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The Colonial Java Town and Beach: Chronotopical Analysis of Augusta de Wit's Two Travelogue Chapters

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Abstract

When the twentieth century was around the corner, the plurality of residents and newcomers grew in numbers, forming a dynamic and heterogeneous urban society in colonial Java. Augusta de Wit was one of the Dutch authors who wrote about Java during her stay there in her book form travelogue titled Java: Facts and Fancies*. Her experience in Java had left an influence on her, which is shown in her fiction works. One of them is the short story* Vijandschap *that portrays mostly the rural and idyllic life of a coastal community, yet includes the participation of the town (Batavia) as a commercially promising place. This qualitative study aspires to illuminate how the rural beach community reconciled with the town and to confirm what she means by natural beauty by focusing on two chapters "The Town" and "On the Beach." It is conducted by employing a close reading method and Torop's chronotopical analysis consisting of topographical, psychological, and metaphysical chronotopes in Augusta de Wit's perspective while considering the notion of tropicality. This study discovers that there is a relational function of town as a dynamic marketplace to the local folks on the beach and a "space of home" for the Europeans, while the beach as fruitful home to the native beach community and a soothing recreational place to de Wit. Moreover, natural beauty is not confined to nature solely, but includes the locals alongside their character and habits, who are an intrinsic tropical part of Java.*

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Introduction

Augusta de Wit, a Dutch lady author, wrote her English-written accounts on her stay in Java that was published and serialised on Singapore Straits Times in 1898, titled *Facts and Fancies about Java* (Gielkens, 1990). This serial was later published in book form under the title *Java: Facts and Fancies* wherein she addresses Java as "that enchanted garden."

Java: Facts and Fancies is the product of Augusta de Wit's stay on Java at the end of the nineteenth century. She first landed on Java at Tandjong Priok, Batavia. De Wit's writing

sheds light on subjects surrounding human life alongside their culture, beliefs, and the landscapes. In addition, she occasionally compares what she perceives with what is familiar to her. Her writing consists of several chapters that each spotlights a section as subject-matter, such as: "A Batavia Hotel," "The Town," "A Colonial Home," "Social Life," "Glimpses of Native Life," "On the Beach," "Of Buitenzorg," "In the Hill Country," and "In the Dessa."

Augusta de Wit was a journalist, critic, and novelist, born in Siboga (now Sibolga), Sumatra 1864. She was the daughter of a colonial official Jan Carel de Wit, spent her early life in the East Indies until her family returned to the Netherlands in 1874. She had gone to and fro Holland and the Indies. She left for Batavia, Java, as an adult from 1894 to 1896 to teach English, German, and history in an all-girls middle school (HBS), and wrote her travelogue there (Gielkens, 1990).

Her intimacy with the East had influenced her in her works. She wrote a novel titled *The Waiting Goddess* (*De Godin die wacht*) in 1903. The plot revolves around a judicial official's first year in Sumberbaru, Java, and showcases a nineteenth-century image of landraad and criminal law in colonial Java (Ravensbergen, 2018). Another fiction of her published in the same year is *Orpheus in the Dessa* (*Orpheus in de dessa*), a story that touches on the civilization of the Eastern (Indies) and the Western (Meijer, 1978). The two are based on her life in the Indies and written about people in the Indies in belletristic fashion (Heijns, 2016).

This prowess as a Dutch East Indies author is evinced in her other works. For a depiction of colonial Java where colonial activities or the Western are less involved, *Vijandschap* is one. It is included in her short story collection *Verborgen bronnen* (first published in 1899). According to de Wever (2009), de Wit's effort in providing facts about Java in her *Java: Facts and Fancies* benefited her in composing the aforementioned story whose reference is based on her own book chapter *On the Beach* in which the regular beach life she witnessed by Tandjong Priok was displayed.

We would argue that the story does not solely speak of the coastal life, but also glimpses of the urban, the Batavia city, where the fishermen (Djalil and Mian) hawk their baskets of fish to potential buyers and where Mian sells his wife's (Dalima's) hand-made batik to a rich Chinaman. Although the city is not the main backdrop of *Vijandschap*, it is an important element of the story-telling that represents it as a favourable place to exchange their coastal commodities for money. This aligns with the fact that in the late nineteenth century, economic, industrial, and social strides started to emerge amongst the European, Chinese, other foreign Asian, and Javanese residents of the East Indies, moulding Java towns into lively and culturally diverse centres of economic and cultural life with different social classes and elites (Hibatullah & Wijaya, 2023; Hoogervorst & Nordholt, 2017). Another proof that a colonial city was a commercially ideal place in the early 1900s is addressed in Johan Ernst Jasper's story *Het Leven van Ardja en Lasmi* (The Lives of Ardja and Lasmi). The married couple, Ardja and Lasmi, has come to the city in order to improve their lives since the city embodies modernity of the time (Rooyackers, 2024).

