Superiority of the Native Seen in the Tone of *The Track to Bralgu* by Bozic Wongar

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Abstract

This paper focuses on The Track to Bralgu, a twelve-chapter novel written by Bozic Wongar. The novel is concerned with the destruction and exploitation of the land and the Aborigines. The novel emphasizes the superiority of the colonizer as a surface representation, and the superiority of the colonized as the representation of depth. The aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of how the tone of The Track to Bralgu leads readers to the superiority of the colonized.

The objectives are first, to explain the steps of examining the tone of The Track to Bralgu and to explain how its tone can lead readers to the superiority of the colonized; second, to analyze the superiority of the colonizer as a surface representation of The Track to Bralgu; and third, to examine the tone of The Track to Bralgu which brings the idea of the superiority of the colonized.
The method that was conducted in the study was the library research, for all the reference textbooks applied in the study were gained from the library. In conducting the analysis, a postcolonial approach was applied. By applying a postcolonial approach, the researcher is able to understand the broad outline of the relation between the colonizer and the colonized presented in the novel.

The result of the study shows in The Track to Bralgu, the superiority of the colonizer is depicted through the superiority of tools and technology, while the superiority of the colonized is depicted in its close relation to nature. The tone of The Track to Bralgu is cynical and it brings the idea of the superiority of the colonized because its tone is examined from the colonized's cynical view of the colonizer.

Keywords: *superiority, tone, colonized, colonizer, postcolonial*

Introduction

Long before the expansion of European power into Asia, Africa, or the America began in 16th Century, colonialism had actually already begun and was considered as one of the widespread features of human history, as Ania Loomba put it in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998: 2). Before Western colonialism occured, the Roman Empire spread from Armenia to Atlantic in the 2nd Century AD, the Mongols defeated the Middle East and China in the 13th C. Those two examples of history are one of the reasons for the emergence of European colonialism, but it adopted new and different kinds of colonial practices. Ania Loomba gave an opinion about this modern colonialism, that

> *It did more than extract tributes, goods, and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economy of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own. So colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods* (1998: 2-3).

Western colonialism as modern colonialism gave birth to racial stereotyping and binary opposition; the 'othering' of vast numbers of people, and their construction as backward and inferior. Bijay Kumar Das in his book *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: 4th*

Edition stated that the colonial power sought to establish the superiority of the West over the East, and thus Western superiority paved the way for the binary opposition that structured people's minds into ideas of the colonized's inferiority and the colonizer's superiority (2002: 214). Consequently, laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence, and irrationality are attributed by the English to the 'others' (Loomba, 1998: 95).

In the late of eighteenth Century, Edward Said contributed Orientalism to postcolonial theory. The Europeans tried to justify their territorial conquests by producing the images of non-European as indolent, thoughtless, sexually immoral, unreliable, and demented. For a long time, they believed that they had accurately created the images of their conquered land (Bressler, 1998: 267). In Orientalism, Said tried to bring out the binary opposition between East and West, in the way that he changed the term East to the 'Orient' and West to the 'Occident', so that one cannot claim superiority over the other, and by using the term Orientalism, the East will not be constructed as barbaric or degenerate anymore (Bijay Kumar Das, 2002: 218). In conclusion, Orientalism by Edward Said aimed to reconstruct the structure that gave a bad connotation to the East, to demonstrate the values of Oriental Culture and he brought the marginalized 'Other' to the centre stage (Said, 1979: 84). This makes Orientalism by Edward Said the starting point of the awareness of being colonized.

The colonizer-colonized relationship is described in Abdul R. JanMohamed's *The Economy of Manichaean Allegory*:

> *The dominant model of power – and interest – relations in all colonial societies is the Manichaean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native* (1985: 63).

This Manichaean division of the world stresses that the colonizer is good, has power, and controls the colony's resources, while the colonized is bad, must be dominated, and must forfeit control over both land and labor (Rajan and Mohanram, 1995: 20). This Manichaean division of the colonizer-colonized also led to the resistance of the colonized, as Bressler put it, resistance is born out of the colonized people's frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture, and their fears, hopes, and dreams about the future and their own identities (1998: 266).

