WESTERN STEREOTYPING OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN MORGAN'S *MUTANT MESSAGE DOWN UNDER*: AN ORIENTALISM ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the stereotyping of Aboriginal tribe in Morgan's novel, Mutant Message Down Under, by the Western. The objectives of the study are to identify the Aboriginal stereotypes and to analyse how it is constructed based on Said's theory of Orientalism.

This research applied a descriptive qualitative method to analyse the data. The primary data instrument was the researcher and the secondary data instrument was data sheet. The data was in the form of sentences, phrases, or words in the novel. The data were analysed using content analysis technique employing Orientalism theory by Edward Said.

The findings of this research showed that there are two main stereotyping of Aboriginal tribe in the novel. The first stereotype is uncivilized. This stereotype is constructed as the distinction of Western civilization. The Western civilization is maintained through the delineation of Aboriginal people as uncivilized, being primitive or traditional, and having bad personalities or manner. The second stereotype is inferior. The inferiority is constructed through the characteristics of Aboriginal people who are seen as uneducated, poor, and having worse language than English. The findings implicate that Western stereotyping of the Aboriginal people are maintained well through the literary work.

Keywords: Orientalism, stereotype, stereotyping, Aboriginal people, Edward Said.

INTRODUCTION

Stereotyping, in brief, may mean generalising perception of the first impression, oversimplifying conception or image, or even judging with personal point of view. Lippmann (1922: 79-90) writes in his Public Opinion that stereotype is a kind of image in people's mind about a particular social group. This kind of image is mental and only in people's head. The image is not always true because it is based on people's subjective judgement which is constructed by experience, belief, doctrine, media, and preconceptive opinion.

Stereotyping can result in prejudice, stigma, discrimination, racism, even conflict as shown in many problems that this world is now facing. For example, the recent issue about terrorism that claims Muslims as the doers. Thus, in many Western countries, in which Muslims are minority, people are frightened of Muslims and they stereotype them as terrorists. This affects how global society perceives Islam and its believers. Some cases reflecting this stereotyping can be read in international news. There was a 14-year-old child from Texas named Ahmed Mohammed who made and brought a homemade clock to school. He innocently wanted to show his experiment to impress his teacher but his teacher mistakenly assumed that it is a bomb. Thus, Ahmed was handcuffed, arrested, and interrogated (Hern, 2015). The news was rapidly spread

by international media and it caused some debates in cyberspace. Many cyber citizens tended to claim this case as a form of Islamophobia and thought that it was because the child's name sounds Islamic so that he was suspicious for threatening by making a hoax bomb. The cyber turmoil can be seen when this case became the trending topic worldwide and the hash tag #IStandWithAhmed triggered mass of debate on social media. In conclusion, this case arose because of stereotyping attitude.

Stereotyping also appertains to some racial issues recently. The elected president in the United States of America, Donald Trump, orders the executive to ban citizens of some Muslim countries travelling to America. In his opinion, Muslims are tremendous threat that he must prevent before doing harm to his folks (Guardian, 2017). This case is also the result of negative stereotyping that affects the institutional law and policy of a country. Since America is the superpower country, it definitely brings direct and indirect impacts to especially the banned countries and generally to many other countries worldwide.

Particularly in Australia, stereotyping triggers racial discrimination likewise in other places do. 93% Aboriginal Australians think that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians are prejudiced against each other, while 71% non-Aboriginal Australians think the same (Korff, 2014). 20% Australians experienced discrimination in 2014 and 70% secondary school students (including Aboriginal students) experienced racism (Korff, 2016). In addition, Kalgoorlie riots, one of the real issues of racial stereotyping, happened in August 2016. A 55-year-old man murdered 14-year-old Indigenous boy named Elijah Doughty. The boy was found dead near Kalgoorlie after a crash between him riding a stolen motorcycle and the charged man. Elijah was known as a good boy and a promising football player in the town. More than 200 protesters came to Kalgoorlie Court and clamoured for justice (Wibberley, 2016). Yet, the protest turned to be violent that some police officers injured. The tragedy woke people's spirit to fight against the racism in Australia. The murderer has stereotyped the boy as a rude and delinquent indigenous youth that must be the one who stole his motorcycle, so he killed him without prior investigation. In short, the statistical data and the incident show how the stereotyping is crucial to discuss since it affects social and ideological systems.

