

A Structural Postcolonial Analysis of Voice and Noise in Joseph Conrad's *The Lagoon*

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Abstract

This article explores the motifs of voice and noise in Joseph Conrad's *The Lagoon* from a structural postcolonial perspective. The dialectic relations between voice and power, structure, and function are critically investigated to identify the ideologies involved in the subjugation of the Orient and sustainment of the racial superiority of the Occident. The noise narrative structure and ethnic conflict add to voice disrupts the effective reception of the message conveyed. *The Lagoon* encapsulates a story-within-a-story with two storytellers relating different narratives and addressing different characters and audiences from different viewpoints. Their narratives elicit responses ranging from trust to distrust depending on the identity of the storyteller and hierarchy of the narrative structure within the story. The study evaluates the impact of structure and ethnic identity on the reception of voice, and shows how structural and cultural noises disrupt the voice of the Orient. It finds that the Occident's perception of the Orient is based on certain stereotypes and misconceptions. The voice of Arsat, a protagonist and storyteller, is accordingly subordinated to the framing voice of the third-person narrator, and his tale structurally functions as a flashback.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, *the Lagoon*, noise, postcolonialism, structuralism, voice

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Introduction

The article critically examines the voices of the storytellers in Conrad's *The Lagoon*, which comprises a story within a story. Arsat tells the framed tale in which he articulates and subjectively reflects upon his thoughts and feelings, from the viewpoint of the first-person narrator. The noises distorting Arsat's voice are of structural and cultural origin. The story Arsat tells is structurally reduced to a flashback in the frame story. Culturally, the restrictions and constraints laid upon Arsat's voice by his Oriental identity contribute to perpetuating the hegemony of the Occident. Structuralists and postcolonialists' views on narratology and subalternity guide the analysis of the story and investigation of the research topic. The main questions the research raises and seeks to answer are: How impressionistic, and stereotypical is the image of the Orient? To what extent does Arsat act like a typical Orient? Does Arsat meet the expectations of Orientalists? How audible and capable is Arsat's voice? The research problem the article addresses concerns Conrad's use of narrative structure in *The Lagoon* to subjugate the voice and narrative of Arsat. The main objective is to open new avenues in a longstanding debate concerning the representation of the Orient in Conrad's novels and short stories.

Theoretical Approaches

The theories of structuralism and postcolonialism enlighten the analysis of the implications of voice hierarchy and narrative hierarchy in *The Lagoon*. Narratologists suppose where a work embeds two narratives, the embedded narrative is subordinated to the embedding narrative. Each story usually has a narrator and is set at a different locale and time. Each might be a story in its own right or a portion of a larger story. The precedence of one story over another is determined by how it is presented (Waldron, 2012).

Irwin (2011) defined embedding as a frame narrative "composed primarily to present other narratives. The frame tale depicts a series of oral storytelling events in which one or more characters in the frame tale are also narrators of the interpolated tales" (p. 28). The frame tale is perceived as a modular package or box, where "an interpolated tale can stand alone or reappear in a different frame, albeit with a different connotation" (p. 28). The frame tale creates "a context for reading, listening, and, of course, interpreting the interior tales" (p. 28).

However, Herman (2006) viewed framed narratives "as both models for and vehicles of shared thinking, or socially distributed cognition" (p. 358). In other words, framed stories are contrived to generate and convey knowledge and meaning. While the frame narrative manifests an awareness of the present, the framed story is designated as a mirror of the past and a gift for today (Merman, 2006). He countered the arguments likening the frame story to a package that contains the framed narrative with an emphasis on the chain-like relationship that undermines hierarchies between them.

Narrative hierarchy, for Rimmon-Kenan (1983), is governed by mediacy, which entails that the mediated narrative is subordinate to the mediating story. Rimmon-Kenan clarified that subordination signifies dependency but not inferiority. The embedded narrative cannot be separated from its embedding narrative without changing the overall effect and meaning of the text. Genette (1980) contrarily placed embedded stories at a higher diegetic level. He contended, "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing the

narrative is placed" (p. 228). The embedded narrative is, in that sense, a narrative in itself and an event within another story.

Narratologists generally use binary terms such as the frame story versus the framed story, and the embedding story versus the embedded story to signify the same concepts. For consistency purposes, the current study will use the terms frame and framed to describe the different hierarchies of stories and voices in *The Lagoon*.