Subsequent to the commencement of free enterprise in 1870, the Indisch (Indian, characterised by the acculturation between European and Indonesian) towns began to develop. These towns imperceptibly extended into the neighbouring countryside. Houses, Chinese tokos, and native warongs (small shops) surfaced along the roads. There was already segregation for business quarters and residential districts, nevertheless, the facilities were built arbitrarily and apparently, the dynamic of urban life was realised at the expense of the local citizens. The cheap labour allowed the wealthy to live in a semi-feudal manner and a major portion of the local urban population also retained the rural way of life for a long time. In the city kampongs, behind the banana trees and palms, the construction and lifestyle remained predominantly rural (Wertheim, 1956).

Just around the Tandjong Priok port, on the northern beach, there stood a bathing-lodge called Baadplats Petit Trouville. According to a blogger *buitenzorg* (2020) and

a few digitised newspapers on Delpher, it was founded in 1888 (Bataviaasch nieuwsblad, 1888) at Kampong Kodja and demolished in 1920 due to expansion works for the port (Bataviaasch nieuwsblad, 1921). Tourist guidebook *Java the Wonderland* (1900) says about this place as follows:

> *Lovers of sea-bathing can go by one of the first trains in the morning to Tandjong-Priok, where conveyances can be hired (f 0.75) to the bathing-place, "Petit Trouville," situated on the sea, an hour's drive farther to the East.* (p. 16)

This site also appears in de Wit's travelogue within the chapter "On the Beach," which, instead of concerning the regulatory aspects and the bathing-lodge itself, introduces more of the rural yet idyllic life of the local villagers on the beach through her lived experience there, similar to how she evokes the image of Java beach in her fiction (*Vijandschap*). This shows that amid the growing urbanity in Java, the natural coastal beauty of the land remained and, with the existence of Petit Trouville, was a suitable place for recreational pleasure in the eyes of a foreigner, seeing that going to the beach was part of early modern tourism (Lowry, 2017) and beach-based recreation enterprises were developing in the nineteenth century (Ritchie, 2021), but what else does de Wit mean by natural beauty? This study aspires to call attention to the author's descriptions and impressions of the life in the town and on the beach of colonial Java at the turn of the twentieth century, as a foreign visitor witnessing the Oriental, more thoroughly by her travelogue, with focus on two chapters, to wit: "The Town" and "On the Beach."

Coulter and Smith (2009) uphold that there is no universal truth in narrating an event. Accounts on the same subject (event) may differ depending on the perspectives, in which this "truth" becomes elusive once time and space are involved. Thus, in order to illuminate de Wit's perception on colonial Java town and beach, an analysis that concerns the relationship between time and space is beneficial. Referring to Korte's (2008) dissection, travel is a temporal-spatial experience, where travel narratives that are primarily about places, people, and customs, focus more on the existence in certain places, which create a space-dominated chronotope. This makes Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope an apt theory to consider, which, according to Bakhtin, an "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84).

The notion of chronotope has been used widely for delving into multiple creative media, such as performed musical numbers (Elyamany, 2023), song (Stuewe, 2022), and cinematic films (Torop, 2020; Baillon, 2021). Considering that this study primarily handles narratives in the form of travel writing, previous studies that leverage chronotope and similar subjects should be mentioned.

In Stasch's (2011) study, the use of chronotope in the analysis helps understand the textual content in the travel writing about Korowai. Stasch uses three chronotopes that are termed as "chronotope of narrated travel," "chronotope of author-reader relations," and the "mythic chronotope of the civilized and the primitive." Respectively, each is a tool to recognize how the authors create the conceptualised primitivist world believable, how the authors involve the reader in the narrative, and the relationship between the authors, alongside the readers, and the different parts of the human world (the Korowai). These chronotopes unfold the attempt of mystifying other cultural groups that seem to be unusual to what is known as civilised, which is in line with the idea of orientalism (Said, 1979).

In a case study, Remm and Kasemets (2020) use the notion of chronotope as a vehicle to generate meaning through experiencing landscape. They implemented a chronotopical approach developed by Peeter Torop in an effort to make out the imagination of an architect and meaning-making in landscapes through the interpretative situation and process that involves his feelings and thoughts while he was physically there.

According to Torop (2017 & 2019), text is a space or a hierarchy of spaces when it progresses with time, the space creates a

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spatial-temporal synthetical parameter of cultural study. Torop advocates to look within a text a system of realities (worlds) and not only an organised space (Torop, 2020). Remm and Kasemets see this approach to be helpful in understanding the relationship between a man and his environment as social actors. However, if it is used to compare two bodies of subject-matter texts, this approach would be a suitable tool as well to analyse the way de Wit took in the town and the beach of colonial Java while she was physically present, recorded in her *Java: Facts and Fancies*, by delving into her internal and external world.

