

COLONIALISM AND RACISM REFLECTED IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S

***HEART OF DARKNESS* (1902):**

A POSTCOLONIALISM PERSPECTIVE

PUBLICATION ARTICLE



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 PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

This Study is about colonialism and racism. The problem of this study is how colonialism and racism reflected in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. The object of the study is Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. It used post-colonialism perspective. This study belongs to qualitative research. In this method, there are two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel and the secondary data is other material related to the study. Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The result of the study shows the following conclusion, based on the analysis it is clear that there is a close relation between this novel and the social reality in nineteenth century.

Keyword: Heart of Darkness, Post-colonialism, Colonialism, Racism

A. Introduction

Heart of Darkness is a novella by Joseph Conrad. At first, this literary work as a serial in a magazine called Blackwoods in 1890. But, finally it was compiled be a short novel or usually called as novella in 1902.

This Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* carried many social problems. Such as that will be discussed in this study are colonialism and racism.

The writer analyses the colonialism and racism in novel using post-colonialism perspective. Bhabha (1994:171) sees postcolonial critique emerging from colonial experiences.

The writer wants to analyze it because the novel is interesting. It is reflecting the real phenomenon of nineteenth century.

There are many previous studies that used in this study. The first research was conducted by Febrinan (Universitas Kristen Petra, 2012) entitled "Moral Values in Joseph Conrad's Novel *Heart of Darkness*". This research aims to describe the characterization of the characters in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This research aims to analyze the moral values of Charlie Marlow and Mr. Kurtz as the main characters. It was described using a descriptive qualitative research. The second research was conducted by Mikewati (Universitas Kristen Petra, 1991), entitled "The Reliability of Nick Carraway in the Great Gatsby and Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* as Narrators and Commentators, and Their Similarities as the Main Characters of the Novels". This research aims to compare the character Nick Carraway and Marlow as a narrator commentator in the novel. It was described using a descriptive method. The third research was conducted by Aninda (Universitas Kristen Petra, 2008), entitled "A Study of Psychological Conflict Underground by Joseph Conrad As The Main Character In Marlow's Decision". The researcher analyzed the smartness and messages of the novel through Marlow as the main character. Descriptive research is used in this

study. The fourth is an essay by Syahpura (Akademi Maritim Indonesia, 2011) entitled “Hypocrisy of Imperialism in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*”. The analysis focuses on the main themes, that hypocrisy of imperialism. Syahpura said that in this novel Conrad contradicts the common belief that imperialism is regarded as a glorious and worthy enterprise. The fifth is an essay written by Anggraini (2000), entitled “The Imperialism Depicted in Joseph Conrad’s Novel *Heart of Darkness*”. The essay talks about the imperialism in the novel. The sixth is an essay by Rosmarin (University of Texas, 1989) entitled “Darkening the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism and *Heart of Darkness*”. Her essay use contemporary criticism for criticizing the novel. It criticized the meaning of “darkness” in the novel. Darkness does not, by virtue of this reversal, turn into its opposite, into a perverse sort of whiteness that can now be relied upon. While it is true that dark men in this tale tend to behave in ways more moral and more civilized than do white men — virtually every critic notes, for example, that the near-starving cannibals on board keep their hungry eyes off their masters — darkness remains the place and mode of Marlow's terminal struggle with Kurtz. It also remains the term Marlow uses to phrase his most probing and, of course, permanently unanswered question about Kurtz and himself.

B. Research Method

This study belongs to qualitative method. In this method, there are two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel itself, meanwhile the secondary data sources are other materials related to the study. Both data are collected through library research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

In collecting data, the writer will takes some steps as follow: Reading the novel repeatedly, taking notes of important parts both primary and secondary data, arranging the data into several groups based on its theoretical

category, selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis, and drawing conclusion.

In analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 11). The writer analyzes the data based on post-colonial perspective. Focus will be paid on the meaning of colonialism and racism reflected in *Heart of Darkness* novel.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

The writer gets some research finding in analyzing *Heart of Darkness* novel. Each finding has some cases to be discussed.

1. Findings

a. Colonialism

Edward Said wrote that colonialism is mainly about political and economic relationships, some of which may or may not continue after a state gains independence.

Below are a few quotes that stated about colonialism that is reflected in the novel Conrad.

“They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness.”
(p. 9-10).

The quote above reflects the existence of a robbery and atrocities in an effort to boost earnings. Those that don't do not think of their atrocities. They just tried to dredge the wealth as much as possible with any way.