By the same token, postcolonialists addressed the hierarchies established between the voices and discourses of the colonized and the colonizer, the Orient and the Occident, the minority and the majority, immigrants and natives, women of color and white women. Spivak lumped the above-oppressed groups together under the heading subalternity to suggest that subaltern groups can speak, but their binary other impatiently and inattentively listens to them. This impatience is a form of a noise interrupting the conveyance of a message from a sender to a receiver. Ethno-cultural, social, and gender considerations constitute other sources of noise that may disrupt communication and interaction between a subaltern subject and a non-subaltern subject. Only when the desired message is effectively received can it instill a thought, change an impression or perspective, or prompt action or feeling on the part of the non-subaltern listener. Though the subaltern speaker does his best to convey his message, it is inevitably hindered by noise. In a reflection upon her controversial statement, the subaltern cannot speak, Spivak clarified "even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. That's what it had meant, and anguish marked the spot" (Spivak, 1995, p. 292). Spivak contended that the subalterns could speak, write, and articulate their thoughts and feelings. Non-subaltern listeners, however, show no interest in listening to or decoding the message sent to them. The only productive and perceptible voice in a subaltern context, she believed, is that of the non-subaltern to which all other voices are subjected.

Literature Review

Al-Sheikh and Lazim (2017) examined speech acts, particularly metaphors, similes, personification, and antithesis, in Conrad's *The Lagoon*. Just as a word is the smallest unit of language and morpheme the smallest unit of a word, the speech act is viewed as a "minimal functional unit in human communication" (p. 245). The speech act signifies the context, situation, and paralinguistic features such as tone in which an utterance is used. The three types of speech acts are: a locutionary act (production of a statement), illocutionary act (purpose of producing the statement), and perlocutionary act (the effect of the statement produced).

Pragmatic stylistics is the model chosen to analyze and interpret the language and meaning of *The Lagoon*. While pragmatics is the study of the contextual meaning of actual utterances, stylistics is a walk of linguistics concentrating on the use of language in literature. Representative speech acts with metaphorical shades such as metaphor (the hunger of my heart), simile (the carved-dragon-like head), personification (the eyes of the day), and light-dark antithesis make one extended metaphor that characterizes the language of *The Lagoon*. The metaphorical modes used in the story "operate reciprocally in the context of situation to create the mental picture of the world: the picture of love,

pain, shame, remorse and finally death in that vast solitude" (Al-Sheikh & Lazim, 2017, p. 254). They indirectly expose the complexity of human nature and express the characters' world views.

The pragmatic-stylistic analysis of the story identifies a sequence of direct and indirect speech acts. The direct actions, represented by descriptive utterances, create the physical setting and atmosphere of the story within the story. The indirect speech acts such as metaphorical modes correlate the physical world with the spiritual world of the protagonist using an analogy or implicit similitude. They also relate the opposing images of dark-light nature to "the complexity of human nature in its vicissitudes" (Al-Sheikh & Lazim, 2017, p. 258). Implicature or the meaning inferred from utterances is found to be a prominent pragmatic feature of Conrad's story. Stylistic variations in conversational turns prove to be sufficient enough to reveal the obscurity of human nature.

Bandyopadhyay (2006) investigated the interrelation between form and theme in Conrad's *The Lagoon* and other short fiction. Form and theme are perceived as integral components that sustain each other and produce the unity of impression and artistic wholeness. The narrative structure, Conrad used in the story, is "linear, straightforward, and strictly chronological" (p. 185). The only time shift the story has is a flashback, in which Arsat relates his story of crime, remorse, and retribution. The locale, where all the events occur, is located in the Malay Archipelago, whose mysterious beauty is abundantly described. The themes the story touches upon are love, betrayal, remorse, retribution, fate and tension between the ideal and the real. These themes are found to be appropriately integrated with such formal elements of the story as narrative mode, narrative structure, characterization, location, and time-sequences. The structural and rhetorical devices, Conrad excessively employed in the story, are imagistic details, intricate sentence patterns, idioms, and reversal of noun and modifier. In addition to the verbosity of language and complexity of sentence patterns, Conrad used "another kind of language and style which is more simple, passionate and straightforward, and throbbing with vitality" (p. 179). The themes are presented by a first-person narrator in a linear, chronological narrative model with a flashback. Yet, the story is introduced by a primary narrator.