Several studies have mentioned or explored *Java: Facts and Fancies* as proof of the contemporaneous lifestyle in colonial Java, such as emerging tourist accommodations (Mujaffar, 2021), home crafts (Groot, 2015), multi-ethnicity and Indisch culture (Sidharta, 1992; Protschky, 2008b), and subjective European views on the Oriental (Protschky, 2008a; Rooyackers, 2024). Discussions rarely show the relationship between areas including their inhabitants with regard to attraction. With that in mind, the relational functions between the town (Batavia) and the community on the beach (by Tandjong Priok) may support the use of chronotopical analysis in understanding narrative texts and complement the study of colonial Java's social development through the meaning-making of two separate chapters.

The discussion will zero in on the textual references from both subjects that align with one another and represent de Wit's impression of the urban town and coastal colonial Java. This study is conducted with questions to address: (1) What does Augusta de Wit mean by "natural beauty" in her writing? and (2) How is the relationship between the town and the beach implied through Augusta de Wit's perception?

Methodology

With the expectation of discovering the association between the experienced landscape of colonial Java town (Batavia) and rural beach of Augusta de Wit, this qualitative study employs the close reading method between two chapters of a literary nonfiction travelogue, the 1989 republication of *Java: Facts and Fancies* which was first published in 1898, respectively "The Town" and "On the Beach." These chapters are selected as the main focus due to the appropriate content to achieve the study's objective. However, looking back into another chapter is indispensable to provide more basis of how de Wit writes in the following narratives.

As to make out a more in-depth understanding of temporal-spatial relationship in her narratives, the discussion henceforth uses a conceptual framework of chronotopic analysis, referring to chronotopical approach promoted by Torop (2017; 2019; 2020) that consists of three levels: (1) topographical chronotope, the depiction of succession of events, (2) psychological chronotope, the expression of the characters' viewpoints, and (3) metaphysical chronotope, which presents the conception of the text through the interrelations between chronotopical levels. This framework is implemented in each analysis of the narratives in both chapters in order to break down the interrelation of de Wit with the landscapes.

Once each conception of the town and the beach is inferred by the help of this chronotopical analysis, both perceptual views are set side by side to make out a meaning de Wit has formed in her writing by involving Arnold's notion of tropicality where "the tropics" are represented as an imaginative geography contrasting "the West" (Keck, 2004; Clayton, 2021; Lundberg, Regis, & Agbonifo, 2022) that may range from "pestilential" to "paradisiacal" (Arnold, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Augusta de Wit is depicted as both the actor and the narrator in her narratives. The succession of the subjects and events progresses simultaneously alongside her internal reflection. This exhibits the subjectivity in her interpretation, where she primarily uses her senses (touch, sight, smell, and hearing) and her personal familiarity that blend her with the environment through the use of simile, showing the perceptual landscape and the people involved. Her writing consists of the acts of reflecting, recounting,

imagining, storytelling, and informing. The following sections break down the analysis into parts and pinpoint findings that correlate one another. It should be borne that the chronotopical levels are appropriated as follows: (1) topographical chronotope; focuses on the physical as the background and how it is carried in the textual progression, (2) psychological chronotope; focuses on de Wit's role and feelings displayed in the text, (3) metaphysical chronotope; how the world of the text is personally designed by de Wit.

1. "The Town": The Culturally Dynamic and Commercially Brisky Batavia

a. Topographical Chronotope

On a topographical level, de Wit's writing in this chapter is chiefly directed by her informative statements and perception about the town, Batavia, from one aspect to another, that does not require continuous progression of physical participation in the telling, giving the indication that she composed this chapter after experiencing and perceiving the town for some time. Because of that, the analysis on the topographical chronotope focuses on the succession of one idea to another regarding the place and people.

De Wit begins this chapter with a short explanation of what she means by the term "town" which also alludes to a slight historical background of Batavia. She wraps the suburb, the business quarter of Batavia as a place that has undergone a series of historical events. Afterward, she winds up the Batavia as "a system of parks and avenues," as she puts it. She continues to describe the proximity of the town, the Koningsplein (now Merdeka Square) and the Duke's Park (now Pancasila Building), in terms of buildings, roads, tropical nature and seasons. Albeit, this description is not devoid of her subjectivity, so, at some points, her approval and disapproval of certain features appear.