“...., where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthy atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb, ...” (p. 25)

In the other paragraph, Conrad also wrote:

“Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. ... they were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea.” (p. 28-29)

From the quote above it can be seen that the black people were oppressed in the circumstances in such a way. How those blacks drained her energy and treated ruthlessly.

Colonialism was more visible at the end of Chapter 1. When the devoted band told that they grabbed all the treasure of the native.

“This devoted band called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and I believe they were sworn to secrecy.

Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage; there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe. Who paid the expense of the noble enterprise I don't know; but the uncle of our manager was leader of that lot." (p. 60-61)

b. Racism

According to Sinead Caslin's essay, the division and classification of human beings by physical and biological characteristics. Race often is used by various groups to either maintain power or to stress solidarity. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it was often used as a pretext by European colonial powers for slavery and/or the "white man's burden."

The following are quotes that describe racism:

"It was paddled by black fellows. You could see afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks – these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf align their coast." (p. 24)

According to the above quotations, Conrad emphasized about the physical state of black people who are rowing the boat. Where, he has a bone, muscle, wild and strong energy of vitality.

Conrad also sees to equate those natives with Satan.

“But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil rapacious and pitiless folly.” (p. 30)

In the excerpt, cruelly describes the native people as Satan that mushy misguided and weak-eyed.

“Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair.” (p 31)

The bad perspective did also by Marlow. Even though, he assumed that the blacks was like animals which would victimize him.

“I looked at them with a swift quickening of interest – not because it occurred to me I might be eaten by them ...”
(p. 84)

Marlow’s judgment of them is the word “I might be eaten by them.

On sub-altern has discussed that when fires break out, those black people who blamed. In this case, not only black people oppressed. But it is also considered low, because, white people think that black people are the ones that "brute" (p. 50).

Angrily, the white man said: “What a row the brute makes!” (p.50)

2. Discussion

Based on the post-colonial analysis above, can be concluded that the post-colonial theory could divided into many parts, such as imperialism, subaltern, colonialism and racism.

The first one is imperialism. As an imperialist here are white man. The real example is Mr. Kurtz. He came to the Africa for trading. But, in fact, he didn't just trading. But the actual core is for expanding the commercial area.

Not only it, white man also engages to dredge the advantages from the inland. By the tempting many goods that they brought, such like beads, cotton, and the materials from metal, they beg the reward shapes the ivory from that inland. However, what they gave didn't as much as what they beg.

The second is subaltern. Subaltern here implied as a colonized. In this novel, the subaltern are niggers, they are the blacks. They said colonized, because indirectly their area was grabbed by the white man. Moreover they pressed to works without gratify fee.

The third is colonialism. As an the fact above, the niggers was pressed to work without gratify fee. Moreover that seemed more cruel is the niggers was permitted to starved. Then, when they were attacked by the tropic epidemic, there is no effort to recover them. Even, they permitted to die.

And the fourth is racism. Racism here stressed to looking down to the other race. Here, that race is the niggers. They assumed as a fool man and immorality. Even their attitude assumed like the animals.

From the discussion above, it appears that Conrad actually wants to raise that event as a description of post colonialism in action at the time. However, in the novel, Conrad sees more black people in terms of viewing

as white people, not in terms of the view as a black person. So Conrad discriminate look like white people.

The writer think, as a writer, Conrad could be wiser not to looked too discriminate one party only. So the novel he wrote could be acceptable without causing controversy.

D. Conclusion

After analyzing *Heart of Darkness* using Post-colonial theory, the writer comes to the following conclusions:

First, there are three indicators of colonialism: (1) the Europeans colonized Africa. Second; (2) they did not just colonized the Africans, but also tried to grabbed all of the natural resource of Africa and put the advantages of it; (3) they also set the government of Africa. Beside the indicators of colonialism, there are the indicators of racism too: (1) there is unpleasant treatment for African by oppressing and qonquering them; (2) European looked down to the African, because they felt that they had the higher position than African.

Second is the reflection of colonialism and racism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. These reflections are: (1) based on the plot, we can see that there are many unpleasant treatment from the European to the African; (2) based on the setting, Africa told as a dark place; (3) based on the style, the African told as a "nigger", whereas nigger is a citation for the colonized people.

Third, Joseph Conrad revealed the colonialism and racism in the novel because he was the part of colonialism. He was a white man, so he takes side to the European and looks down to the African too.

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