



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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

MORTEZA HABIBI NESAMI

FBMK 2012 20



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By

MORTEZA HABIBI NESAMI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2012

DEDICATION

To Hayat



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

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September 2012

Chairman: Arbaayah Ali Termizi, Ph.D

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Uncertainty about identity is prevalent in modern literature. Self and identity in Joseph Conrad has been mostly researched into the search for self and identity in social context and through confrontation of 'self' with 'the other'. Humans' self-knowledge is mostly derived from the information gathered in social environments. However, experiencing natural environment especially the dark side of nature can be another contributing factor. Under the light of ecocriticism this study unmasks how wilderness 'provokes' the Conradian heroes to arrive at the state of self-awareness as one part of self forms through direct confrontation with non-human natural environment – when 'self' is placed against 'nonself', apart from the socio-cultural factors such as race, gender, class and nationality that form identity. Owing to being defeated in their quest in the wilderness whether marine or terrestrial such as jungles and islands, Conrad's adventurous characters come to the new perception of their

‘self’. By giving them enough time and space, nature provides them with an opportunity for self-awareness. It serves as a mirror to show them who they really are and how powerful nature might be in the battle between human and nature. Their ultimate awareness is that defeating nature is nothing but the vanity of human wishes.

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

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**SATU KRITIKAN EKO TERHADAP IDENTITI CERMINAN ALAM
DALAM KARYA TERPILIH CONRAD**

Oleh

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September 2012

Chair: Arbaayah Ali Termizi, Ph.D

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Identiti dalam ‘Cermin alam semula jadi’ [mirror of nature]:

Suatu kajian ekokritis karya terpilih Joseph Conrad

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

diri' yakni selain daripada faktor sosio-budaya, seperti bangsa, jantina, kelas dan warganegara yang juga membentuk identiti. Kegagalan usaha mereka di belantara sama ada di laut atau di darat seperti hutan dan pulau, watak-watak adventur Conrad mendapat persepsi baru tentang 'diri' mereka. Di samping masa dan ruang yang mereka berikan untuk diri mereka sendiri, alam semula jadi juga memberikan mereka peluang mencapai kesedaran sendiri. Alam semula jadi ini berfungsi sebagai cermin untuk menunjukkan siapa sebenarnya mereka dan betapa berkuasanya alam semulajadi sekiranya manusia dan alam semula jadi berlawan. Mereka akhirnya sedar bahawa untuk menakluk alam semula jadi adalah hasrat manusia yang sia-sia.

Oleh sebab sifatnya yang interdisiplin pengkaji ekokritisme bergantung sebahagiannya kepada kajian saintifik yang memfokuskan kepada peranan utama persekitaran semula jadi dalam mentakrifkan identiti manusia—bagaimana manusia menghakimi diri mereka dalam aspek autonomi dan kecekapan apabila berhadapan dengan alam semula jadi. Antara beberapa jenis persekitaran, belantara adalah subset alam semula jadi yang akan diketengahkan. Aspek belantara yang luas meliputi kepelbagaian iklim, mengasyikan, inversi, rakus dan di luar kawalan menunjukkan bagaimana keadaan alam semula jadi dipaparkan dalam karya dan bagaimana watak mendefinisikan diri mereka sendiri. Sisi gelap alam semula jadi yang merupakan unsur yang sering diulang dalam karya Joseph Conrad dapat dijejak merujuk idea Edmund Burke tentang konsep "sublime" membantu melengkapkan kajian ini. Kekuatan dan keunikan kajian ini adalah kerana kurangnya kajian Conrad yang menggunakan perspektif ekokritis dan konsep sendiri dalam pembentukan . Akhirnya, identiti watak-watak utama Conrad dijelaskan secara lebih sahih dan

nyata hasil daripada penafsiran semula identitinya sendiri melalui cermin alam semula jadi semasa penglibatan beliau sebagai pelaut selama dua puluh tahun itu.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 06-09-2012 to conduct the final examination of Morteza Habibi Nesami on his thesis entitled "AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF IDENTITY IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE IN SELECTED WORKS BY JOSEPH CONRAD" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Ph.D in English Literature.

