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Writing the Self: Interior Voyage in 19th Century French Travel Writing

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Abstract

Travel is a momentum to look inside that influences the travelers' existence, along with meeting and interacting with others. The self as a traveler experiences internal dynamics reflected in the travel writings. This paper analyzes five French travel writings to reveal the self-construction of travelers who explored the East in the 19th century. The analysis results show that travelers' self-construction is divided into Enlightenment or Romantic subjects and true travelers or travelers as tourists. The Enlightenment subject prioritizes facts and empirical knowledge outside of the self for the broader interest. In contrast, the Romantic subject puts forward subjective and emotional attitudes in dealing with and narrating others used for personal gain. True travelers look for difficulties in other places to prove themselves in conquering the challenges. Travelers as tourists try to avoid the obstacles by seeking safety and comfort during the trip. The East as a travel destination is a space that offers difficulties in constructing and legitimizing the traveler's self-image with the attributes that society expects, such as courage and persistence. The five French travelers, both Enlightenment or Romantic subjects and true travelers or tourists, had various knowledge of the others due to factors such as the purpose of the trip, profession, social status, and duration of the trip. Knowledge of the others and self-disclosure narrated in travel writings manifest the French travelers' power to control and manage themselves and represent the Other.

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Introduction

The self is a metaphor for a journey. Travel writing records not only a physical journey (exterior voyage) but also a metaphorical journey in the form of a mental journey (interior voyage). In the latter context, travel is a momentum to look inward, or as Thompson (2011) called an inward turn, which affects the self and the traveler's existence. As interactions and encounters occur between

the traveler and the other, the self as a moving subject experiences internal dynamics that affect narrative patterns about himself. These self-narrative patterns are reflected in travel writings written by travelers due to the relationship between self and others.

Previous studies examining travel writings have tended to look at other representations in travel writings (Ai, 2014; Bernier, 2001; Brisson, 2013; Copin, 2001; Détrie, 2006; Driever, 2013; Gonçalves, 2020; Jaya and Pratama, 2021; Keck, 2004; Marcinkowski, 2006; Mermann-Jozwiak, 2009; Nayar, 2005; Nygren, 2006; Shi, 2007; Udasmoro, 2017), the relationship of travel writing with orientalism and imperialism (Amarawat, 2016; Grangé, 2011), and the identity construction of Self and Other (Juall, 2008; Lee, 2007). These studies focus on depicting travel destinations as the other world in the context of the binary opposition of Self/Other to construct different identities between travelers as a Self *vis-à-vis* destinations as Other. However, the depiction of the traveler's self as a subject who travels in another world has not been well mapped.

This paper completes the gap in previous studies by questioning how travelers construct themselves in the travel writings they create from their journeys. Several 19th century French travel writings describing travelers' journeys to the East are selected as case examples to answer this question. The first travel writing is *Voyage de Paris à Java* (1832), written by Honoré de Balzac. Balzac's journey was imaginary. This means that Balzac never set foot on Java and wrote his journey to Java from his imagination. The second work is *Quinze ans de séjour à Java* (1861) by Just-Jean-Étienne Roy. This work results from the author's experience as a member of the military who was assigned to Java under the military corps of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The third is *Voyage autour du monde: Java, Siam, Canton* (1869) by Ludovic de Beauvoir. Beauvoir's writings contain his experiences worldwide, with Java as one of the destinations, in an adventure with his fellow nobles. The fourth travel writing is *En Océanie: Voyage autour du monde en 365 jours* by Edmond Cotteau (1895). Cotteau's work results from a journey with a *mission scientifique* that focuses on ethnographic and geographical studies. And the fifth is *Java, Ceylan, les Indes: Excursion sous l'équateur et la zone torride* (1897) by Émile Delmas, a well-known French politician who visited several Eastern regions for tours. French travel writings were chosen because France was a great empire that was the source of the creation of the East (Martins, 2011; Said, 2003; Vinson, 2004). Furthermore, the 19th century was the peak of French interest in the East, marked by many trips from France to the East (Détrie, 2006; Lin, 2003; Lombard, 1971; Said, 2003; Vinson, 2004).