The inferiority of the colonized brought postcolonialists into existence. Postcolonialists sought to articulate the oppressed consciousness of the colonized subject and also to overcome the stigma of marginality (2002: 206). There are many colonized people who struggle to regain their identity by writing back to the centre, telling the colonizer that what they did was wrong and how their Western hegemony damaged and suppressed the ideologies of those who were conquered (Bressler, 1998: 267-268). Thus, resistance literature can be seen as that category of literary writing which emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle and resistance for national liberation (Slemon, 1997:107).

There were indeed the attempts of reclaiming and the regaining voice of identity of the colonized country, but many postcolonialists also influenced the colonizer constructed text of the third world, and consequently their attempts seemed useless. This condition is also justified by Bill Ashcroft in his *Post-Colonial Transformation*. He stated that,

> *The most tenacious aspect of colonial control has been its capacity to bind the colonized into a binary myth-- … --of colonizer/colonized, civilized/uncivilized, white/black which works to justify the mission civilatrice-- … --The theorists who re-write the story of Europe as 'developer' into the story of Europe as 'exploiter' remain caught in the binary of Europe and its others. The subject of the new history is still Europe* (2001:21).

From this perspective, it is obvious that it shows how postcolonialists were trapped in the paradigm of 'the colonizer's superiority

and the colonized's inferiority'. Postcolonial writings, in fact, only represent the inferiority of the colonized since they only try to attract sympathy for the colonized.

In order to make this more tangible, we can compare Wongar's *The Track to Bralgu* with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the concept of the 'colonizer is superior' is applied throughout his work; the Congo is described as the dark continent inhabited by ruthless cannibals, and the native African people are described as selfish, helpless, uneducated, exotic, lower and inferior. The *Heart of Darkness* still holds on to the constructed text of the binary opposition of colonizer's superiority and the colonized's inferiority. Thus, the tangible difference between *The Track to Bralgu* and *Heart of Darkness* is that *Heart of Darkness* uses the old paradigm of postcolonialism that stresses both the colonizer's superiority and the bad images of the colonized people, while *The Track to Bralgu* adopts a new insight of postcolonialism that rejects the idea of the binary opposition of 'the colonizer's superiority and the colonized's inferiority'.

While other postcolonial writings are still trapped in the old paradigm, "East is inferior and West is superior", Bozic Wongar in his work *The Track to Bralgu* has adopted another idea of postcolonialism. It is the representation of the new paradigm of postcolonialism which believes that the natives are superior and which will obviously alter people's mindset from previously believing in the constructed text of the binary opposition of postcolonialism to accepting the new insight of the idea of postcolonialism. Thus, this is a deconstructive phenomenon.

Wongar's work is different from others in the way he adopted a new kind of genre. The plot in *The Track to Bralgu* does not have a causal relationship and every chapter stands by itself. Another significant element in *The Track to Bralgu* is the tone because the superiority of the native is depicted in the tone itself and leads readers to accept the new insight into postcolonialism.

According to Stuart Hall in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, representation is the production of meaning through language (2003: 28). Representation can be divided into two; first, is the surface representation which is founded in the visual, including what is apprehended by the senses, while the second is the depth representation which means penetrating the visible in other words, it pierces through the veil of the visible to what the visible supposedly secretes (Gibson, 1996: 82).

As a representation, the novel is also interesting because there are two levels of representation: the representation of surface and the representation of depth. In the surface representation, the novel applies "the old paradigm", while in its depth representation, it applies the new paradigm.

Tone

It was Romantic criticism which gave birth to the concept of the 'Author as God', but not until the end of the 19th Century, was the 'Author as God' concept denied. T. S. Eliot together with The New Critics, made the importance of the author fall and the importance itself was shifted from the author to the text (Das, 2002: 159). Soon after, Roland Barthes produced an essay about *The Death of the Author*, about the impersonality of the author whose function is as a particular medium.The New Critic believed that the reader should have the priority to interpret the text.

According to I. A. Richards in C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon's *A Handbook to Literature: 5th Edition*, tone is a term designating the attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience implied in a literary work (1986: 503). This definition really supports Barthes' essay which stresses that the author is only a particular medium. In order to reveal the tone of *The Track to Bralgu*, we depend fully on how the text itself leads the reader into something.

