

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Colonization is one of the most historical phenomena that ever happened in this world. It stretches around the globe and across time. The modern state of global colonization began around the 15th century led by the European explorers to discover the new worlds. The European explorers sailed from their land to the Middle East, Africa, Asia, America, and even Australia. During this colonization, there were countless conflicts happened between the indigenous and the colonizers. One of these conflicts was between the Australian indigenous known as the Aborigines and the British Empire. Some of these conflicts ended up in history books and some of them become the inspiration of literary works.

In literature, there are many authors who criticize colonization. Some of them are the indigenous people who write about their life during colonization. The colonizers themselves also write about colonization, yet in different perspectives. One of the most acknowledged authors from Australia - which happened to be one of the biggest colonies in history - is David George Joseph Malouf. He has written many literary works like novels, short stories, poetry, and a play. He was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2000, his 1993 novel *Remembering Babylon* won the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 1996, he won the inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award in 2008, and he was

shortlisted for the Booker Prize. In 2016, he received the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature.

In this research, the writer takes *An Imaginary Life* as the object of the research. The novel tells a story about Ovid, a famous Roman poet of the Augustan era who has been exiled for unknown reasons. Ovid, who is in exile, comes into contact with the barbaric world as against the civilized Roman society in which he has lived. He starts living with these natives in a place called Tomis. Initially, he feels out of place but as time passes by, and with the help of the Wild Boy, he becomes part of their tribe. The writer believes that this story can be taken as a representation of the relationship between the early British people in Australia and the Australian indigenous since the British were highly civilized people and the aborigines were just a bunch of barbarians.

The reason why the writer is interested to take up this story is because the writer sees the story of Ovid who gets exiled to Tomis is the same as the British early settlers who came to Australia. Another reason is that the writer is interested to know how David Malouf - who happens to be a British descendant - presents the story in the perspective of a civilized man who tries to adapt with barbarians culture to the point he becomes part of them. The writer finds it unique because as a descendant of a colonialist himself, David Malouf gives the story of Ovid without focusing on how great the empire he comes from but instead it is a story of how a man adapts with a lesser civilization and coexist with each other.

The story of Ovid in *An Imaginary Life* can be taken as an allegory of what Australia has become and what fate the aborigines were facing, thus the writer is

interested to give a deeper look at the story in hope to discover how the story of Ovid in *An Imaginary Life* represents the history of Australian colonization by the British Empire.

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

The writer believes *An Imaginary Life* is an allegory of the British colonization in Australia. Ovid, a famous Roman poet of the Augustan era who comes from highly civilized society, represents the colonizers. Meanwhile, the place called Tomis, an outpost of the Roman Empire between the Danube and the Black Sea, is the representation of the pre-colonized Australia. Through this novel, David Malouf illustrates how the early British people in Australia faced the Australian indigenous with all the efforts they have done that makes Australia today. The novel shows that Ovid sees Tomis as an uncivilized society but through time he becomes part of them. The writer wants to show the reason why Ovid, who comes from highly civilized society, can coexist with the Tomis people even though he sees them as uncivilized the first time he meets them. The writer's hypothesis is that Malouf wants to show that even though one culture is inferior to the other, both cultures can still coexist and respect each other. The historical analysis helps the writer to find the connection between the story and the history of Australia.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

This research focuses on analyzing *An Imaginary Life* by David Malouf as an allegory of British colonization in Australia; the early British people in

Australia is represented by Ovid and the Australian indigenous or the aborigines are represented by the people of Tomis. The analysis is based on postcolonial criticism point of view. Then the writer finds the connection between the story in the novel and British colonization in Australia. The discussion is based on Edward Said's argument who argues that the cultural representations generated with the us-and-them binary relation are social constructs, which is mutually constitutive and cannot exist independently of each other because each exists on account of and for the other. This analysis, therefore, concludes the author's perspective about the binary relation about us-and-them in colonization.

1.4 Research Questions

The main focus of the research is to explain the novel's story, particularly Ovid's life in the exile, as the allegory of British colonization in Australia. Specifically, the question that the writer investigates are :

- a. How does the setting of Tomis represent the pre-colonized Australia?
- b. How does the relationship of the characters (Ovid, The Wild Boy, and The People of Tomis) represent the early British people in Australia and Australian indigenous people?
- c. Considering the novel as the allegory of British colonization in Australia, what is David Malouf's perspective about orientalism?

1.5 The Objective of the Research

The main objective of this research is to prove that the novel (based on the characters, setting, and plot) is the allegory of British colonization in Australia. Another objective is to explain David Malouf's perspective about colonization, particularly the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized.