XIAO and Hong-bin DAI (2017) argued that Conrad's *The Lagoon* includes several stark contrasts between light and dark, black and white, sunrise and sunset, sound and silence, water and fire, movement and stillness. Their study primarily focused on the contrast of light and dark, which runs throughout the story and reflects the psychological states and inner worlds of the two protagonists, the white man and Arsat. Several passages abundantly describing the landscape, foliage, and bodies of water in Malaysian islands signify the intersection of light and shadow and its psychological reflections upon the protagonists in Conrad's story. The depiction of streams and forests was the technique through which Conrad strikingly illustrates "the conflicts and struggles of the characters" (p. 147) and develops a gloomy atmosphere of *The Lagoon*. The contrastive analysis of the relationship between light and dark emphasizes the dominance of the dark over the dim light. Conrad described light using such verbs as "flash," "glint," and "glitter," or such adjectives as "thin," and "dim". Yet, darkness was described as "mysterious," and "invincible" (Xiao and Dai, 2017, p. 147). The study further contended that Conrad used "slender" and "distorted" to describe the white man's shadow and reluctance to find "a lodge in Arsat's clearing, for the reason that although he is Arsat's friend, he still possesses the identity of "the kinsman of colonists. They cannot sincerely open their heart to each other" (Xiao and Dai, 2017, p. 147).

Arsat, however, is bewildered with his wife's illness and guilt of his brother's death. The night-time setting, along with contrasts of dark and light, intently conforms to that bewilderment. Yet, Conrad gave hope for Arsat and the reader when ending the story "with the sunrise, where the light dominates dark, and the narration, the scenery depiction and the psychological description harmoniously integrates" (Xiao and Dai, 2017, p. 149).

Discussion

Critics generally distinguish between dialogic and monologic narrative situations. Monologism entails that the author, who is all-knowing and all-seeing, is in a domineering position to stand above and beyond the narrative. He constructs characters, attaches a specific set of attributes and traits to them, and determines their fate and fortune. He speaks about but not with them. Characters are not free to act, speak, or think as they have to follow the track set for them. Besides, the author determines the meaning and perspective of the monologic narrative (Selden & Peter, 2005).

Dialogism, however, assumes that "the author acts as a kind of arranger, an organizer, and participant in the dialogues, the clashes of conflicting positions and voices, but without retaining for himself the final word" (Curthoys & Docker, 2010, p. 37). Characters in dialogic fiction are not considered objects of the author's omniscient gaze. They have equal voices and views to the author. As dialogue disrupts the author's authority and control over the text, the hierarchy of voices disappears. The exchange of opinions through discussion creates better conditions for the generation or discovery of truth, according to dialogists (Selden & Peter, 2005).

Several features accordingly render *The Lagoon* a monologic narrative. The author has the story related by an authoritative third-person narrator, and relies more on narration and mediation than on the dialogue. The third-person narrator, for instance, plays the role of the mediator when reporting the characters' voices and the story the protagonist, Arsat, tells. Concerning the interpretation, the author confines the text to a monolithic reading that manipulates the truth, masks the characters' identities and drives, and glosses over other perspectives.

Voice

The Lagoon encapsulates a story-within a story and has them told by different storytellers. The relator of the framed story is a character in the frame story, which is narrated from a third-person point of view. The frame story recounts the voyage of Tuan, a white man, to the Malay Peninsula, where he meets his Malay friend, Arsat, in an abandoned lagoon. Tuan finds him overwhelmed by grief and sorrow over his dying wife, Diamelen. Arsat repeatedly asks whether she is going to die, and Tuan coldly replies she probably will. At a nostalgic but revealing moment, Arsat recalls the story of his love and remorsefully admits accountability for the murder of his brother in pursuit. The forest and darkness surrounding Arsat's cottage look terrifying enough for Tuan to bring his visit into an abrupt end by the morning.

In the course of his narrative, the third-person narrator reports the voices of other characters. Tuan, for instance, is reported making brief commentaries and remarks on his voyage as well as on Arsat's story. Below are concise declarative and imperative statements Tuan makes while talking to the

Malay steersman: "we will pass the night in Arsat's clearing. It is late" (p. 126), "we will cook in the sampan, and sleep on the water" (p. 128), and "pass my blankets and the basket" (p. 128). The tone with which he articulates those statements puts him in a position to authority to order and direct his assistants. The earlier sound soon becomes interrogative and affirmative when speaking to Arsat: "No, Why? Is there sickness in the house?" (p. 128), "I fear so" (p. 129), "if such is her fate" (p. 129), "I remember" (p. 131), "We all love our brothers" (p. 135). The latter tone contrarily expresses suppressed anxieties and fears.