Such stereotyping of indigenous people is rooted from the colonialism eras in the past. Europeans were the most ambitious subjects in colonialism. They expanded their power by conquering territories around the world. Many countries experienced colonialism and imperialism since most of territories in the world are European colonies. They call other races as 'the Other'

while they themselves as 'the Occident'. Western civilians think that they are superior than 'the Others' in some aspects such as manner, custom, human resource quality, and so on. Edward Said (1978) who studied these phenomena states that the concept of Otherness is a part of colonisation. One of the most recurrent images of 'the Other' is 'the Orient'. It refers to the places of European's greatest, richest, and oldest colonies which helped them defining the West by contrasting their image, idea, personality, and experience (Said, 1978: 1-3).

Along the history of the European colonisation, Australia becomes a very special case of colonized countries. After Willem Janszoon from the Netherlands in 1606 'discovered' it, many other Europeans, including English, sailed to explore this continent, which formerly was known as Terra Australis Incognita (unknown southern land), more and more. Then in 1788, Captain Arthur Philip and the first fleet of British Colony consisted of the ship crews, marines and their family, and mostly male-female convicts were sent to and arrived in Botany Bay (Reynders, 2014: para 2-4). Since then the colonialism in Australia began to be more massive. The Australian indigenous people called Aborigines were shoved aside. The Aborigines and those White settlers had different cultures, thus the stereotype was formed within the interaction. As the Other, the Whites stereotyped Aborigines as less developed,

less intelligent, brutal, criminal, and so on (Korff, 2016). Such stereotype belongs to negative stereotype that is possible to raise conflicts and problems.

Stereotyping of the Aboriginal people was portrayed in some literary works. Little Black Princess written by Aeneas Gunn in 1870s is the first literary text with indigenous people as the central role (Carmel Bird, 2002: para 32). The narrator is a white woman who finds the black little girl and takes her home then treats her like a pet animal. This little girl then becomes the central character in the story. Yet this literary work also portrays how the Whites stereotype the Black people as inferior so they treat the girl like a half-human. Mary Grant Bruce's Little Bush Maid written in 1910 is also a notable work. This is the first Billabong series which really show the racial and social hierarchy (Carmel Bird, 2002: para 38). Even readers can feel the stereotypical sense in the title. The Aborigines are characterized as maids or servants. They have no power over the Whites.

The other literary works with the characterisation and setting of indigenous life, especially Aboriginal setting, is Mutant Message Down Under written by Marlo Morgan. Yet compared to the previous novel mentioned, this novel takes a different point of view. The story is told from the point of view of a Western writer and the persona as well. This point of view gives a certain

characteristic of Orientalism novel. This novel was a noble-prized for the self-publication at first. This novel became controversial in bringing Aboriginal culture. Some of Aboriginal elders object Marlo Morgan as the writer because they think that Marlo Morgan writes some points of aberrant idea (Dumbartung.org, 2003: para 1-5). It means that the idea she writes in Mutant Message Down Under does not reflect the real Aboriginal tribes and many parts of the book are potentially fabrication based on the stereotype of how people describe indigenous people in general.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative approach is a research technique which relies on linguistic data rather than numerical data and employs meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis (Elliot and Timulak, 2005:147). Since this research had descriptive data in the form of written data, the researcher applied qualitative approach especially descriptive research design.

The data of this research is written data in the form of dialogue and narration by the main character and the writer as well, Marlo Morgan, in her novel Mutant Message Down Under. The context is sentences, phrases, or words which employ stereotyping toward Aboriginal tribe called Real People. Meanwhile, the data source is the novel written by Marlo Morgan entitled *Mutant Message Down Under*.

As the source of data in this study was a written literary text in the form of novel, the data collection technique belongs to analysis of documents conducted by note taking. The researcher collected the data of stereotyping from *Mutant Message Down Under* novel in the narration and dialogue of the main character.

The research primary instrument was the researcher as the human instrument. The secondary instrument of this research was the data sheet.