When the narrative finally reaches the commercial quarters, Rijswijk, Noordwijk, and Molenvliet, her Western familiarity is displayed, a part that connects her with the landscape on a psychological level. These quarters are sites encircling the aforementioned two squares and portrayed as busy places for commercial activities, crowded with the natives.

Aside from speaking of the Javanese, de Wit puts a highlight on the existence of the Chinese quarters, one in the Kampong Bahru, characterised by their own distinctive briskness and money-making nature. She also provides a short history of the Chinese settlement in Batavia. These multicultural elements, the European, Javanese, and Chinese, are set forth as what also define the "town" that is physically made of squares, commercial, and home quarters.

b. Psychological Chronotope

Several actors appear in her narrative as a means to annotate her explanation of the different aspects of Batavia. They are the Duke (the European), the Javanese, the Chinese, and herself as a first-person. As a narrator, she presents them in a third-person perspective that helps immerse the narrative in the subjects' domains. However, when the narrative takes her as the first-person actor, she includes herself physically or by thoughts on the scene.

The description of the Duke's Park reveals that de Wit takes a liking to shady and lush sites, which de Wit openly compares to Koningsplein that boasts a vast, barren, and scarcely grown field. It also manifests an inclination towards the European characteristics by pointing out that the building resembles an implied European palace and fancifully relating the place with the characters of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, a whimsically romantic scene to evoke. Not to mention, the name "the Duke's Park" is considered European to her.

> *Is it the Renaissance style of those gleaming columns and marble steps, or that name of "the Duke's Park," or both, that stir up the fancy of thoughts of some sixteenth-century Italian pleasaunce, such as Shakespeare loved as a setting for his love stories?* (p. 38).

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The Duke's Park is predominantly European, "very shadowy fragrant and green." Given that it is contrasted to the physical condition of the Koningsplein that is barren and vastly exposed to the sky with untamed wilderness in a tropical backdrop, it is inferred that there is an act of imagining the tropics as an opposite of the temperate West, a Western way of defining something environmentally distinctive from the temperate zone (Arnold, 2006). However, this does not define her general view of the tropics because she solely directs it toward the Koningsplein.

Although the rains of East monsoon bring about undesirable environmental conditions, such as "impracticable streets, flooded houses, and crumbling walls" in the town, they signify the blooming season, a "vernal glory for the Plein." It is a time when the initially cracked soil and dormant tamarind trees turn leafy and are covered in greenness. This shift in appearance is what de Wit delights in.

Aside from environmental features, the inhabitants tend to be deliberately designated "tropical" (Arnold, 2006) and within de Wit's writing, it is apparent. She mentions how she sees the Javanese, the natives, as naturally coherent with the tropical Javanese setting when she describes the Koningsplein.

> *He does not disturb the loneliness. He is indigenous to the place, its natural product, almost as much as the cicadas trilling among the grass-blades, the snakes darting in and out among the crevices of the sun-baked soil, and the lean cattle, upon whose backs the crows perch* (p. 35).

Her familiarity with the European is not only expressed through her action of likening, but through comparison as well. She regards the commercial quarters (Rijswijk, Noordwijk, and Molenvliet) as a curious translation of European layout to a tropical one. Her narrative implicitly assumes that the readers are mostly European, which is doubtless because it was initially written for an English-language newspaper, in this sentence:

> *But, with these European traits, Javanese characteristics mingle, and the resulting effects is a most curious one, somewhat bewildering withal to the new-comer in its mixture of the unknown with the familiar* (p. 43).

Together with the representation of the European, de Wit's narrative presents the distinctive elements of the Javanese, such as the appearance of *sadoos* (Javanese hackney carriages) instead of cabs, the unique Noordwijk as the tropical canal of Amsterdam shaded by tropical tamarind trees, the vicinity that is indicated to be dry and blaring due to the tropical nature, and the "gaudily-painted praos" (boat) of the locals. The Noordwijk canal is later shown to be gradually packed and colourful by the locals on boats, settling themselves along the parapet for trading. The busy and buzzing view, that seems to be the characteristic of fretful European life, of the crowd appears to be unusual for the locals to her because she sees them as leisurely people who take things easy. Apart from being usually laid-back, she pictures the Javanese, of any age, as always happy despite the absence of things to be so. This personal definition is associated with the discussion on the metaphysical level.

Her feelings of unfamiliarity for the non-European are also present in her description of a Chinese quarter of Kampong Bahru. She views the scene as a contrast to the rest of the area, which makes it stand out more with its unusual structural combination of the buildings and the energy that exudes from them is different from the Javanese. Their preference of living in a herd is considered to be the legacy of the time when Batavia had its designated area specifically made for Chinese due to the uprising that had been happening. Notwithstanding their different occupations, where there is the *klontong* (pedlar) and the portly millionaire, the Chinamen in Java share common ability in "the making of bargains" and de Wit considers this to be natural to them compared to the European. Concerning this, there is a part of her narrative that overtly shows that her writing is addressed to the European, reconfirming the last statement about this.