Arsat is the other character the narrator reports speaking. The statements Arsat makes are predominantly interrogative in tone. He is reported asking Tuan the following questions: Have you medicine, Tuan?" (p. 128) "Tuan, will she die?" (p. 128) "Tuan, do you remember the old days? Do you remember my brother?" (p. 130). His interrogative tone significantly expresses suppressed anxieties and nostalgia for the old days of war, love, and companionship. He hates death, which claimed his brother and is about to claim his wife. Therefore, he vainly seeks the healing powers of medicine and hope to conquer fate and death. Besides, the narrator has Arsat speak on behalf of Diamelen, who is denied a voice despite the centrality of her character to the plot and conflict in the story. Arsat explains that she can no longer hear, see, or speak. He sorrowfully adds, "she breathes and burns as if with a great fire. She speaks not; she hears not – and burns" (p. 129). The mediating voice of Arsat suddenly shifts to the narrator, who reports his observation of Diamelen's health condition:

In the dim light of the dwelling he made out on a couch of bamboos a woman stretched on her back under a broad sheet of red cotton cloth. She lay still, as if dead; but her big eyes, wide open, glittered in the gloom, staring upwards at the slender rafters, motionless and unseeing (...) Her cheeks were sunk slightly, her lips were partly open, and on the young face there was the ominous and fixed expression – the absorbed, contemplating expression of the unconscious who are going to die. (p. 128)

The mediation of Arsat and the narrator can be figuratively perceived as a tape placed on the mouths of oriental women to stifle their voices and force them into silence. The illness Diamelen dies of produces similar repressive effects to patriarchy and orientalism, i.e. inability to hear, see, and speak.

The infinite knowledge available to the omniscient third-person narrator substantiates the reliability of his point of view. The narrator's omniscience emanates from his omnipresence aboard the boat with Tuan and the steersman, in the hut with Arsat, his wife and Tuan, in the clearing before the fire where he invisibly listens to Arsat's story, in the sky with birds, clouds and stars, and in the forest with birds, animals, trees and waters. The narrator delves into the minds and hearts of characters to vocalize their thoughts, suspicions, and concerns. Tuan, the narrator realizes, would have preferred to spend the night somewhere else than on the abandoned lagoon. He distrusts and fears Arsat. He feels unsafe and insecure in haunted forests, where death, darkness, and despair await, "the fear and fascination, the inspiration and the wonder of death – of death near, unavoidable, and unseen, soothed the unrest of his race and stirred the most indistinct, the most intimate of his thoughts" (p. 130). The suspicions and fears lurking in the darkest corner of Tuan's mind, the narrator reveals, profoundly inform his orientalist conception of Malaysia as a "shadowy country of inhuman strife, a battle-field of phantoms terrible and

charming, august or ignoble, struggling ardently for the possession of our helpless hearts. An unquiet and mysterious country of inextinguishable desires and fears" (p. 130). Malaysia, in Tuan's perception, is an exotic country, where darkness, fear, and spirits dwell.

The narrator, to a lesser extent, vocalizes Arsat's feelings and concerns. Arsat is portrayed as a "man young, powerful, with broad chest and muscular arms. He had nothing on but his sarong. His head was bare. His big, soft eyes stared eagerly at the white man, but his voice and demeanor were composed" (p. 128). Arsat loves his wife and feels honored by his relationship with the white. He takes pleasure in solitude and loneliness and seeks peace, safety, and refuge in the wilderness. Though Arsat expresses defiant and hostile sentiments towards the killers of his brother, his tone, the narrator unfolds, remains dreamy and surreal, "Arsat had not moved. He stood lonely in the searching sunshine; and he looked beyond the great light of a cloudless day into the darkness of a world of illusion" (p. 137).

Embedded in the frame story is the first-person account Arsat gives of his love. The story takes place overnight in a coastal fishing country whose ruler was despotic and cruel. The conflict begins when the first person narrator falls in love with one of the ruler's slave girls named Diamelen. Alarmed by the whispers of women and glances of the guards, the narrator and his nameless brother contrive an ill-advised and reckless plot to kidnap the slave girl. The narrator and his brother take advantage of the ruler's departure on a fishing trip with hundreds of his men to kidnap the girl. As they are paddling back downstream close to the riverbank, the ruler's men catch sight of them and commence a pursuit during which the narrator and his girl manage to reach a safe place beyond reach in the lagoon. His brother, who insists on keeping them back using a gun, is beaten to death. The narrator remembers his brother cried his name twice, but he never turned his head again.