The journey of the French to the East is not only a form of exploration to meet others, but also a form of identity formation and self-advancement. In other words, a journey, which is recorded in travel writing, can be used as a challenge to gain experience and self-transformation. Thompson (2011, p. 119) states that travel writing offers the stages of self-development of the travelers. This self-development is influenced by others encountered during the journey. Therefore, this paper argues that others encountered on the way become objects for travelers to carry out internal transformations. In other words, the interactions between self and others affect the travelers' internal dynamics. In addition, the travelers' self-construction in travel writing is influenced by several factors, such as the purpose of the trip, profession, and social status in society.

Methodology

This study is qualitative research which analyses the data taken from French travel writings first published in the 19th century, namely Honoré de Balzac's 2006 edition of *Voyage de Paris à Java* (1832) from Babel, *Quinze ans de séjour à Java* (1861) by Just-Jean-Étienne Roy published by Ad Mame et Cie, *Voyage autour du monde: Java, Siam, Canton* (1869) by Ludovic de Beauvoir in 1998 edition of Kailash, *En Océanie: Voyage autour du monde en 365 jours* (1895) by Edmond Cotteau published by Librairie Hachette et Cie, and *Java, Ceylan, les Indes: Excursion sous l'équateur et la zone torride* (1897) by Émile Delmas published by Librairie de l'art. The selection of data sources is made by looking at the

diversity of travelers' data, including age, profession, purpose, and type of trip.

Note taking technique was used in collecting lingual data in the form of phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or discourse in the text from five travel writings. The data were obtained through the actions, words, and thoughts of the travelers as reflected in the travel writings. Content analysis was used in analyzing research data to determine the travelers' self-description. This research analysis was conducted by reading the five travel writings thoroughly. Textual analysis was used to determine the patterns of self-construction in the interactions done by the French travelers towards other. The patterns of travelers' self-construction were determined by identifying the travelers' behavior and views based on Thompson's concept of revealing the self.

Results and Discussion

Being Enlightenment or Romantic Travelers?

Thompson (2011, p. 117) divides the subject of travel, who goes on an adventure to the outside world, into two major subjects, namely the Enlightenment and Romantic subjects. The Enlightenment subject prioritizes facts and empirical knowledge as an effort to explore knowledge that focuses on things outside of the self to narrate great goals for the broader interest. The Romantic subjects influenced by the flow of Romanticism put forward subjective and emotional attitudes in dealing with and narrating others. In contrast to the Enlightenment subject, the Romantic subject leads to self-discovery, enlightenment, knowledge, and understanding of the world for personal gain. In terms of narrative, the Enlightenment subjects position themselves as trusted observers of the external world who rarely include personal details that lead to internal descriptions of themselves. In contrast, Romantic subjects observe and react to interactions that occur with others, recording and reflecting on them—the interaction between the Self-Other. However, the two categories of subjects use the others encountered as a trigger to understanding the external world and internal self.

Travel creates momentum to get to know others (Thompson, 2011). In other words, travel serves to gain knowledge, or what Thompson calls a utilitarian agenda. Therefore, the form of travel writing with this function tends to be based on empirical facts, so its accuracy is reliable. Such travel narratives were written by Enlightenment subjects who prioritized finding facts and empirical data from the other world. Roy's journey, recorded in *Quinze ans de séjour à Java*, makes the world of Java the main focus. For example, Roy shows detailed narration when explaining the origins and names of the days used in Javanese society.

> "*La semaine ou série de sept jours a été introduite à Java par les Hindous, et renouvelée par les Arabes. Dans les premiers temps, les peuples de cette île la divisaient en cinq jours, comme les Mexicains. Les noms actuels de la semaine hebdomadaire, sont évidemment sanskrits, savoir: daïtia, qui correspond à notre dimanche, lonia lundi, angara mardi, boudha mercredi, wraspoti jeudi, soukra vendredi, et sanischara samedi. Tous ces noms appartiennent à la mythologie hindoue, comme les noms des jours de notre semaine appartiennent à la mythologie gréco-latine, et ont la même signification: ainsi, daïtia, signifie le soleil, lonia ou soma la lune, angara Mars, boudha Mercure, wraspoti ou vrihaspoti Jupiter, soukra Vénus, et sanischara ou sana Saturne*" (Roy, 1861, p. 67).