> *And this, one fancies, is the great difference between his race and ours; and the true secret of their superiority as money-makers. A Caucasian, if he is a merchant, is so with a certain part of his being only—during certain hours of the day, in his own office. A Chinaman is a merchant with his own heart, his whole soul and his whole understanding, a merchant always and everywhere, from his cradle to his grave, at table, at play, over his opium-pipe, in his temple* (p. 55).

As a European, de Wit acknowledges the Chinese in Java as people who know how to do business by practice and how to get by through trading, relentlessly, that would render him eventually rich, unlike the European merchant who mostly spends his time working in office.

c. Metaphysical Chronotope

Aside from being "a system of parks and avenues," Batavia is also a system of relationships, among the residents and between a person or people with their environment.

There is an idea she introduces in another chapter prior to this, "A Batavia Hotel." Regardless that the main subject is the Batavia hotel, in the beginning part of the narrative is featured the perceived situation outside the hotel which brings her to the conclusion that the orientals (Javanese, Arabs, and Chinese) have their own time in the day, and the Europeans have theirs in the evening due to their respective productivities. These extremes are expressed in the following:

> *Noon is its own time, its hour of hours, the instant when those opposing elements of Batavia street-life—the native population most conspicuous of a morning, and the European contingent preponderant in the evening—attain that exact equipoise which gives the place its particular character; and when the conditions of sky, air and earth are attuned to truest harmony with it* (p. 16).

> *Through this blaze of light and colour, move groups of gaudily-draped natives—water-carriers, flower-sellers, fruit-vendors, pedlars selling silk and precious stones…* (p. 16).

> *Grave-faced Arabs stride past. Chinamen trudge along—lean, agile figures—chattering and gesticulating as they go* (p. 17).

> *But, among the crowd of orientals, no Europeans are seen, save such as rapidly pass in vehicles of every description…* (p.17).

This idea of designated time is what seemingly becomes the basis for her writing about the town. The Europeans do not seem to be actively engaged in outside activities during the day. She does mention glimpses of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, nonetheless he is not narrated to belong in the present, but as an actor of an additional story. On the other hand, de Wit mostly informs about the non-Europeans (the Javanese and the Chinese) who noticeably contribute to the liveliness of Batavia, especially in the business quarters.

> *…the business quarters of Batavia—alive during a few hours of the day only, and sinking back into death-like stillness, as soon as the rumble of the last down-train has died away among its echoing streets* (p. 29).

With regards to the Javanese, they are pictured to be free and easy, yet appear contradictory during the day in the business quarter. They become busy and fretful, a nature she regards as European.

> *The fever and the fret of European life have seized upon these leisurely Orientals too. They have abandoned their sirih-chewing and day-dreaming upon the square of matting in the cool corner of the house, the dusty path along which they used to trudge in Indian file, when there was an urgent necessity for going to the market; and behold them all perched upon this "devil's engine" where they cannot even sit in the way they were*

> *taught to, hurkling on their hunkers."* (p. 47).

These Javanese who take home on the boat, also exhibit a family-oriented demeanour. De Wit states that upon the *prao* (boat), where the stern of it resembles a hut, a family "eat, drink, sleep, and live." The owner (the father) propels the boat by a pole, the mother cooks rice for a family-meal, and the children appear bubbly in the nude. The happiness of the children is also embodied by their parents. This always-happy nature is mulled over in her narrative. It baffles her how they remain so without a considerable cause to be happy. De Wit attributes this to the idea that everything is fine to them as long as they live, which causes the rumination about whether the Javanese ever die.

> *As long as they are not dying—and one sometimes doubts if Javanese die at all—all is well with them* (p. 48).

As for the Chinese, they are industrious merchants characterised by their money-making nature. They are also depicted to be very social, for instance: entertaining army officers and civil servants in his mansion, inviting someone for the New Year's festivities, introducing one's spouse to his, talking about his father's funeral, asking advice, and about sending his son abroad to further his study. They are industrious, social, and seen to have an insatiable desire to improve their life.

Although she mentions that the different cultural groups coexist in this town, there is a tendency to differentiate cultural groups. Most Javanese cluster in the canals for commercial purposes during the day, coming from different directions, the Chinese have their own quarter, where houses are both home and shops, while the European, not much is said about them in this chapter, but according to the preceding chapter "A Batavia Hotel," are quite likely to stay away from the sunlight, doing their own respective business, and show up in the evening for social gatherings or entertainments, like how de Wit presents the social life of the European in her chapter "Social Life." Nevertheless, they (people of different social groups) still cross paths and interact with one another, again, referencing the preceding chapter.