1.6 The Review of Related Studies

To conduct this research, the writer found several researches that are related to this thesis, either in terms of the object of analysis or the theory/approach used. following is the review of them.

The first article is written by John Rhys-Davies - the actor who plays Gimli the Dwarf Warrior in *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy - from BBC titled "How was *The Lord of the Rings* influenced by World War One?". Davies argues that the monsters from *The Lord of the Rings* are an allegory of the machines that were used in World War One. He equates the giant, elephant-like Mûmakil, or Oliphaunts in *The Lord of the Rings* - which is described as monsters that could destroy everything in their path - with the tanks, the machine guns and the flamethrowers that were used in the first World War. He also believes that the cavalry riders who wear gas masks in the first World War are an allegory to Tolkien's Nazgul, or Ringwraiths, both are shrouded in heavy black cloaks and wear masks. The screams of the Nazgul are also similar to the sound of artillery shells flying through the air before exploding. The psychological effect that the artillery sounds had on soldiers is comparable to the effect of the Nazgûl's

screams (2015:1). The research article written by John Rhys-Davies is as additional guidance for the writer of this research due to the good explanation with the analysis and the similar use of approach.

Saadi Nikro from Notre Dame University, Lebanon, discussed *An Imaginary Life* in an *Open Journal Postcolonial* 2006, in an article entitled “David Malouf: Exploring Imperial Textuality”. Nikro argued that *An Imaginary Life* shows the relationship between language and landscape. He also suggested *An Imaginary Life* as a conventional notion of the frontier that tends more to assert, rather than challenge, narratives of conquest and exploration informing the language and figurative power of imperial texts.

An Imaginary Life is also discussed in a thesis from 2018 entitled *The Influence of Nature Towards Self-Realization Of The Main Character's Identity In David Malouf's An Imaginary Life : An Ecocritical Reading* by Faridz Al-Ashari - an English Studies student in Andalas University. Anshari believes that nature has a role in influencing Ovid in changing his way of thinking, that nature helps Ovid to learn and change him to a better man. Anshari also found out that some of the important elements that become the main points of the story are actually symbols that convey important meaning.

Faiza Mardzoeki - a playwright, theater producer, and director based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia - writes an essay on her website in November 2005 entitled “The significance of the figure of ‘the Child’ in David Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life*”. In analyzing the works, Mardzoeki utilizes the aspects of character that revolves around the Child in the story. She argues that Malouf explores the issues

of the interrelationship between an old man, Ovid and the Child, and the changes it brings in human personality. The Child in *An Imaginary Life*, which is described as a wild boy, is a symbol of uncivilized society and shows the process of reflection of humanity's evolution into a new self. Ovid represents a man who comes from civilized society. He has to face changes in life as an exile. In this process, Ovid's self-consciousness has been tested through many experiences. Furthermore, the main cause in Ovid's transformation is The Child. Thus, the events of the meeting between Ovid and the child in Tomis is about the process of shaping selfness. Their interaction with each other results in the process of transformation. While it is acceptable to see the Child as a symbol of barbaric or uncivilized society, the writer of this research believes that the Wild Child is an allegory to Christianity based on how Ovid and the people of Tomis described him as something divine and how the Wild Boy's appearances is explained in the novel.

An article written by Dallas Barker -an Australian lecturer from Southern Cross University- entitled "The case for David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*" stated that *An Imaginary Life* is about an individual journey from a state of being unfamiliar with the environment and the wild world to a state of being familiar with the untrained, wild things of the world. It is also about a poet, a slave to advanced civilization, realizing that there are other ways to live and to see in the world; ways that are beautiful and fulfilling. "Those themes – of belonging and exile, of how to relate to the environment and to those who are different to us – are core to the debate about what it means to be Australian today" (Barker, 2014).

The writer of this research also believes that *An Imaginary Life* is a story of a journey of a man, not just as an individual but also as a representation of a group of people who have gone through a similar experience.

Based on all the related studies mentioned above, the writer of this research is certain that *An Imaginary Life* is never analyzed in the same topic as this research talk about, meaning that this research is purely and originally a new idea.

1.7 The Theoretical Framework

This research applies the mimetic criticism since it takes the novel as the allegory of British colonization in Australia. According to M.H. Abrams in his book entitled *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, explained that “mimetic criticism views the literary work as an imitation or reflection, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is the truth of its representation to the subject matter that it represents or should represent” (1999:51). Based on Abrams’ definition of mimetic criticism above, the story of Ovid in Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life* is taken as an imitation of the real world which is the British colonization in Australia. Applying the mimetic criticism shows the connection between the story of Ovid in Tomis and the colonization of British Empire in Australia.