> "The week or series of seven days was introduced in Java by the Hindus and renewed by the Arabs. In the early days, the peoples of this island divided it into five days, like the Mexicans. The current names of the weekly week are obviously Sanskrit, namely: daïtia, which corresponds to our Sunday, lonia Monday, angara Tuesday, boudha Wednesday, wraspoti Thursday, soukra Friday, and sanischara Saturday. All these names belong to Hindu mythology, as the names of the days of our week belong to Greco-Latin mythology, and have the same meaning: thus, daïtia, means the sun, lonia

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or soma the moon, angara Mars, boudha Mercury , wraspoti or vrihaspoti Jupiter, sukra Venus, and sanischara or sana Saturn" (Roy, 1861, p. 67).

Roy's journey, which lasted for approximately fifteen years in Java, seemed to affect the details of the narrative given. The long duration has implications for the traveler's opportunity to explore Javanese knowledge when interactions occur between Roy and foreign objects in Java. In addition, the mastery of the Javanese language allows Roy to understand Java through canon and authoritative sources such as ancient manuscripts, chronicles, and local rulers in Java, then describe them in detail in his travel writing. Therefore, the subject of the Enlightenment in Roy's journey turns to valid and credible sources to convey detailed information related to Java. Moreover, Roy's status as a well-known military soldier supports him in obtaining accurate and reliable data.

If the Enlightenment subject focuses on extracting knowledge about others, Cotteau's narrative is no different from Roy's, which focuses on information such as ethnographic and geographical knowledge of Java. Cotteau is a journalist who travels to Java funded by the French Ministry of Education to conduct observations of Javanese people, culture, and landscapes. This scientific mission influenced Cotteau's narrative in his travel writings.

> *"Après Tjandjour, la voie ferrée s'engage dans une contrée montagneuse et déserte, puis atteint, à une altitude de 700 mètres, le fertile plateau de Bandoung, où nous arrivons à 3 heures de l'après-midi; nous avions quitté Buitenzorg à 8 heures du matin. Ici, grâce à l'élévation du sol, la température est sensiblement plus fraiche : mon thermomètre ne marque plus que 26°"* (Cotteau, 1895, p. 82).
>
> "After Tjandjour, the railway enters a mountainous and deserted region, then reaches, at an altitude of 700 meters, the fertile plateau of Bandoung, where we arrive at 3 o'clock in the afternoon; we had left Buitenzorg at 8 o'clock in the morning. Here, thanks to the elevation of the ground, the temperature is noticeably cooler: my thermometer only registers 26°"(Cotteau, 1895, p. 82).

In the previous quotation, narratives that show self-subjectivity are reduced to produce credible narratives without dramatization in capturing and reporting the events seen. In other words, the traveler is tasked with observing without reacting and reflecting on what he saw. Aesthetic appreciation of others tends not to be raised. Otherwise, Romantic subjects react to their encounters with others on their journey. These reactions are not only a matter of good and bad but also, for example, admiration, loneliness, sadness, happiness, and nostalgia.

> *"Pauvres Javanais! Ils ne parlent au Résident qu'à genoux et en accompagnant leurs réponses d'un geste d'actions de grâce reconnaissant, qui consiste à élever les mains jointes jusqu'à la hauteur du front. Je me sens indigné et comme suffoqué de cet abaissement; mais vraiment je ne suis pas venu ici pour changer les mœurs du pays; et puis, au fond, je sens que je m'aguerris"* (Delmas, 1897, p. 114).
>
> "Poor Javanese! They speak to the Resident only on their knees and accompany their answers with a gesture of grateful thanksgiving, which consists in raising the joined hands to the height of the forehead. I feel indignant and as if I suffocated at this humiliation, but really I did not come here to change the manners of the country, and then, deep down, I feel that I am hardening myself" (Delmas, 1897, p. 114).
>
> *"Ah! j'ai avant tout à cœur de vous dire combien les hommes à Java m'ont inspiré de vive sympathie et de respect sincère"* (Beauvoir, 1998, p. 118).
>
> "Oh! I have, above all, at heart to tell you how much the men in Java have inspired me with lively sympathy and sincere respect" (Beauvoir, 1998, p. 118).