2. "On the Beach": The Idyllic Coastal Life

a. Topographical Chronotope

Here, unlike the chapter "The Town," de Wit includes the journey she took in order to reach a certain destination of focus, the beach. One motivation that brought her to the beach, eastward from the harbour of Tandjong Priok, was the awareness of a bathing-lodge known as Petite Trouville and the natural country beauty to behold nearby. De Wit participated in a travel from Batavia to the north, the beach by Tandjong Priok, which included her physical observation and cross-cultural discovery in the surroundings.

De Wit recorded her observation throughout the way to the beach, starting in the early morning of late April when the rainy season was not quite over. She did not set off alone, instead, she was accompanied by some friends. The group left Batavia at half-past five by train. At that time, the Koningsplein remained misty, unchanging like usual when it is still dark, and the brightness of the sun had yet fully permeated the sky when the train travelled past the marshy ground and palm trees. Eventually, they alighted at Tandjong Priok station to resume their journey by their sadoos. It was not quite an easy route regarding the bumpy road marred by ruts.

After undergoing a difficult journey, they eventually came to a campong (village). The brackish water and sparse wood were apparent beyond the campong. De Wit does describe the activity of the locals there, but she does not prolong much about it which hints that her group were merely passing by and she does not mean them as the main subject of her writing. Going past the density of the wood, they came to the beach. In her narrative, de Wit spent her time taking in and feeling the landscape, observing the activities of locals and how they engaged with their environment, and gathering and recalling accounts revolving around the coastal community until the sun set at last.

The dialogic relationship between de Wit and the landscape of the beach appears when she presents the tangible and intangible features of the beach in her narrative, the realisation of something fresh and worth appreciating to her senses. Her description exudes a kind of idyllic atmosphere coating the landscape. She appreciates how nature carries itself and interacts with the activities of the locals. This intermingles with the psychological chronotope level which connects her internal world with the external world then.

b. Psychological Chronotope

Respecting her view, there is an expression of dislike toward the ruined nature, shown in the contrast between the area of the harbour (Tandjong Priok) that had become unpleasant for sightseeing due to the construction that took place there and the preserved natural beauty on the beach just around it where at one spot, stands Petite Trouville, a recreational place when Batavia is parched and dusty in the dry season.

> *It is nothing now but a heap of dust rendered compact by a coating of basalt and bricks, and bearing on its flat surface some half-dozen square squat sheds, the whitewashed walls of which glare intolerably in the sunlight that beats upon the barren place all day long. But a little further down the shore, eastwards from the harbour, the natural beauty of the country reasserts itself* (p. 163).

Midway her journey to Tandjong Priok, the increasingly tender brightness and warmth of the sun soon pervaded and she dwells on this in her narrative through continuous description of the effects it had on things, how the sunlight interacted with the foliage, the nature, in her surroundings. As this came to her senses, it evinces how she personally felt while engaging with the changing environment despite the jolty path they had.

> *It was good to feel wet-through on the tramp through the drenched tangle, to feel the blood tingling in the finger tips, the lungs full of quickening air, and the sunshine right in your eyes. It was good to be alive* (p. 165).

Shortly after she and her company reached the beach past the wood, her narrative treats the sighting of the beach as a revelation, a tranquil one. She stresses the calm yet radiant landscape of the beach through several mentions of bright colours as a result of the interplay between the sunlight and things present on the beach, including the vegetation. She uses the brilliance of the sunlight as a backdrop for the landscape and describes how little the distant things are against the bright sunlight to represent the spacious landscape from the shore to the horizon where it met the clear sky. Her extended description of the first-glanced nature implies her deep reflection of the new landscape that came into her view, letting herself be absorbed in the admiration for the natural beauty.

There is a place in her narrative for njamploeng (nyamplung) trees alongside nipah (palm) used as the huts' roofs to be described as part of the beach scenery. Tropical flora, especially palms and bananas, generally represents the tropics and as life-sustaining wealth (Arnold, 2006).

> *The beach, with a nipah-thatched hut on the right and a group of spreading njamploeng trees on the left, framed the radiant vista with sober browns and greens* (p. 166).

The njamploengs bear luxuriantly prolific, overhanging foliage and their characteristics are elaborated on as noble and graceful, rich with vigorous colour. Njamploengs are deemed as complementary emblems of the shoreline in de Wit's attempt to picture the coastal vista, similar to how palms are used to represent tropical countries (Arnold, 2006).

> *Standing under an ancient tree, that overhung the water with trailing branches and a tangle of wave-washed roots, I could see the luminous clusters shining in that dome of dusky leafage, like stars in the evening sky* (p. 167).