This research also applies post-colonial criticism. According to Peter Barry – a professor of English at Aberystwyth University, UK – in his book *Beginning Theory* (1994), the ancestry of post-colonial criticism can be traced to Frantz

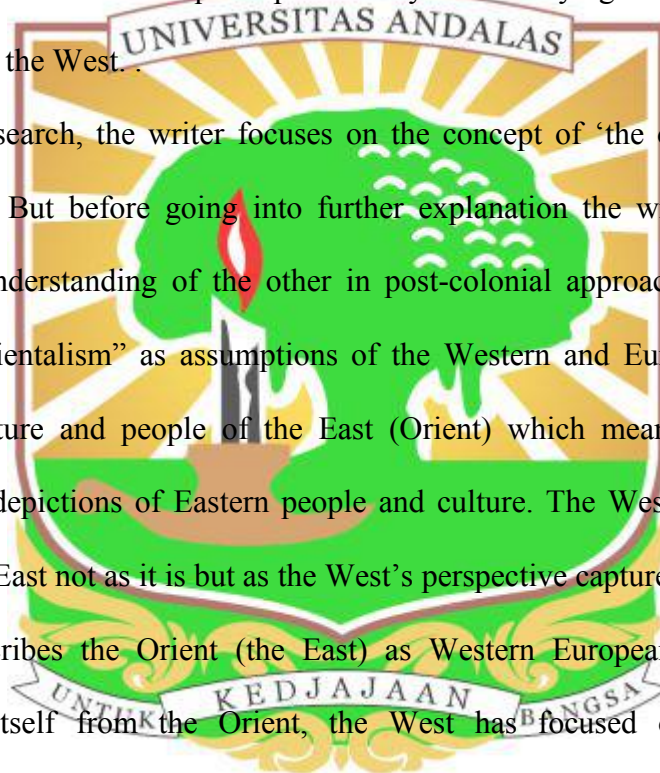


Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which voices what might be called 'cultural resistance' to France's African empire.

Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978) which could be a specific expose of the Eurocentric universalism – a worldview centered on Western civilization – which describes what is European or Western, and everything that is not European or Western is inferior. Said describes a European cultural tradition of ‘Orientalism’ which is a quite specific way of identifying the East as ‘Other’ and inferior to the West.

In this research, the writer focuses on the concept of ‘the other’ coined by Edward Said. But before going into further explanation the writer will briefly explain the understanding of the other in post-colonial approach. Edward Said describes “Orientalism” as assumptions of the Western and European countries about the culture and people of the East (Orient) which means the West has created false depictions of Eastern people and culture. The West (Occident) has described the East not as it is but as the West’s perspective captures it.

Said describes the Orient (the East) as Western European’s “Other”. To differentiate itself from the Orient, the West has focused on generalizing, stereotyping, and inventing depictions of the Orient that conform to this opposition of West and East. Based on the description above, the writer believes that the concept of the other can help the writer to analyze the character of Ovid as an Occident because he came from a highly civilized society at that time and the people of Tomis as the other because Ovid initially thinks of them as uncivilized barbarians.



This research also utilizes ‘allegory’ which is – according to Meriam Webster dictionary – the expression using symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence. According to M.H. Abrams in his book *Glossary of Literary Terms*, “allegory is, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the literal, or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification”.(1999:5)

There are two types of allegory according to Abrams. The first is a historical and political allegory. The second is the allegory of ideas, in which the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract idea. Abrams believes both types of allegory may either be sustained throughout a work, or else serve merely as an episode in a non-allegorical work. (1999:6)

1.8 The Methods of Literary Research

In conducting this research, there are several steps involved. The first is collecting the data. The writer collects the primary data from library research and explores the idea of allegory, mimetic criticism and post-colonial criticism which are related with the object of the research *An Imaginary Life*. The secondary data comes from the internet that the writer uses to collect articles that are relevant to the research.

The following step is analyzing the data. The writer analyzes the data using the descriptive analysis method. The analysis begins by analyzing the

intrinsic elements and then further analysis is applied in the relation between the story in the novel and the history of British colonization in Australia. Furthermore, the analysis continues onward by finding out how the characters, plot and setting of the novel can reveal the relationship between the aborigines and the colonizers. The analysis ends by analyzing the symbols that is used in the novel which reflects the idea of colonialism and to sum up the author's message about Orientalism through the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized in the novel. The last step is presenting the conclusion and result of the research descriptively since the research itself is qualitative research.