Tone is a more delicate matter than spoken language, for we do not have the speaker's voice to guide us and it may convey not simply one attitude, but a medley (1999: 138). To interpret the message that the

author conveys in his work, the writer uses the point of view of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is when a work of literature is seen from the perspective of the theoretical discourses, which work as the major shift in the interpretation of literature, such as postcolonial theory, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, etc. Such theoretical discourse is used to interpret what a work of literature is ultimately all 'about' (Culler, 2000: 61).

There are two accounts of hermeneutics, hermeneutics of recovery and hermeneutics of suspicion. According to Jonathan Culler in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, the hermeneutics of recovery seeks to reconstruct the original context of production, while the hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to expose the unexamined assumptions on which a text may rely (2000: 64). Thus, the tone of *The Track to Bralgu* can be gained from the hermeneutics of recovery, since it concerns the text and its author as it seeks to make an original message accessible to readers today (2000: 64).

From Culler's definition of the hermeneutics of recovery, the writer should first understand the text of *The Track to Bralgu*, and secondly decide the context before coming up with the message exists in *The Track to Bralgu*. The interpretation of the message is certainly context-bound, or, context brings a message but at the same time, context is also boundless. Meaning to say, there is no determining in advance what might count as relevant, or what enlarging of context might be able to shift what we regard as the meaning of text (2000: 63-64).

Since *The Track to Bralgu* is a story about the destruction of one world by another, the context of *The Track to Bralgu* is postcolonial and it is used as the hermeneutics point of view. Thus, to reveal the tone of *The Track to Bralgu* is to uncover the postcolonial message that the text wants to portray.

From the intensive reading, the tone of *The Track to Bralgu* can be seen cleearly in the colonized or the Aborigines' view of the colonizer. Once we get the tone of *The Track to Bralgu*, it will lead to the message that exists inside the text.

Representation

According to Gibson, Classical theory develops two accounts of narrative representation, which are the representation of surface and the representation of depth (1996: 81).

Representation of surface views language as innocent, or in other words, it conceives of language as adequate to what it represents (1996: 81). Meanwhile, the representation of depth means penetrating the visible. Representation of depth pierces through the veil of the visible and then captures the unseen or captures something beyond the visible (1996: 82).

In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall gave us three approaches to explain how the representation of meaning through language works, and those are the reflective approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach. For *The Track to Bralgu*, the writer uses the constructionist approach; it argues that representation can be related to objects, people, and events in the real world, and can also be related to imaginary things and fantasy worlds or to abstracts ideas which are not in any obvious sense part of the material world (1997: 24 - 28). Obviously, this approach wants to emphasize that it is the language system which conveys meanings and not the material world (1997: 25).

How the Tone is Depicted in the Story of *The Track to Bralgu*

How the tone is depicted can be examined from the text of *The Track to Bralgu*. The objects being emphasized in *The Track to Bralgu* are the colonizer and the colonized. Within the text of *The Track to Bralgu*, the colonizer is emphasized through superiority of tools and technology, so that the whites can support the transportation faster, and the development of their mining operation and town. While the colonized is emphasized through their closeness to

nature, and consequently, the natives can survive in the terrible long drought by performing a rainmaking ceremony. The colonized is also emphasized through their view of the colonizer shown from the text of *The Track to Bralgu.* Throughout the novel colonized people state their thoughts on or views of the colonizer. Tone is the expression of a literary speaker's attitude to his listener (Abrams, 1985: 156). From this, it is obvious that the view of the natives that is addressed to the colonizer brings the tone to the surface.

> *The white man is so rock-hungry he will soon have moved the whole island away – and such a lot of the work has been done by me, swinging a hammer.* (19-20)

It is about the cynicism that is addressed to the whites, since they are so mad about rocks and seem want to have all the rocks in the land, but surprisingly, swinging a hammer to reduce the sizes of the rocks, is done by the natives.

> *I shouldn't be in this at all; you track an animal or a snake but not a man. White fella will never understand that – he's keen to hunt down even his own kind*. (47)

The native's cynical view above expresses that white men will never understand that it is not wise to hunt down a man.

> *What a bastard, this white man, who likes neither my voice nor my color, yet wants me to come up with a miracle that will make him a god.* (66)

It shows the added cynicism of the native who is aware that even though the white men do not like him due to his voice and color, they still need the natives to help them as slaves.