De Wit shows that as time moved on, the environment changed as well. By noon, it is displayed in the mentions of the heat that had increased while the day was advancing, the hot sand and glaring sunbeam, and the behavioural changes of living creatures (ex. when she describes how the trills of cicadas were gradually dampened by the increasing heat). In the afternoon, it is represented by the dying of colours, the shifting of cool air, the coming of tides, and, foremost, the activities of local folks that became briskier, the idyllic perceptual picture of coastal (rural) activities that came to her attention. These interconnected ideas are related to the metaphysical level.

Later in her narrative, the major subject of focus diverted from nature to the people, in terms of daily basis and the folkloric beliefs through tales. De Wit delivers these in an informative and thoughtful manner. She empathises with an old fisherman for having such dutiful family members, so he does not have to overburden himself to make a living or desperately settle for a dishonest shortcut to earn money, namely the temptation of the wicked goddess Kjai Belorong. She describes them as "good-natured, frugal and careless," so she affirms and agrees that those people would not easily yield to foul and corrupt decisions for their strong grasp on good religious values.

This soothing tone is abruptly interrupted by the thought of another threat that lingers around them, that is "My Lord the Crocodile," the crocodiles that inhabit the coast. She calls them the brutes that make the coast a perilous place for people, especially bathers from a European perspective for a particularly alien yet dangerous area (Arnod, 2006, p. 48). However, the idea that the locals respect the existence of these crocodiles is asserted and de Wit takes this into consideration. They let them populate the shores of Java instead of killing them as the Government and philanthropists advocated.

These multiple dialogic relationships with her subjects describe her as a person who holds an affinity for the nature of the beach and the people genuinely included in it. The interplay between her senses, personal feelings, and her act of recalling create different montages from one to another.

c. Metaphysical Chronotope

Previously, it was discussed that to de Wit's perception, the progression of time prompted particular activities of nature, the living creatures, and the local folks.

> *It was as if the inspiriting hour that changed the face of land and sea, made itself felt also in the little brown huts under the trees, stirring up the folk into briskness and activity* (p. 169).

In addition, she subtly illustrates how the beach was both home and the fruitful source of merchantable goods, while the city (Batavia) was a suitable place for selling those commodities. The idea that the beach was home to the folks is accentuated by the display of family bonds in her narrative.

> *Then the women of the village would come with their baskets, and gather the living harvest, as they might a windfall of ripe fruit; and his grandson, out at sea now, with the other young men, would hang two full baskets to his bending yoke, and with the fire-car go to Batavia, there to sell the fish for much money, a handful of copper doits* (coins)*. Even if he had caught "kabak" which the orang blandah like, and "gabus," of which the Chinese are fond, the boy might bring him him home some silver coins. And his grand-daughter would salt and dry in the sun the smaller fry, and make "ikan kring" for him and all the household* (p. 170).

She also mentions the happiness of a man to have such dutiful children who worked and made use of their home (the beach). The abundant landscape of the beach provided a certain lifestyle for the local community and this influenced their family life. This conceptualises a defined place where certain relationships between people and nature; and a person with another are enclosed within its own idyllic world.

It is in line with Bakhtin's notion concerning the idyllic chronotope that various idylls are bound together by several shared features, determined by their relationship with the inherent unity of folkloric time. They are expressed within the temporal-spatio relationship in the idyll, to wit: "an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 225). Still referring to Bakhtin, in this case, the predominant aspect is the regular maritime work and family, thus the labour and family idyll.

Beside the landscape and perception of the occupied locals, de Wit provides tales that are established among the locals. The first she narrates is the story told by the said old fisherman about Pah-Sidin, a poor man with tough luck, who engaged himself with the wicked Kjai Belorong solely for worldly wealth. The second one is her explanation about malicious crocodiles along the coast, complemented by a tale revolving around it, a tale about a crocodile who was deprived of all respects for taking the life of a girl and to be punished with the help of a hermit who spoke the language of animals. She was apparently reminded of this tale after seeing the landscape of the beach.

> *Something in the landscape near Petite Trouville brought back to my memory this tale, heard from a village priest some time ago* (p. 178).

Upon hearing the tale about Pah-Sidin, she correlates both subjects by deeming the temptation of the money-goddess, Kjai Belorong, and the menace of crocodiles as threats to the safety of the people, the idyll in the coastal community. However, the locals believe that those caymans are the reincarnations of their ancestors and give offerings to them whenever a child is born.

The link between the two subjects (the fisherman's tale and the infestation of crocodiles) suggests a folkloric and disruptive theme which later is subdued by de Wit's reflective narrative that relates the remembered tale to the present as it draws to an end of the chapter On the Beach, meaning that this tale is concretised by the environment of the beach.