The framed story reports the voice of the narrator's brother to manifest his wisdom and bravery. In a statement reported, Arsat's brother advises, "open your heart so that she can see what is in it – and wait. Patience is wisdom" (p. 131). He is also reported stating, "there is half a man in you now – the other half is in that woman" (p. 133) and "we are cast out and this boat is our country now – and the sea is our refuge" (p. 132). The statements reported pay compliment to the brother for his prudence and wisdom. Other comments such as "you shall take her from their midst" (p. 132), "go and take her; carry her into our boat" (p. 132) and "run with her along the path " (p. 134) are reported to demonstrate his courage in times of war and turmoil. Arsat maintains in a boastful tone, "he was strong. He was brave. He knew not fear and no fatigue" (p. 133).

Noise

Several noises, among which narrative structure, subjectivity, and subalternity, substantially contribute to distorting the narrating voice of Arsat. The relationship between the tales embedded in *The Lagoon* is less organic than that of the part to the whole because their formal elements neither overlap nor coexist and function in a familiar context. Each story has a plot and a narrator with a different tone and viewpoint. Each signifies a different set of subjects, themes, motifs, and values.

However, the autonomy of forms underlying each story is undermined by the structural hierarchy established between them. Structurally speaking, the framed story is intended to function as a flashback

in the frame story. Flashback is an abrupt interruption of linearity to interject background information or clarifications into the narrative. It transports readers from a present dramatic situation in a tale back to a scene in the past. In *The Lagoon*, the story Arsat recounts transports readers from the current atmosphere of illness, loneliness, and despair to an atmosphere of love, hope, and venture in the past. In a restless talk to Tuan, Arsat abruptly disrupts the linearity of the plot to tell his story of love. Readers afterward are transported forward to the present scene at which Diamelen dies, Tuan leaves the lagoon, and Arsat feels remorse and vengeful.

Meaningful inferences about Arsat's social status and cultural identity can be drawn from the story recounted. Socially, Arsat and his brother belong to "a ruling race, and more fit than any to carry on our right shoulder the emblem of power" (p. 131). Culturally, Arsat conforms to the values of revenge, honor, and pride his family upholds and cultivates. On this ground, he considers fear and cowardice as deeds dishonoring not only his manhood but also his family,

we are of a people who take what they want ... There is a time when a man should forget loyalty and respect. Might and authority are given to rulers, but to all men is given love and strength and courage". (p. 132)

Toward the end of the story, Arsat resolves to take the law into his own hands and pursue the murderers of his brother. He as well complies with the patriarchal culture, which relegates women to a subordinate position in terms of intellect, body, and social prowess. His wife is consequently portrayed as a helpless and dependent creature who "can neither run nor fight" (p. 134). Realizing that his wife cannot survive without his support and protection, he grows as protective and possessive of her as any of his other properties. He neither describes the sheer loveliness of her voice nor the charm of her beauty, which he respectively cloaks with silence and secrecy. That realization explains why she is never reported speaking in his framed narrative. She is said to be panting and her heart beating, but she is never reported speaking or expresses a feeling. Her silence, however, has a sweet voice he pretends to hear. This paradox in which silence becomes a vocable utterance is meant to satisfy the possessive instincts and urges of Arsat. Other inferences related to the prevalence of slavery, class conflict, and social injustices in Malaysia during the nineteenth century can also be drawn from the framed story.

The significant clarifications and explanations the framed story contains help the audience better analyze characters. Yet, they do not make it less subordinated to the frame story in terms of structure. The structural subordination of the framed story casts a shade over the voice of its first-person narrator. Without the mediating and framing voice of the third-person narrator, the first-person narrator's voice mostly remains inaudible and unnoticeable. Arsat, for instance, cannot directly and effectively speak to addresses and readers using his framed voice; thus, the framing voice of the third-person narrator mediates to get his story told and readers exposed to its thematic and conceptual implications.

Aside from the structure, Arsat's subjective point of view adds noise to his voice. His presence through both performance as a protagonist and voice as a narrator casts doubt and suspicions upon his tale. He might deliberately misconstrue characters and events, conceal or ignore specific details and contrive others. Readers in such cases do not trust the narrator without verifying his claims and views.