To ensure the findings and to enhance trustworthiness, the researcher employed triangulation by theory and by researcher. Furthermore, the researcher also involved two experts and some of her peer reviewers to check out the triangulation of the data.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in binary opposition summarized in the following table.

ORIENT / ABORIGINE		OCCIDENT / WEST
A. UNCIVILIZED 　1. Uncivilized 　2. Traditional/ Primitive 　3. Bad Personality or Manner	**vs.**	A. CIVILIZED 　1. Civilized 　2. Modern 　3. Good Personality or Manner
B. INFERIOR 　1. Unintelligent/ Uneducated 　2. Poor 　3. Bad Language		B. SUPERIOR 　1. Intelligent/ Educated 　2. Wellbeing 　3. Good Language

A. Uncivilized vs. Civilized

1. Uncivilized vs. Civilized

Said (1978: 207) emphasizes how Orientals are underestimated by the West Said They are seen as less human since they do not meet the standards of Western life. This Western view on the Oriental is portrayed in Mutant Message Down Under. Morgan also mentioned several times that the Aboriginal people are uncivilized by emphasizing that she, as the part of Western society, is civilized as the following quotation.

> I notice that soon after we ate they went into the desert and emptied their bowels, and it truly did not have strong smell that it is associated with the waste matter in our lifestyle. I was sure that after fifty years of my civilized diet, it would take some time to detoxify my body, but I felt if I stayed in the Outback, it was possible (Morgan, 1994: 85). *[Data23/p85/A/1]*

Even though in the datum she seems to convey the positive side of living with the Aboriginal people, stating "my civilized diet" implies the contradiction. This is how she stereotypes Aboriginal people as having uncivilized diet. Moreover, in some sentences before, Morgan described their behaviour after eating which contradict with the commonly known as Western standard of manner. This way of conveying stereotype clarifies the difference between Western lifestyle and Aboriginal life as argued by Said (1978: 39-40) that if one featured Oriental as 'different', it implies that the Western is 'normal'.

2. Traditional / Primitive vs. Modern

The next stereotype is related to the modernity of the West through the delineation of indigenous people who are associated with being primitive and too traditional as their universal and primary characteristics (Said, 1978: 120), including the Aborigines as the indigenous tribe in Australia. In this novel, Morgan also describes that Aboriginal people still do traditional ritual even though she sets the story in 1990's when modernism is supposed to have reached Australia, particularly Aborigines. The stereotype is reflected in the following datum.

> The smoke ritual was repeated behind me, then I was instructed to step across the fire, through the smoke (Morgan, 1994: 7).[Data08/p7/A/2]

Morgan emphasizes how Aborigines in that year are still performing old ritual. The smoke ritual she describes is that the Aborigine's ritual to 'cleanse' her as a stranger to the tribe. She was told to take her clothes off and wore the prepared rag instead. Then, the woman elder of the tribe flapped the smoke in front of her from face to feet. Finally, she was instructed to step across the fire through the smoke.

3. Bad vs. Good Personalities or Manner

Social stereotyping of Aboriginal people lays in their personalities. They are seen as a race with very bad and disapproving personalities. Said (1978: 150) stated that the Orient suddenly appeared lamentably under humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth. In this novel, some

similar bad personalities labelled to 'the Real People' as the representation of Aboriginal people, are explained as follows.

The characteristics of barbaric, rude, and bad tempered are one of the negative stereotypes labelled to Australian indigenous people, Aborigines. The stereotyping can be found in Morgan's narration to start the story, "I was to become merely one more American to disappear in a foreign" (Morgan, 1994: 1) as coded as Data01/p1/A/3. In this datum, the persona or main character in the novel assumes that indigenous people likes to do disapproving things like kidnapping and killing. She seems believing the rumour that many American people disappear when visiting Australia because being kidnapped or killed by local people. It highlights that American people as the West are more lawful because they are not doing the same as Aboriginal people. The same stereotype is repeated in the following datum which describes similar case.