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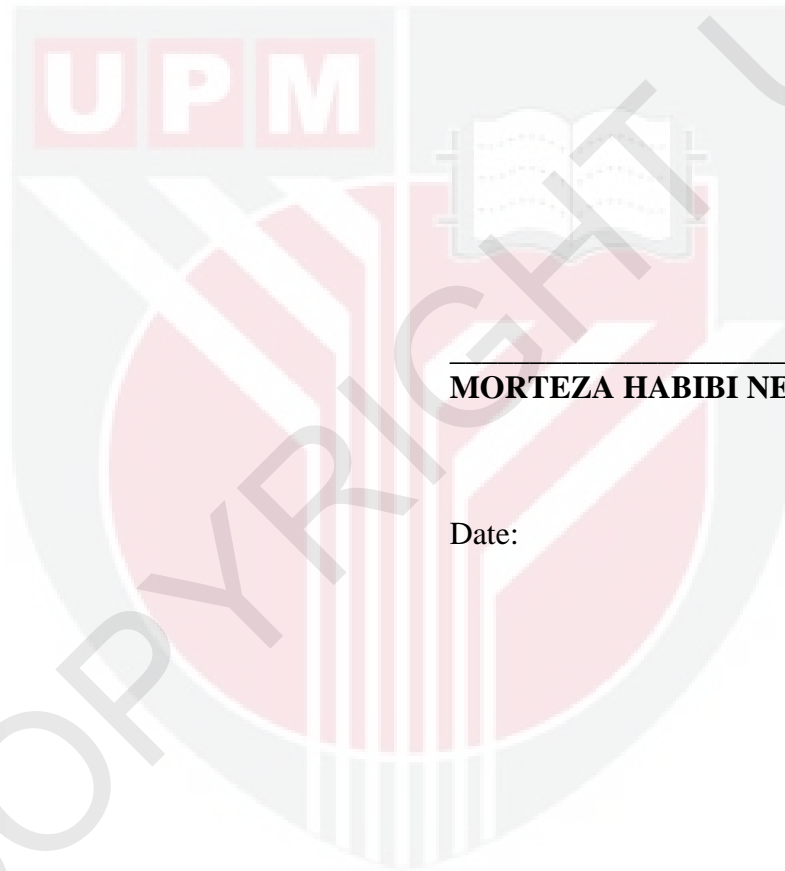
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DECLARATION

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



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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	viii
APPROVAL	ix
DECLARATION	xi
TABLE OF CONTENT	xii

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study	7
1.4 Conceptual Theory	9
1.4.1 Ecocriticism	9
1.4.2 Identity and Nature	10
1.5 Objectives of the Study	12
1.6 Significance of the Study	12
1.7 Structure of the Thesis	13
1.8 Definition of Terms	14
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Preamble	17
2.2 Conrad and Nature	21
2.3 Identity and Self in Joseph Conrad	25
2.4 Interdisciplinary Nature of Ecocriticism	30
2.5 Forerunners in Literature of Nature	33
2.6 The Emergence of Ecocriticism	34
2.7 Nature	37
2.8 Wilderness	38
2.9 Nature and identity	40
2.10 Darkness in the Heart of Nature	47

2.11	Postcolonial Ecocriticism in Conrad	51
2.12	The Representation of Nature in Malaysian Works	55
2.13	Conclusion	56
3	THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	59
3.1	Preamble	59
3.2	Identity and Natural Environment	60
3.3	Features of Wilderness	66
3.3.1	Uncontrollability	69
3.3.2	Indifference	70
3.3.3	Inversion	71
3.3.4	Sublime	72
3.3.5	Weather and Climate	77
3.4	Methodology	83
3.5	Conclusion	89
4	THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA	92
4.1	Preamble	92
4.2	<i>Lord Jim</i>	95
4.2.1	Jim's Quest in the Wilderness	95
4.2.2	Darkness of Nature for Jim	102
4.2.3	Jim's Redefinition of Identity	106
4.3	"The Secret Sharer"	109
4.3.1	The Mirror of Nature in "The Secret Sharer"	109
4.3.2	Weather	112
4.3.3	Identity	114
4.4	<i>Mirror of the Sea</i>	116
4.4.1	Dark Side of nature in <i>Mirror</i>	118
4.4.2	Weather in <i>Mirror</i>	123
4.4.3	Redefinition of Identity	126
4.4.4	Conclusion	128
5	NATURE AND SELF IN <i>VICTORY</i> AND <i>HEART OF DARNKESS</i>	129
5.1	Preamble	129
5.2	<i>Victory</i>	130
5.2.1	Island as a Natural Environment	130

5.2.2	Dark Side of Nature	134
5.2.3	Uncertainty in Identity	136
5.3	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	140
5.3.1	The Natural Environment	143
5.3.2	Dark Side of Nature	146
5.3.3	Uncontrollability of Nature	149
5.3.4	Identity in Kurtz and Marlow	151
5.3.5	Conclusion	159
CONCLUSION		161
REFERENCES		168
BIODATA OF STUDENT		175

