conquer the world (Meyer, 2011).

2. *Tom Lingard*

Not quite different from Almayer, Lingard also represented the Imperialism aim as a colonizer in the other's land. He is the great conqueror along the Bornean shore. He defeated the Sulu pirate bravely and patriotically. He is represented as the chivalry of British Imperialism. The morality of Christianity that becomes a part of Victorian era is also represented in Lingard. In the novel, he feels sinful by slaughtering the local Sulu pirate. The moral of Christianity of Lingard made him to take care the child of local Sulu Pirate that he found in between the dead body.

3. *The Dutch Vs. The British*

In colonizing contest between Holland and British according to the history of Indonesia colonial times, there is a competition and dispute between Dutch empire and British empire. Treaty of London 1824 became the major influence of this gap that symbolize as the relation between Almayer and Lingard. The author was mocking the Dutch colonial by created the Dutch character in the novel under the control of the British character.

B. *Western Fantasy in Almayer's Folly (1895)*

The Oriental land in Almayer's Folly was the place for searching career or adventure, the exotic nature of tropical place, while Europe became the dreamland of Western character. Europe in novel as the center of high civilization and the East as the opposite, the uncivilized, the unhistorical place.

a) *Europe*

All the white man characters in the novel who lived in the colonized island have Europe in his mind as the place to live and to spent the rest of their life, the goal of the white men in the tropical area. The white men who lived in the tropical area have a longing about his ancestor. Europe

became their obsession because the head of colonialism and imperialism rule is made and command from there. In short, Europe became their fantasy and superior than any other islands (Kuus, 2009).

b) The East

In the novel, the East is also depicted as the place in searching for money and adventure. Benjamin Disraeli said that “The East is a career” (via Said, 2003: xxvi). The author’s view toward Malay Archipelago in the novel is the opposite side of the Western world. If Western world is the civilized, neat and clean, the Eastern world is represented to be the opposite side: poisonous shore, miserably swamp, dangerous, cannibal, savages, and etc.

c) The Exotic of Malay Archipelago

In Almayer’s Folly (1895), the tropic was exotic, and wild like place. The tropical nature was exaggerated in the narration of the novel. The writer finds that this style of writing is categorized as the orientalist aim for making the East as the interesting place for the West. The terms referring to the orientalist aim in the novel are used such as exotic nature, magical life, full of misery, dangerous, and adventurous.

C. Orientalism: Legitimizing

In Almayer’s Folly (1895), British Empire has a dominant power than the Dutch while the Indigenous rulers only become the puppets in legitimating the Malay Archipelago. Lakamba is the representation of Malay ruler, Kaspar Almayer as the Dutch trader particularly as Lingard (British Rajah in Borneo) follower, and Arabs as the most influential trader in the Island. The author also makes the legitimization of the European power toward Eastern island by the white supremacist seen in how he represents each of European character in the novel as the special character with white skin. In Almayer’s Folly, Malay Archipelago as the British colonies was deconstructed in the aspect of aesthetic, politic and economy for the mass control of the colonized island. The colonial hegemony in Almayer’s Folly is divided in Aesthetic and politic. In short, the colonial hegemony that appears in Almayer’s Folly has a close relation with the way of colonization throughout the text as the instrument for mass control in the colonised land.

1. Colonial Hegemony in Aesthetic

The women character in Almayer’s Folly spread into two categories: European and Non-European. The beauty of the women in the novel Almayer’s Folly should be intellectual, capable in speaking, and know their position and the most important is to be white woman with white man education. To strengthen this beauty concept, the author makes the opposite side by putting the Non-European women as the badly-dressed, dirty, spoken bad words, having bad attitudes, savage and uncontrolled personality.

The legitimization of colonial hegemony through the beauty standard has dominated the beauty model of the women in the novel. The pretty women are represented through Nina, the half-breed from European father and Malay mother. She is tall, and has white skin, neat and clean figure. In contrast, the author makes Nina’s mother appearance as the opposite.

The writer argues that the author provides this aesthetic on how the beautiful woman is based on the British taste. In the time of the colonialism, many artists and scholars worked to serve the Empire and based on the Empire criteria (Sweeney, 2013). In conclusion, the aesthetic standard in the novel that have been discussed above is the relative standard, and the author generalizes that the beautiful women have the lighter skin such as European women.

2. Colonial Hegemony in Politic

The political map of Sambir, as the colonized island that is depicted in the novel Almayer’s Folly (1895), is divided into three major powers: Malays, Arabs, and Europe. The writer argues that the hegemony has an impact in the image of the story in positioning the race of the people on the ability to rule the people. By discrediting the ability of the non-European, this novel can be included as the part of colonial hegemony on the Malay Archipelago. The pride to be the European is the most dangerous instrument to colonize the Malay Island (Glassman, 2009).