> *That brown hut among the bananas might have been the abode of the hapless little maid. The dense wood behind, might well shelter an anchorite, some old man, wise and humble, content to live on wild fruit and learn from the birds among the branches and the fish in the sea; assuredly he would stand upon the little spit of land that has the njamploeng on it, and the crocodiles, obedient to his command, would raise their formidable heads from the water, and with their serried ranks cover the shelving beach*……. (pp. 178–179)

The beach is a spacious sun-beaten place, shady yet hot, commendable for the natural vistas it boasts, as well as a resourceful home to the people. This tie that binds human life and nature alongside its transcendental respect concretises the community of the beach. Nature is the embodiment of the formless and the mystical aspects of the tales associated with worldly human life present as a moral compass. On the other hand, nature unites family and offers prosperity and goods merchantable in the city for the fishermen. Therefore, the physical and spiritual divine are co-existing and interrelated, making the world go round in this community.

3. The Functional Town-Beach Relationship

The chapter "The Beach" showcases the characteristic chronotope of the road. This is due to the multiple encounters de Wit perceives throughout her journey, starting from her departing Batavia to arriving at the beach. It should be noted that the action of departing involves the idea of "home", the place one is leaving (Jora, 2018). Although de Wit positions herself as a foreigner, Batavia works as the "space of home", where she is accommodated during her stay in Java. This is also implied by her familiarity with Koningsplein's setting at night and in an early

morning. In "the Town" when she described Koningsplein after dark, she writes:

> *I* […] *found it whitely waving with mist, a very lake of vapor, fitfully heaving and sinking in the uncertain moonlight, and rolling airy waves against a shore of darkness* (pp. 35–36).

While in "the Beach", she tells its condition in the early morning likewise, showing familiarity before leaving:

> *We had left Batavia at half-past five, when the Koningsplein was still white with rolling mists and the stars had but just begun to fade in the greyish sky* (p. 164).

"The road" serves as the bridge between the town and the beach, the transportations (the train ride to Tandjong Priok and the *sadoo* ride to the jungle) and the places (the road to Tandjong Priok, the "grass-grown clearings of the jungle", and "a little campong") she passes by and takes in order to behold the sea. This connection is strengthened by the motif of European visits to the beach:

> *…when Batavia is parched with heat and choked with dust, people come hither* (Petite Trouville) *for a plunge into the clear cool waves, and for some hours of blissful idleness in the shadow of the broad-branched nyamploeng trees, which mirror their dark leafage and clusters of white wax-like blossoms in the tide* (p. 164).

This gives the impression that the beach offers recreational pleasure, which includes the nature and the sight of coastal villagers' every-day doings similar to other guidebooks of the Indies (Sunjayadi, 2019), to escape the business and overwhelming heat in the town for the Europeans. As for the coastal community, the beach is their home that provides them food, saleable commodities, and a habitually idyllic lifestyle. On the other hand, Batavia's briskness invites people to gather, which makes a commercially promising place for the coastal villagers to sell the goods they collect from their home.

This discussion confirms that the chronotopical analysis developed by Torop help understand the experienced relationship between a person and his environment expressed through texts. Apart from that, it is also helpful in unraveling the relationship between one environment and another to different communities.

Since de Wit recorded her impressions in the coming of the twentieth century, it may be inferred that the idea of functional relationship between the town and the beach was developing by 1900, which is based on people's backgrounds, settlements, earnings, and necessities in the early modern colonial Java. This functional relationship defines the town and the beach as separate yet interrelated places.

Conclusion

The chronotopical analysis developed by Torop is instrumental in breaking down the experiences as pieces of information that display how de Wit interacts with the town and the beach, revealing the functional town-beach relationship. Batavia, the culturally dynamic town, is de Wit's and other European comers' "space of home" in Java, while the beach is a recreational destination for them who seek the natural beauty, which includes the native people, of the tropics. However, this functional relationship is deemed different by the native community of the beach. This is proven by the familiarity of the people to the beach and its surroundings, making it their "space of home". This familiarity is demonstrated by their folkloric tales that tie them to the place and their everyday habits of using palms for their huts, harvesting fruits, and capturing fish to be sold in the town, Batavia, the place they leave for instead of to return to, telling a sense of tropicality where they live close to nature.

Narrative non-fiction writings of the contemporaries are helpful devices to learn the partial reality of their time. It is partial due to the subjectivity it may present. This study extracts meanings of the town's and the beach's two-way functional relationship through de Wit's perceptions. However, it also recommends future studies to look into other

textual narrative data of the time to confirm this town-beach relationship in different perspectives or other relationships between areas of colonial Java nearing its twentieth-century modernity.

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