As an instance, Arsat expresses conflicting beliefs and feelings about his brother. On the one hand, Arsat claims he loved his brother, and he continues to describe his courage and prudence boastfully. On the other hand, he meets his brother's ultimate sacrifice with ingratitude and unfaithfulness. Instead of getting back to help his brother fight the ruler's men, Arsat selfishly leaves him to his fate. Arsat desires nothing better than his safety and union with Diamelen. Readers grow more skeptical of the narrator's account regarding his brother when he makes such statements, "there is no worse enemy and no better friend than a brother" (p. 131), and "there is a time when a man should forget loyalty and respect" (p. 132). Words like the enemy and forget inadvertently reveal unconscious thoughts and attitudes. It can accordingly be inferred that Arsat has long-pulsed with repressed animosity and hatred toward his brother for unvoiced grievances, which might be exaggerated or contrived. Arsat's subdued anger finds an outlet at the scene of the pursuit when he ignores the cries and pleadings of his brother for help. On such a basis, readers cannot seriously take Arsat's vengeful threats against the murderers of his brother. It is a threat the third-person narrator refers to as "dreamy" (p. 136).

Culturally speaking, the subaltern status of Arsat adds noise to his voice as his ability to tell his narrative and influence others is reduced. The two storytellers in *The Lagoon* belong to different ethnicities and identify with different cultures. The third-person narrator conveys the perspective of the Occident, whereas Arsat voices that of the Orient. The concerns and feelings Arsat expresses as a subaltern subject find no solace or support from his addressees. Tuan is one of the addressees, who does not appear to be affected or interested in what Arsat says or feels, so he never comments or ponders the received account.

The disdain Tuan holds emanates from his Occidental perspectives, which view the Orient as exotic and hostile but ultimately inferior. The conditions under which Arsat lives look fascinating and fearsome to Tuan, who wonders "he who repairs a ruined house, and dwells in it, proclaims that he is not afraid to live amongst the spirits that haunt the places abandoned by mankind" (p. 127). The perception of the forest as a place populated by spirits and ghosts provokes Tuan's fear that "such a man can disturb the course of fate by glances or words; while his familiar ghosts are not easy to propitiate by casual wayfarers upon whom they long to wreak the malice of their human master" (p.127). Though Tuan praises Arsat for having "faith in council" (p. 129) and faithfully fighting "without fear by the side of his white friend" (p. 129), he does not consider him an equal partner. Rather he discloses, "he liked him – not so much perhaps as a man likes his favorite dog – but still he liked him well enough to help and ask no questions" (p. 129). Arsat is, in that sense, less respected than a dog despite his faithfulness to the white. He is also expected not to reason, think, or speak simply because his race is equipped with wisdom or intuition but not intellect. The stereotypes Tuan conjures and projects upon Arsat are meant to justify the disdain and distrust with which he receives his claims and accounts.

The dialectic of voice and silence is central to understanding the hegemonic relationship between the Occident and the Orient. In *The Lagoon*, voice is perceived as a means of domination or empowerment. The effectivity of the voice, Arsat believes, lies in its subjectivity "a writing may be lost; a lie may be written; but what the eye has seen is truth and remains in the mind" (p. 130). Contrary to the western perspective, subjective thinking is capable of reaching truth, correcting stereotypes and misconceptions, and restoring liberty and sovereignty for the suppressed people. Therefore, the West

seeks to force the East into silence or objectivity to establish and perpetuate its supremacy. Conrad, on that ground, has Arsat's subjective voice framed and interpolated by the voice of the third-person narrator.

Conclusion

The article examines the effect of the narrative structure Conrad used in *The Lagoon* on the reception of Arsat's voice as an Orient. It reveals that Tuan builds his interracial relationship and his perception of the Orient on internalized stereotypes and misconceptions. The Orient, for him, is an exotic, mysterious place populated by savage and primitive people. He realizes that the superiority of western civilization can be maintained through the domination and subjugation of the Orient. On that ground, Arsat is viewed as an uncivilized other with an inferior intellect and a primitive culture. Arsat, to no small extent, acts like a typical Orient, considering his exotic personal characteristics and living conditions along with his conformity to the patriarchal and tribal culture of his community. However, the subjective perspective from which he relates his story disrupts the western emphasis on objectivity. Still, his narrative is structurally reduced to a flashback, and his voice is framed by that of the third-person narrator. The structure of the story undermines his ability to affect and influence addressees and readers.

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