D. Joseph Conrad Moralism

Racism is the moral of Colonialism, and Joseph Conrad is a man and product of its time, in this case, is the times of European colonialism and imperialism. In *Almayer's Folly*, the moralism of the author is represented by the characterization of Lingard and Almayer. Both of them are Conrad's European characters which became his tool in expressing racism in many ways. In novel, it was represented through the author sides in dominate the Christian religion and subordinated the other religion (Islam and Native's belief). The writer will explain below (Conrad, 1991).

a. Author and Christian Religion

In the *Almayer's Folly*, when Almayer married Lingard's adopted daughter it is under the icon of Christian religion because this religion is the religion of the subject of the colonized land. From the marriage between Almayer and Lingard's adopted daughter, they have a daughter called Nina. Since a child, Nina was sent to the Singapore to get the European education under the protection of Vinck's family. Then she also gets the knowledge in the Christian school. The writer argues that the act of Almayer by sending his daughter far away from the native land is the symbol of the unsecured and unwell situation or the condition in every aspect that surrounds and influences in the Sambir (the name of native land in *Almayer's Folly*).

The colonialism and imperialism are the most destructive ideologies in this planet earth, as it contains the pride of some groups of people that put themselves above the other groups. In conclusion, Christian religion penetrated many aspects of the European life and it becomes the instrument of colonialization under the name of civilization towards the others. The colonialism used Christian as the political tool to convert indigenous people from Nina's indigenous religion and discredit her religion by the sentence that symbolizes her half-savage womankind rejection towards Christianity.

b. Author and Islamic Religion

In the *Almayer's Folly*, Islamic religion is represented by the Arabs who is in charge as the great trader of Sambir. Conrad represents the Arabs in *Almayer's Folly*, as the people who use the religion for the sake of the profit. The writer argues that this was the stereotype that Conrad built to represent the characterization of the capitalist under the cover of Muslim.

In the *Almayer's Folly*, Islam was represented as the religion that gives the right for choosing the wife more than one. In the novel, the readers did not have the scene or narration that shows how Reshid treats all his wives, whether he is being fair for each of his wife or not. The story cuts piece by piece and leaves the stereotype behind (Wach, 2019).

c. Author and The Native's Belief

The native of Sulu origins refers to Mrs. Almayer, Lakamba, Dain Maroola, and Babalatchi depicted in the novel as Barbarian and have no religion. This becomes the generalization of one value which is better than the other values or faith. In short, the categorization of faith in the time of colonial is the tool of colonization to control and take advantage of all the resources (nature and human) of the colonized island.

Dain Maroola is represented as as Brahmin from Bali. The writer noticed that Dain Maroola as the representation of indigenous religion is only depicted in the side of exotic, mysteriousness, unusual, and there is no explanation on how he as a Brahmin represents his Brahmin. The author put the Malay characters as nothing: no moral values, no faith, and no religion.

E. The Novel *Almayer's Folly* as the False Criticism of Colonialism and Imperialism

In reading the *Almayer's Folly*, the author told the readers about the beautiful night at sea, the beauty of nature, moralism, and cultural encounter. If the readers read the *Almayer's Folly* without the literature theory, the writer argues that this novel is only the novel about love affair which makes the story more complex and more intent. When the writer read the *Almayer's Folly* with the perspective of post-colonialism and followed the point of identifying Orientalist project through literature, many categorizations and subjected toward the other is revealed.

Conrad made the image of the alienated European character far away from his ancestral land in which Conrad called “miserably swamp of Malay Archipelago” in the novel. The writer called this as the false criticism because the writer could not find the narration that can make the readers realize the bad effect of colonialism. In fact, in the *Almayer’s Folly* the domination of binary opposition and racism are reflected in many ways in throughout the whole novel.

5. Conclusion

First, Joseph Conrad sets the binary division in the pattern of the novel. In this case, Tom Lingard is as the patron and Kaspar Almayer as the client; Lingard is the British and Almayer is the Dutch. In fact, the Dutch is always in war with British in colonizing the Malay Archipelago. In this case, it makes the binary division in this novel is unique. In other words, binary division is set to support the superiority of the European colonizer and used to make the status quo of European colonization in Malay Archipelago to be long lasting.

Second, to support the ideology in the 19th century of European imperialism, the author sets the Western fantasy in the novel. The writer argues that this representation is implemented in the visualization of tropical nature and word processing that the author had classified to make the effect of the tropical exotic and mysterious wild nature in Malay Archipelago as the metaphor; this representation in metaphoric narrative built in contrasting to the hard weather and high standard civilization of the Occident.

Third, the writer found that Orientalism is legitimating the white superiority in Malay Archipelago, and it is represented in the form of hegemony in aesthetic and politic in the novel. The leader in Malay group in the novel is depicted with a low capability as the leader. They are corrupted, savage, bad looking and are comparable with the Western standards which are strong, gentle, rational and able to rule and to govern.

Fourth, the author sets his moralism in the novel *Almayer Folly* to support Christian religion as the tool of colonialism. The moralism of the author is represented as his voice to gratitude Christianity in the novel and degenerate another religion. The other religions are Islam and indigenous religion. This is the evidence of Joseph Conrad as the Orientalist and his attempt to take side in colonizing the Malay Archipelago.

Fifth, *Almayer’s Folly* as the false criticism of colonialism and imperialism is concluded from all research about this novel that said that *Almayer’s Folly* criticizes colonialism. The author does not accomplish to spread his criticism in his characters because the characters that he depicts are benefited for the white superiority in the 19th century.

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