Delmas's sadness in seeing the practice of worship in Javanese society and Beauvoir's admiration for the attitude and humility of the Javanese were reactions to the encounter between French travelers and others who showed character as Romantic subjects.

Romantic subject narration is more directed towards personal relationships and looking inward (inward turn) (Thompson, 2011). The same is found in Balzac's imaginative journey. In the context of *Voyage de Paris à Java*, Balzac highlights the prowess of Javanese women in controlling death.

> *"A Paris, vous aimez à votre guise: jouant, aimant, buvant au gré de votre organisation; aussi l'ennui vous y saisit bientôt. Mais à Java, la mort est dans l'air: elle plane autour de vous ; elle est dans un sourire de femme, dans une œillade, dans un geste fascinateur, dans les ondulations d'une robe. Là où vous avez la prétention d'aimer, de suivre vos penchans, vous périssez radicalement..."* (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 42).
>
> "In Paris, you love as you please: playing, loving, drinking according to your organization; so, boredom soon seizes you there. But in Java, death is in the air: it hovers around you; it is in a woman's smile, in a glance, in a fascinating gesture, in the undulations of a dress. Where you pretend to love, to follow your inclinations, you perish radically..." (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 42).

Balzac's admiration for Javanese women can be seen in his narrative, which constructs Javanese women as dangerous and full of love figures who can handle a man. Romantic subjects influenced by the movement of Romanticism, which emphasizes subjective and emotional reactions, appear to be more dominant in Balzac's travel writings. Diaz (2000) mentions that Balzac's relationship with 19th century Romanticism is at the level of imagination. This can be seen in Balzac's imaginative journey to Java, which explores self-subjectivity and avoids using quantitative data.

Tourists in the World of Other

Thompson (2011) explains that travelers as tourists seek comfort and avoid all the hassles of traveling. In the context of *Java, Ceylan, Les Indes*, Delmas considers himself a tourist who visits Java to see and enjoy the beauty of the world of the Far East (Delmas, 1897, p. 161). The purpose of Delmas' journey influences the narrative written in *Java, Ceylan, Les Indes*. Being a tourist means seeking safety and comfort while traveling; likewise, Delmas is on his way to Java. The adventures he does tend to look for comfortable and safe things. Delmas strives to create these situations and conditions by constantly interacting with the familiar.

> *"Mes compagnons hollandais du Natal m'avaient fort recommandé l'Hôtel des Indes ; mais il est tenu par des Allemands. Il me paraît plus congruent de m'installer à l'Hôtel de Java, dirigé par un très obligeant Français, M. Pélé"* (Delmas, 1897, p. 73).
>
> "My Dutch companions from *Natal* strongly recommended the Hôtel des Indes to me; but it is held by Germans. It seems more congruent to me to settle in the Hôtel de Java, run by a very obliging Frenchman, Mr. Pélé" (Delmas, 1897, p. 73).

When choosing a hotel in Batavia, Delmas decided to stay in a hotel managed by a French. Several other European travelers who had visited Batavia suggested Delmas rent a room at Hôtel des Indes. However, Delmas flatly refused because a German managed it. Delmas' ties to France are evident in this context. For him, the similarity of origins from France made Delmas confident of the quality of the hotel he took, even though other European travelers did not recommend it.

Thompson (2011) states that the journey that is presented not in the form of a spiritual journey or exploration will be presented as a self-indulgent jaunt due to the absence of challenges. Familiarity with France encourages Delmas' behavior because, for him, it provides comfort even though he is in Java. This, for example, can be seen in the food that Delmas chose while in Java, i.e., French-style food. An upscale tourist, Delmas, claimed that the local food horrified him (Delmas, 1897, p. 76). Delmas' behavior creates a superior attitude while demeaning the local culinary culture he encounters. The differences that are present are not appreciated but instead removed.

