

PRIMITIVENESS OF THE CARIBBEAN
AS AN ORIENTALISM DISCOURSE:
A POST-COLONIAL STUDY ON DANIEL DEFOE'S
ROBINSON CRUSOE

A Thesis



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ABSTRAK

Dalam skripsi berjudul *Primitiveness of the Caribbean as an Orientalism Discourse: Post Colonial Study on Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe* ini, penulis menggunakan gagasan Orientalisme Edward Said untuk menganalisa novel *Robinson Crusoe* yang ditulis oleh Daniel Defoe, seorang pengarang Inggris kenamaan, pada tahun 1719. Penulis akan mengaitkan sejarah Eropa pasca Renaissance yang menjadi latar waktu kisah petualangan ini dan latar belakang hidup pengarang dengan analisa wacana Orientalisme. Oposisi biner yang ditampilkan antara tokoh utama dan penduduk asli kepulauan Karibia akan menjadi poin penting untuk memperlihatkan wacana bias tentang bangsa Timur.

Penulis menggunakan metode penelitian pustaka untuk mengumpulkan data dan metode kualitatif untuk menganalisis data, sehingga agenda Orientalisme yang terdapat dalam novel *Robinson Crusoe* dapat disingkap. Teori Orientalisme yang digagas oleh Edwar Said (yang merupakan elaborasi dari konsep wacana Michael Foucault) dipakai sebagai fokus kajian. Wacana, menurut Foucault adalah serangkaian ide-ide atau pemikiran yang darinya dunia dapat diketahui. Wacana diciptakan oleh mereka yang mempunyai kekuasaan (*power*) dengan tujuan dan maksud-maksud tertentu

Setelah menganalisa novel *Robinson Crusoe* dengan menggunakan perspektif pasca-kolonial (dengan bertumpu secara spesifik pada teori Orientalisme Said), penulis menemukan beberapa oposisi biner yang sengaja ditampilkan oleh pengarang novel untuk menjalankan perannya sebagai salah satu aktor yang mempertahankan sekaligus melestarikan dominasi Barat terhadap Timur melalui karya sastra. Primitivisme, yang menjadi fokus pijakan analisa penulis juga terlihat dengan gamblang baik dalam deskripsi geografis (dimana Kepulauan Karibia digambarkan sebagai sebuah *terra nullius*) maupun dalam karakterisasi penduduk asli kepulauan Karibia. Hal ini mempertegas asumsi penulis bahwa Deniel Defoe adalah seorang orientalis sekaligus primitivis.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Post-colonial literary criticism is the way of evaluating and interpreting the work of literature written by or talking about post-colonial people. It takes concern on the experiences, history and impacts (social as well as psychological) of colonialism toward the colonized people. The countries which have become major topic of post-colonial discussion are ranging from Africa (and its diasporas), Australia, India, West Indies and Caribbean Islands, to Egypt, Malaysia, and Indonesia, or simply all territories which were once colonized by European empire. Literary texts produced by people from those places or by 'outsiders' who take the countries as setting have been analyzed to see the bad impact of colonization.

However, it is worth to note that post-colonial studies pay also a great attention to the discourses spread by European about colonized society. By the late of twentieth century, European, who after the boom of technological inventions which was triggered by Renaissance era (1400-1700) conducted many voyages (which mostly led them to a colonialism (desire), had undertaken more than three fourth of the world and influenced experiences of the people in the areas (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002).

Post-colonial criticism gains its popularity after the publication of Edward Said's book '*Orientalism*' (1978). Through this monumental book Edward Said proposes a term 'Orient' to call the people outside Europe. Even tough in Said's

book the discussion about the Orient mostly refer to Asia (and Islam), but the same case and hypothesis work also upon all countries which have ever experienced colonialism. In regard of this, the orient can be seen similarly as the term 'the rest', as 'the other' of the West. During and after the Renaissance era, there were so many writings produced by the European about the 'orient'. Unfortunately, those writings are neither neutral nor objective. The texts written by the European contain various intentions; the tendency which is, to quote Ratna (2008), basically intended to underestimate the people outside their nation or race (the other). Binary opposition about the European and the others occurred on the text. They considered themselves as the chosen race; educated, cultured, civilized, while the others were considered as primitive, uncivilized, and uneducated people. In short, the Europe put their ideology within the texts. Said believes that "Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities; orientalism is a school of representation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities" (1979: 203).

Said divides Orientalism into two major categories; they are latent orientalism and manifest orientalism. Latent orientalism refers to thoughts, ideology, myths, and stereotypes attached upon the Orient. Meanwhile, manifest orientalism is various views about Oriental society which have become apparent in languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth (1979: 206). In the regards of these, literature is one of the media used by Orientalist to spread their ideology. Through literary works, they tell about the Orient based on their own perspective. As stated above, in the literary works written by the European, the Orient tends to be categorized as primitive and uncivilized people. This tendency

can be seen in many European literary works, including Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. (Ratna, 2008).