Those explanations of the expression of the natives show cynicism and are addressed to the colonizer, and thus the tone of *The Track to Bralgu* is cynical. The tone of *The Track to Bralgu* obviously leads readers to the message that exists within the text. The new insight that will be penetrated using the representation of depth, is aimed at releasing readers from being trapped within the constructed discourse of postcolonialism that stresses the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized.

Superiority of the Colonizer as the Surface Representation

The first story of *The Track to Bralgu* is about the black Christian priest named George of Riratjingu who wants to be buried in a Christian way. But unfortunately he is not given a piece of land for his grave.

> *"Whatever happened to me will have no bearing on your mining operation. I only need three feet by six feet – it'll do for the hole."*
> *"I am afraid … we could not allow burial on the leased land." (7)*
> *I whispered: "what about the church, there is plenty of room in the courtyard."*
> *"One has to be a saint to be buried there. Sorry, we could not bend the rules." (9)*
> *"No, just three feet by six feet."*
> *"Do not challenge the property law: make no obstruction to progress."* (11)

It is obvious that the colonizer is superior since the native is forbidden to have any part of the land. In this story, Reverend George understands that even though he has served the whites as a Minister preaching to and helping them, but they will not take this into account.

> *It does not matter what you did all your life and that you preached the way it benefits them, once you die, you are kicked back to the tribal man – no, they would not let me be buried in the ground with a decent Christian service.* (4)

"Jambawal, the Thunder Man" starts with how their cherished customs, the tribal meanings, the sacred places, all were broken to pieces by the guns and the laws and the bulldozers of the new gods (*The Track to Bralgu*, 1992: 1).

> *They have already cleaned the bush and bulldozed the black man's land. They have built their houses and made their graveyard – the country I knew so well is*

> *ugly and strange. No black man now can point to a place and say: "Here, at the bottom of this water hole (…), lies the spirit of our ancestors… Even the trampled space where we dance to call for rain when drought was long – that has been taken by the white man*. (14)

The superiority of the colonizer is even clearer from the description of the whites exploiting the natives and their freedom making them slaves and of how they have successfully built their town with their superior and sophisticated equipments

> *Now they put a great sledgehammer in your hands, and bully you to swing it against the rocks from dawn till dark. When night comes and you're pushed into lockup, you lie down without the strength to sigh or swear.* (15)

"The Tracker" is about a native who is forced by three white men to track his own friend and one of them is carrying a gun.

> *They don't talk about why they're hunting the poor bloke; don't even say his name.* (48)

> *I wonder why they're hunting him – what harm could he've done? None of them talk about that so maybe there's nothing much to say*. (49)

It represents the superiority of the colonizer and the inferiority of the colonized since the native can do nothing except follow the colonizer's orders, even though the colonized understands that the colonizer controls, rules and treats them in unfair ways.

Superiority of the Natives as the Representation of Depth

In *The Track to Bralgu*, the prejudices of the West which considered the East as inferior, uncivilized and barbarous, are reversed through the representation of depth. Consequently, the West's justifications of colonialization to the East as lacked all the genius of the West will no longer depreciate the East. This new paradigm can be brought to the surface by the representation of depth.

In the first story George's deep disappointment leads him to be a Mogwoi, a trickster spirit, so that he can take revenge on the people who have harmed him.

> *Even if you beg and plead all your life, you are born a black, have to die as one, and worst of all you are buried differently from the way you wanted.* (4)

> *Perhaps I should not be bothered any of them; the whites have their own problems to care about. After all what is the use of trying to nag, .* (11)

> *The Riratjingu elders say often when a man dies, his spirits splits in three parts: one goes to Bralgu to join the ancestors; another sits on the bottom of the totemic water hole and waits to be reborn; while the third, the Mogwoi, they call it, wanders around tribal country.* (12)

> *I am going to be a Mogwoi, ….* (12)

George's decision to be a Mogwoi shows his awareness that being a black is better than being a white. In the white man's world, when death takes their souls, they only have one place to go and it will be heaven. But, in the black man's world, the black people have three options for their death. The first is Bralgu, the second is the bottom of the totemic water hole to be reborn, and the last is Mogwoi, a place to take revenge.

As a matter of fact, George is aware that whatever unjust treatment you get from the colonizer, it does not mean that the colonizer is superior, because in the end, he can take revenge in a more cruel way on the colonizer who makes his life uncomfortable.