> I wasn't bound and gagged, but I felt like a captive. To me, it appeared, I was the victim of a forced march into the unknown (Morgan, 1994: 17).
> [Data12/p17/A/3]

This datum indicates that stereotyping is constructed through some sentences or phrases showing Western as the victim of the Aboriginal people's barbaric traits. The context of this datum is that Morgan feels tricked and forced to join a Aboriginal people walking across Australia for around three months. Hence, Morgan state that she was a captive since she is not given choice and she had no idea how to get out from there, just like if she is in a jail. This kind of description was also used by popular Orientalism during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth like William Beckford, Byron, Thomas Moore, and Goethe, who cannot be "simply detached from the interest taken in Gothic tales, pseudo medieval idylls, visions of barbaric splendour and cruelty" (Said, 1978:118). By representing this characteristic to the Orient, the Westerns defines them as the opposite; the Westerns are lawful and pleasant.

B. Inferior vs. Superior

1. Unintelligent vs. Intelligent

Common negative stereotype of indigenous people including Aborigine is stupid or uneducated. This stereotype can be seen in the following dialogue.

> "Great!" I thought to myself. "I've spent seven hundred dollars on airfare, hotel room, and new clothes for this introduction to native Australians, and now I find out they can't even speak English, let alone recognize current fashions." (Morgan 1994: 5)
> [Data05/p5/2/a/G]

In this part, Morgan as the character in the novel seems to have certain expectation when she came to Australia. Since she was invited to an awarding event, she thought that she would experience formal and classy occasion. Thus, she had prepared so well

before she came to Australia. In fact, when she unintentionally joined the Aboriginal people's journey, she was felling unsatisfied because everything is beyond her expectation.

From the quotation in Datum 5, she expressed her disappointment over the Aborigines. Somehow, by stating "now I find out they can't even speak English", she conveys a stereotyping that the Aboriginal people are stupid or uneducated since they cannot speak English. English is the international language that she expects everyone should be able to learn and speak in order to communicate well with the international society. Thus, she felt annoyed because all she had prepared seemed to be useless.

2. Poor vs. Wellbeing

Westerners often standardize their lifestyle over the Occident. Thus, prosperity, beauty, and some other aspects of social life are seen through the eyes of Westerners. In this case, Morgan also portrays the standardization through some narrations.

> There were no signs of its providing for human needs: no chairs, no flooring, no fan; it was without electricity. The entire place was rippling tin held together precariously by worn and rotting lumber (Morgan, 1994: 9).
>
> [Data11/p9/2/b/G]

From the datum 11, we can infer that the place where Morgan stays at first in Australia is considered as so much below the standard of a place to live in America or other Western countries. To her, the basic human needs for a comfortable living are providing the house with at least chairs, a fan, and some other furniture. In addition, the proper flooring and electric installation are very important. Thus, the description of the emptiness of the house intends to distinct them with Aboriginal life which they consider as poor.

3. Bad vs. Good Languages

Language is essential media in communication. The failure in communicating with people can be caused by the failure in comprehending the same language. Yet, all language should be seen as equal because each language has different characteristic and function in certain groups. Somehow, Western people often regard their language as superior and it has to be acquired by other nations. This is reflected in some following data.

> Instead of using one word for sand, they have over twenty different words, which describe textures, types, and descriptions of soil in the Outback. But few words were easy, like Kupi for water. They seem to enjoy my words, and they are more adept at learning my sounds than I was at learning theirs (Morgan, 1994: 84).
>
> [Data28/p84/2/d/G]

In this datum, it is narrated how the words in Aboriginal language are too complex and difficult to comprehend since it has many vocabularies for similar thing. It contradicts with English which she considered to have simpler vocabularies and easier to learn. That is how she also

describes that Aboriginal people enjoys English more and learn it faster than she learns Aboriginal language.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussions, the result of this research can be concluded that based on the findings, there are two main stereotypes identified in the novel.

The first stereotype is uncivilized. This stereotype is constructed as the distinction of Western civilization. The Western civilization is maintained through the delineation of Aboriginal people as uncivilized, being primitive or traditional, and having bad personalities or manner.

The second stereotype is inferior. The inferiority is constructed through the characteristics of Aboriginal people who are seen as uneducated, poor, and having worse language than English.

Those stereotypes are implied to point out that Western people are civilized and superior. This is how they maintain the dominance over the Orient, in this case Aboriginal people.

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