For that reason, the writer is interested to conduct a research about the Oriental texts. The writer chooses Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to be analyzed by using Post-colonial criticism. There are some reasons why the writer is interested to use Postcolonial criticism on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. First, *Robinson Crusoe* is regarded as one the first English novels (published first in 1719) which is acknowledged throughout the century as the 'great novel', 'monumental', and becomes a 'phenomenon' in the history of English literature (particularly in novel genre). Though there are some critiques lie behind the success of this novel (such as the grammatical error made by Defoe in some part of the story), but the appreciation is subjected frequently to this piece of fiction. On the back cover endorsed by a Peacock Book (publisher) Editor, it is stated that "...*Robinson Crusoe* has remained one of the best-known and most read of English novels. It gained popularity among children and adults alike..." The story told in *Robinson Crusoe* then becomes such a role model for the next adventure stories, and it creates a new wave of literary style direction called '*Robinsonade*'. Also, it is obvious that *Robinson Crusoe* has been regarded and accepted by literary-goers a masterpiece that brings its author to the top of fame.

Second, the novel tells about the adventure of an Englishman after his shipwrecking in the Caribbean island. In respect of this, the writer finds the existence of the Orientalism discourses within this story. It then becomes evidence that a bias thoughts about the Orient have been offered since long time ago. To go further, we can say that the discourse does appear in the early development of

English literature. Third, in the novel, Defoe describes the characters to supports the binary opposition about the Europe and the Orient. The Caribbean in this story is described as the primitive and cannibal people. Fourth, Robinson Crusoe is trusted as a story inspired by a true experience. As a result, the writer gets a strong sense that through the novel (which is based on the real story), the author wants to let the reader knows what he experienced about the land and the inhabitants. The possibility of the question whether the events told is true or not will be minimized automatically by this 'based on true story' label. Thus, the writer proposes a research entitled "The Primitiveness of the Caribbean as an Orientalism Discourse: A Postcolonial Study on Daniel Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe*".

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Primitiveness is one of the major topics discussed in Postcolonial criticism. As a discourse, the primitiveness refers to the life of the people outside Europe. Bill Ashcroft, Garret Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Key Concepts of Post-colonial Studies* (2002) suggest "Primitivism remains a problematic concept, and one that most-postcolonial studies have treated with caution as a descriptive category, whilst recognizing that the artistic and social movements it describes have had powerful historical links with colonialist and post-colonialist discourses" (197). Primitivism is indeed referred firstly to the art history, but then also used widely in literary studies (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 195). It then becomes a key point of the binary opposition between the West and the Rest. Primitivism is the traits of the Orient (the Rest) as an opposite trait of the civilized West. To go further, as Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin point out, "things called primitive because

its convention did not match those of the dominant European tradition whose values were considered to establish the norms of civilized and mature art (society)" (196). Abrams, furthermore argues that primitivism is considered the era which was existed in 'the state of nature', before society had even begun'.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, the primitivism passes on the Caribbean people who are narrated by the main character. Through his journal, Crusoe wants to tell the reader that the people who lived in the Caribbean island were cannibals, very primitive and uncivilized people. Crusoe, the major character who is also an Englishman, feels to have responsibility to civilize the people there. As the time passes, he succeeded in civilizing some of the cannibals. He taught them English and Christian beliefs.

In addition, the superiority of the white is also shown in this story. Crusoe, the white man who was shipwrecked in the Caribbean island that he never known before, was able to face the obstacles and the wilderness of the nature. Even though he was alone, but Crusoe was able to safe himself from the Caribbean cannibals. Since he was provided himself with the technology (using gun), Crusoe won the battle with a group of the primitive.

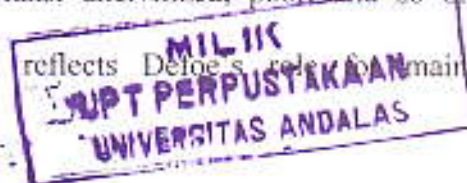
Therefore, the writer uses the Orientalism discourse, as a sub point of Postcolonial criticism to analyze the novel in order to reveal the intention of the European (author) when making a literary work about the Orient.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Literature is one of the media used by the Orientalists to spread the discourses about the Other. In his book '*Orientalism*' Edward Said calls the literary works as manifest orientalism. Within the work, as Said goes on, there are so many binary oppositions that are intentionally written in order to make a clear border between Europe and the Rest. The tendency of bias opinion about the Orient that were maintained by the Orientalist is appear in one of literary works written by English prominent author Daniel Defoe in his most famous adventure novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

In the novel, Defoe tells about the adventure of Robinson Crusoe, an Englishman who had been involved into such a trouble sea voyage with some traders from Brazil. Their ships was hit by big storm and left Crusoe as the only survivor who then put by accident ashore to an uninhabited island somewhere in Caribbean islands. There, Crusoe tried to survive by any single possible effort. He lived there for such a long time and met with the cannibal natives. The binary oppositions are reflected by the differences between Crusoe and the natives. As a European, Crusoe represents a good civilized human being, who then civilizes the native people of Caribbs. The West are civilized, educated, advanced in technology, cultured and having good manner. Meanwhile, in other hand, the Orient are primitive, savages, barbarians, uncivilized, poor, and so on. It is obvious that such bias description reflects Defoe's role in maintaining orientalism discourses.



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