Tourist traveler does not have significant implications for the internal transformation of travelers. This is because encounters with

others that trigger difficulties as a form of self-examination are reduced or eliminated so that they do not have implications for themselves (Thompson, 2011). Everything in unfamiliar territory is arranged to be familiar and comfort the traveler. In the context of Delmas' trip, foreign things far from French influences are engineered and attempted to be as close as possible to France so traveler can enjoy Java in comfort and tranquillity.

The Self as True Traveler

Travel is a self-test (Thompson, 2011). Therefore, difficulties and dangers become a way of finding authentic experience, which, for Thompson (2011), becomes a medium of self-transformation for the travelers. In the context of *Voyage autour du monde: Java, Siam & Canton*, Beauvoir was looking for this test in one-horned rhino hunting activities.

> *"J'ai orné ma carabine de sa baillonnette pour les cas désespérés et chargé mon arme avec une consciencieuse attention, car le danger est grand. Il paraît que, lorsque l'animal attaque, il vous broie en un instant d'un seul coup de ses énormes pieds, qui ont plus d'un pied et demi de diamètre. Au bout d'un quart d'heure, deux coups de feu, tirés par les traqueurs, se font entendre ; on a vu la bête!"* (Beauvoir, 1998, pp. 41–42).
> "I adorned my rifle with its bayonet for desperate cases and loaded my weapon with conscientious attention because the danger is great. It seems that when the animal attacks, it crushes you in an instant with a single blow of its enormous feet, which are more than a foot and a half in diameter. After a quarter of an hour, two shots fired by the trackers are heard; we saw the beast!" (Beauvoir, 1998, pp. 41–42).

Beauvoir admits that his involvement in rhino hunting makes his narrative of his journey unique and different. In addition, the practice of hunting is considered capable of training him to face challenges that are dangerous, stressful, and fun (Beauvoir, 1998, p. 46).

Cotteau's journey of scientific aims and emphasizing scientific matters emphasized the difficulties encountered in obtaining the data sought. Cotteau's persistence in exploring Java was displayed intensively, especially when climbing Mount Merapi to show his authenticity. Cotteau narrates Mount Merapi as a legend because of the beautiful morphology of the mountain and the level of difficulty in climbing it. These two things made Mount Merapi famous among the world's nobles (Cotteau, 1895, p. 99). Danger and discomfort are markers of an authentic journey that corroborates the travelers' claim that they have acquired genuine knowledge about themselves and others (Thompson, 2011). The self described in travel writings is not only a reliable eyewitness, but the traveler possesses and acquires the attributes desired and attained by the society, such as persistence and courage. The narrative of the difficulties and obstacles faced by Cotteau shows his tenacity in his efforts to defeat Merapi.

Furthermore, travel writing becomes a self-promotion medium for the success of travelers in conquering others (Thompson, 2011). Besides being shown through the conquest of Mount Merapi, the narrative of Cotteau's heroic self-promotion is strengthened by his ascent on Mount Merapi, which is immortalized in an article in *Gazette de Semarang* magazine. In the magazine, Cotteau and Breon were the first two French nationals to conquer Merapi. This has become a medium of self-promotion and public recognition of Cotteau's success in showing his authenticity as an adventurer.

In Balzac's imaginative adventures, the myth of upas as a poisonous and deadly plant and the myth of Javanese women are used to show the traveler's existence. In other words, upas and women become media for self-examination for Balzac to strengthen his position in his relationship with others. The travel writing *Voyage de Paris à Java* records the author's love relationship with a Javanese woman. Udasmoro (2007) argues that Balzac's positioning of Javanese women is the author's attempt to do imaginative domination of the East. Although the journey is carried out imaginatively, the narrative about Javanese women creates a self-image for Balzac as a subject who has power. This power is contained in Balzac's narration of his persistence and courage in defeating the legendary myth of Javanese women as a death

control figure and a potent concoction of poison to kill (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 30). However, Balzac tried to fight the construction he created himself by establishing a love relationship with a Javanese woman. Balzac takes risks by having relations with Javanese women to show his adventurous spirit and brave attitude in the face of danger. In this case, Balzac dares risk his soul to get the woman's love.

