UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF IDENTITY IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE IN SELECTED WORKS BY JOSEPH CONRAD

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By

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DEDICATION

To Hayat
Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: Arbaayah Ali Termizi, Ph.D

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Uncertainty about identity is prevalent in modern literature. Self and identity in Joseph Conrad has been mostly researched into the search for self and identity in social context and through confrontation of ‘self’ with ‘the other’. Humans’ self-knowledge is mostly derived from the information gathered in social environments. However, experiencing natural environment especially the dark side of nature can be another contributing factor. Under the light of ecocriticism this study un masks how wilderness ‘provokes’ the Conradian heroes to arrive at the state of self-awareness as one part of self forms through direct confrontation with non-human natural environment – when 'self' is placed against 'nonself', apart from the socio-cultural factors such as race, gender, class and nationality that form identity. Owing to being defeated in their quest in the wilderness whether marine or terrestrial such as jungles and islands, Conrad’s adventurous characters come to the new perception of their
‗self‘. By giving them enough time and space, nature provides them with an opportunity for self-awareness. It serves as a mirror to show them who they really are and how powerful nature might be in the battle between human and nature. Their ultimate awareness is that defeating nature is nothing but the vanity of human wishes.

As interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism calls, the research relies partly on scientific researches focusing on the prominent role of natural environment in redefining identity in human being – how human judges himself in terms of autonomy and competence in nature. Among different types of environment, wilderness as the main subset of nature would be highlighted. Different aspects of wilderness including weather, sublime, inversion, indifference and uncontrollability make way to see how nature is presented in the works and how the characters may define themselves to themselves. The dark side of nature as a recurring element of Joseph Conrad’s works would be traced referring to Edmund Burke’s idea of sublime to help make the study more comprehensive. What adds strength in this study is the limited number of researches scrutinizing Joseph Conrad’s novels from ecocritical perspective in terms of identity formation and self-awareness. Finally, this study intends to show redefinition of identity that Conrad’s major characters experienced in an authentic way based on what he experienced through the mirror of nature in his twenty-year seafaring life.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

SATU KRITIKAN EKO TERHADAP IDENTITI CERMINAN ALAM DALAM KARYA TERPILIH CONRAD

Oleh

Morteza Habibi Nesami

September 2012

Chair: Arbaayah Ali Termizi, Ph.D
Faculti: Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Identiti dalam ‘Cermin alam semula jadi’[mirror of nature]:
Suatu kajian ekokritis karya terpilih Joseph Conrad

Ketidakpastian identiti sering digambarkan dalam kesusastraan moden. Diri dan identiti dalam karya Joseph Conrad banyak dikaji bagi pencarian diri dan identiti dalam konteks sosial, dan seterusnya persemukaan antara ‘diri’ dengan ‘yang lain’. Pengetahuan kendiri manusia biasanya diperoleh daripada maklumat yang dikumpul dalam persekitaran sosial. Walau bagaimanapun, pengalaman persekitaran semula jadi khususnya sisi gelap alam semula jadi turut mempengaruhi pengetahuan kendiri manusia. Kajian ekokritis ini mendedahkan bagaimana kawasan belantara merangsang watak-watak adiwira dalam karya Conrad mencapai tahap kesedaran kendiri sebagai salah satu bentuk kendiri melalui persemukaan langsung dengan persekitaran semula jadi bukan manusia—apabila ‘diri’ diletakkan dengan ‘bukan

Oleh sebab sifatnya yang interdisiplin pengkaji ekokritisme bergantung sebahagiannya kepada kajian saintifik yang memfokuskan kepada peranan utama persekitaran semula jadi dalam mentakrifkan identiti manusia—bagaimana manusia menghakimi diri mereka dalam aspek autonomi dan kecekapan apabila berhadapan dengan alam semula jadi. Antara beberapa jenis persekitaran, belantara adalah subset alam semula jadi yang akan diketengahkan. Aspek belantara yang luas meliputi kepelbagaian iklim, mengasyikkan, inversi, rakus dan di luar kawalan menunjukkan bagaimana keadaan alam semula jadi dipaparkan dalam karya dan bagaimana watak mendefinisikan diri mereka sendiri. Sisi gelap alam semula jadi yang merupakan unsur yang sering diulang dalam karya Joseph Conrad dapat dijejak merujuk idea Edmund Burke tentang konsep “sublime” membantu melengkapkan kajian ini. Kekuatan dan keunikan kajian ini adalah kerana kurangnya kajian Conrad yang menggunakan perspektif ekokritis dan konsep kendiri dalam pembentukan . Akhirnya, identiti watak-watak utama Conrad dijelaskan secara lebih sahih dan
nyata hasil daripada penafsiran semula identitinya sendiri melalui cermin alam semula jadi semasa penglibatan beliau sebagai pelaut selama dua puluh tahun itu.
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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 06-09-2012 to conduct the final examination of Morteza Habibi Nesami on his thesis entitled "AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF IDENTITY IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE IN SELECTED WORKS BY JOSEPH CONRAD" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Ph.D in English Literature.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

___________________________
MORTEZA HABIBI NESAMI

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