"Jambawal, the Thunder Man" starts with the superiority of the colonizer who succeeds in destroying the native's land. But at last, the superiority of their tools is defeated by the native's superiority in his close relationship with nature.

> *I'm glad he made it at last. Since they brought me here to the island I've watched the sky and called to him… I*

> *knew if I called, and waited long enough, Jambawal would rise from Bralgu to sweep across the sea in such a rage that when he hit the town the white man and his houses would flutter like leaves in the air. Sometimes I climbed to the island peak, high, like an anthill there, and looking toward Bralgu I danced and sang to Jambawal – not so loud as to annoy him, but gently; just enough to remind him that he must come. (13-14)*

Within the text, the readers are convinced that the colonizer is superior and that the superiority of their tools really helps them to destroy the native's land. But unexpectedly, this chapter in fact represents the superiority of the colonized because of the native's close relationship with nature. In the story, one of the natives who is forced to be a slave, called Jambawal or the cyclone to come, and as a result, the town that has successfully been built by the whites was smashed down.

In chapter six "The Tracker", the image of the native as uncivilized is reversed. It is a story about the whites who forced the native to track in order to find the native's friend so that they will have the reward.

> *"I just want to get him, and collect that bloody reward," says Glasses.* (51)

> *"I'll blow all my cut on beer," dreams the stockman.*
> *"It'd make a whole pool of booze you could swim in."(*52)

The whites are tricked by the native, but they do not realize that the native is leading them to another way. From this story, it is tangible that the native is superior to the white.

> *I shouldn't be in this at all; you track an animal or a snake but not a man. White fella will never understand that – he's keen to hunt down even his own kind.* (47)

> *We're not following the tracks any longer, but the boss men haven't noticed – they're so sure I won't go wrong.* (53)

All of the above stories are the reversal of the prejudices about the East that the West created. The West created bad images of the East and used them as their justification for mission civilatrice, but in *The Track to Bralgu*, those images of the East are reversed, so that actually the bad images of the East are shown to be the real images of West itself.

Conclusion

The first objects emphasized in the text of *The Track to Bralgu* are the colonizer and the colonized. Within the text, the colonizer is emphasized in the way that they own superior tools to support their mining development. This leads them to be greedy in occupying the native's land, and in exploiting its resources as well as exploiting the natives. The colonized is emphasized as being close to nature. This is shown through the Aborigines who can call Jambawal or the cyclone to come, or by the Aborigines who can perform a rainmaking ceremony when they are in a terrible drought.

The tone of *The Track to Bralgu* can be identified from the native's view of or expression statement about the colonizer. The tone is cynical as can be seen from the cynicism in every expression of the native.

Secondly the supposed superiority of the colonizer is depicted. The superiority of the colonizer can be clearly seen from the tools that support the development of their mining operation. Superiority of tools also allows them to build their town on the native's land and to make the circulation of their development news and transportation easier and faster.

Thirdly is on the real superiority of the colonized is depicted. Unlike the superiority of the colonizer that can be clearly seen within the text, the superiority of the colonized needs deeper examination because it is buried within the seen or the visible. Consequently, to bring the superiority of the colonized into the surface, the writer uses the representation of depth. The most interesting story that represents the superiority of the colonized is "The Tracker". On the surface, it shows the superiority of the colonizer in a

very obvious way, because the native has to obey the whites to track his friend. But, if the visible is pierced through, it shows the superiority of the colonized in the way that the whites depend fully on the native to track the right way. Surprisingly, the native is also clever, for he is not tracking his friend as the whites force him to. He leads the whites so that they will be dying from exhaustion and heat. From the surface representation, in "Mogwoi, the Trickster Spirit", it seems very tangible that it shows the superiority of the colonizer. But, as a matter of fact, when the visible is penetrated, the story shows the superiority of the colonized. The priest's realization that being black is better leads him to become a Mogwoi for one purpose; to take revenge on the whites who made his life on earth uncomfortable. This represents the superiority of the colonized because for the natives, the world is not a limitation. While in "Jambawal, the Thunder Man", the colonizer's superiority of tools and technology are defeated by the native' closeness to nature. In this chapter, the superiority of the native lies in their expertise at calling Jambawal, or the cyclone to smash down the white's town.

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