In addition to constructing the image of Javanese women who are closely related to death, the myth of upas as a poisonous plant in Java is also used by Balzac as a medium for self-examination.

> *"Figurez-vous une plaine d'ossemens blanchis ceinture digne de l'upas, témoignage de son pouvoir, malheureux atteints çà et là, quand ils se croyaient sauvés, la plupart amoncelés autour de l'arbre"* (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 65).
> "Imagine a plain of bleached bones belt worthy of the upas, testimony to his power, unfortunate hit here and there, when they thought they were saved, most of them piled up around the tree" (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 65).

Upas is a plant that produces a toxic substance equivalent to hydrocyanic acid, which can kill its victims quickly, without spraining, convulsions, and suffering (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 62). For Balzac, the myth of the upas he raises is a way of gaining authentic experience and knowledge about others and himself. Traveling through Java challenged Balzac to fight the things he had constructed beyond reason. Balzac confirms this dangerous adventure in the form of a fight against death by approaching the upas tree (Balzac and Maurus, 2006, p. 68). The extreme power of upas can ultimately be defeated by the courage to get to know the poisonous plant more closely.

In *Voyage de Paris à Ja*va, Javanese women and upas plants become Balzac's focus to construct his self-image as heroic subjects on a trip to Java. Thus, Java is not merely a foreign and wildland but also a space for self-examination. Thompson (2011) argues that true travelers tend to choose adversity and describe it as a form of self-defense. The success of the traveler in overcoming obstacles, in the context of Balzac, namely Javanese women and upas plants, is a form of achievement in conquering and mastering others he encounters.

In the context of *Quinze ans de séjour à Java*, Roy's journey in Java is a process of self-development and maturity. Roy's self-test in the narrative of his journey is manifested in physical tests as a Dutch military force. Roy was assigned to several military missions during his stay in Java for approximately fifteen years. Roy's achievements in the military made him a leader in the mission of eradicating pirates in the Dutch East Indies. Roy positioned himself heroically as a key figure in formulating a strategy, attacking enemy bases, negotiating, and determining punitive sanctions against the group of hijackers (Roy, 1861, pp. 209–210). Travel writing, according to Thompson (2011), offers stages of self-development. These stages in the context of Roy's journey are shown through his narrative about himself, starting as a member of the French royal military and ending up as a member of the Dutch royal military with a high-ranking status. The Kingdom of the Netherlands legitimized Roy's military position by giving the highest award, namely the *Chevalier de l'ordre du Lion néerlandais* (Order of the Lion of the Netherlands) and Roy's promotion to lieutenant-colonel after the eradication of pirate gangs. Like Cotteau, Roy's travel writings have become a medium of promotion for his authoritative self. In addition, travel is a way to gain cultural capital (Thompson, 2011). Roy's trip to Java became an intermediary to strengthen his position in society, both the community of origin and the local community he served.

Conclusion

Traveling to a foreign place is a construction to build self-strength. The journey makes the travelers feel complete after achieving the attributes obtained in the process of the journey. The East has become a destination for self-fulfillment for French travelers who are part of the West. This fulfillment is done through difficulties and challenges that must be faced and overcome to

construct and legitimize the traveler's self-image.

Becoming a true traveler or tourist is influenced by the purpose of the trip. What distinguishes the two is whether there is a shift in views before and after the trip. As a tourist, the traveler always looks for comfort during the journey. Therefore, tourist trips are little or even less likely to create transformations in themselves. On the other hand, true travelers deliberately seek adversity elsewhere to prove their resilience and qualities that demonstrate the ability to manage themselves and, second, to reveal their power over others. The difficulty becomes a legitimacy about the quality of self. If the self succeeds in overcoming the existing obstacles and challenges, then the self-image with the attributes expected by society has been successfully constructed.

The five French travelers, whether Enlightenment or Romantic subjects, true travelers or tourists, have a varied knowledge of the others. The depth of knowledge about others is influenced by factors such as the purpose, duration of the trip, profession, and social status. Knowledge of the other and self-disclosure are described in travel writings from the French travelers' power to control and manage themselves and represent the destination as the Other.

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