



Representation of an Exotic Girl in Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands*: A Postcolonial Study

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: January 14, 2026 Revised: March 04, 2026 Accepted: April 23, 2026 Keywords: postcolonialism, exoticism, Joseph Conrad, Orientalism, literary representation This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial- ShareAlike 4.0 International License. © 2026 Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pembelajarannya (JBSP)	This study examines the representation of an exotic girl in Joseph Conrad's <i>An Outcast of the Islands</i>. It analyzes how a Western author portrays Aissa, a girl from the Dutch East Indies, whose dark brown skin and physical appearance are constructed through the author's discourse of exoticism. The analysis focuses specifically on Aissa as the object of exoticism, rather than on the fertility of the land of Borneo or the culture of the natives. The term "exotic," historically constructed through colonial discourse, is therefore examined through the portrayal of Aissa as a native girl from the Dutch East Indies. The study explores how Conrad's representation aligns with colonial stereotypes, emphasizing power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. The research applies Tyson's postcolonial reading strategies and Huggan's concept of postcolonial exoticism. The method used is descriptive qualitative analysis with textual examination. The findings reveal that Aissa functions as a literary construct that reinforces colonial imagination: exoticism as a commodity, marginal discourse, a literary representation strategy, and the construction of authenticity. This research contributes to understanding how cultural bias and gendered colonial perspectives remain embedded in modern Indonesian cultural perception. The implication highlights the need to deconstruct internalized colonial stereotypes still influencing cultural identity today.
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INTRODUCTION

Many Indonesians associate the term “Oriental” with people coming from East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea. Similarly, the term “exotic” is often associated with a brown-skinned woman, the perception that a brown-skinned girl's perception reflects the long historical influence of colonial discourse, in which European perspectives shaped the representation of non-European women as exotic in contrast to the image of white European femininity that dominated positions of power. In this context, the representation of exotic women can be understood as the relationship between the Occident and the Orient as “a relationship of power, domination, and complex levels of hegemony” (Said, 2014). The word “exotic” itself originates from the post-Latin term *exoticus*, derived from the Ancient Greek *exotikos*, meaning “foreign” or “coming from outside.” In literary and cultural studies, exoticism refers to a mode of perception in which something is viewed as appealing, beautiful, or striking precisely because it is perceived as distant from the observer's own world, whether geographically, culturally, historically, or emotionally. Thus, exoticism is not an inherent quality of the object itself but rather a perspective constructed by the observer.

What appears exotic does so because a reader uses fascination, charm, or idealization of what he imagines as “elsewhere,” “different,” or “far from us.” This perception does not come from the object itself, but from the interpretive view through which the reader views cultural difference. When encountering unfamiliar settings or characters, readers often project their own expectations and fantasies into them, transforming common realities into sites of wonder or mystery. Consequently, exoticism becomes less a quality inherent in the represented culture and more a reflection of the reader's desire to romanticize and distance what is perceived as outside their own social and cultural background.

In literature, exoticism works by creating an imagined space of difference, where the foreign is seen not simply as other, but as carrying a special aesthetic or emotional value precisely because it contrasts with the familiar. Exotic as the use of foreign, culturally or geographically distant settings, motifs, or themes, as a mode or motif in literary creation (Said, 2014).

Therefore, this study attempts to trace how the Western world depicted Dutch East Indies girls through the character of Aissa in *Joseph Conrad's An Outcast of the Islands*, a novel rich in stereotypical portrayals of Eastern women that associate white superiority with the “Other” (Tyson, 2023). What makes examining exoticism in this novel particularly compelling is that Conrad, as a canonical Western author, plays a crucial role in shaping colonial discourse, yet his works also reveal tensions and ambiguities in representing colonized subjects. By focusing on Aissa's characterization, this study highlights how exoticism operates not only as a tool of domination but also as a site of ambivalence within colonial narratives. In order to enrich the discussion, this article also engages with several previous studies that have explored the representation of the Orient and exoticism in literary texts from a postcolonial perspective, while positioning this research as a more focused analysis of gendered exoticism in Conrad's work. For instance, Azzahra et al. (2024) examine how Western society in the United States

constructs negative perceptions of Muslims after the events of the September 11 attacks. The study highlights how Orientalist discourse shapes the representation of Muslim identity in contemporary literature. Meanwhile, Neelam (2022) analyzes how Conrad's novella portrays exoticism through binary oppositions between the West and the non-Western world, particularly in the depiction of landscapes, cultures, and indigenous people. These studies demonstrate that Orientalism and exoticism are often constructed through Western perspectives that position the East as the "other".

However, previous studies have largely focused on the representation of exoticism in general cultural contexts or on broader depictions of land, society, and indigenous communities. Relatively little attention has been given to how female native characters are specifically constructed as objects of exoticism within colonial narratives. Therefore, this study attempts to examine how the Western world depicts a Dutch East Indies girl through the character of Aissa in *An Outcast of the Islands* by Joseph Conrad. Using a postcolonial approach, this research aims to analyze how Aissa's characterization reflects colonial discourse and Western imagination, particularly in relation to identity formation and power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. The expected contribution of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of how colonial ideology constructs the representation of native women in literary texts and how such representations reveal the dynamics of domination and cultural hierarchy in colonial literature.

The approach used to examine this study is postcolonial analysis. In literary studies, postcolonialism not only discusses the historical period after colonialism but also critically examines how colonial power relations are found in language, narrative structure, and character representation. It studies how literary texts construct the identities of both the colonizer and the colonized, often through hierarchical binaries such as civilized/primitive, rational/irrational, or superior/inferior. By understanding this perspective, a novel is read as a cultural product that may reproduce, negotiate, or challenge colonial ideology. Therefore, postcolonial analysis in this study seeks to uncover how Aissa's characterization reflects colonial discourse and how her representation is shaped by Western imagination and structures of dominance, particularly in relation to identity formation. In this way, the people of former colonies become fully human because they are capable of creating history and societal knowledge (Smith, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial Paradigm

Postcolonial studies examine how colonial power relations shape cultural representations, identities, and knowledge production. According to Edward Said in *Orientalism* (Said, 2014), the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is fundamentally a relationship of power, domination, and hegemony. Through discourse, the West historically constructed the East as inferior, irrational, and backward in contrast to the rational and civilized West. This process created a hierarchical binary that legitimized colonial authority (Sunilbhai Patel, 2022).

Within this framework, postcolonial theory investigates how literature participates in constructing such representations. Literary texts often reproduce colonial ideologies by depicting non-Western societies through stereotypes that reinforce Western superiority (Noda, 2020). One important concept in postcolonial studies is othering, which refers to the process by which colonial discourse defines colonized peoples as fundamentally different and inferior. Through othering, the colonized subject is represented not as an equal human being but as the “other,” positioned outside the norms of Western civilization.

Postcolonial literary criticism therefore seeks to uncover how narratives, language, and characterizations reflect colonial structures of power. As scholars of postcolonial studies argue, literary texts can both reproduce and challenge colonial ideologies depending on how they represent the identities of colonizers and the colonized. In this perspective, literature becomes a cultural site where power relations and identity formations are negotiated and contested.

Exoticism as a Mode of Perception

The concept of exoticism is closely related to colonial discourse because it shapes how Western observers perceive non-Western cultures. According to François Jost, exoticism refers to a mode of perception in which something is considered appealing or beautiful precisely because it is perceived as distant from the observer’s own cultural world. In this sense, exoticism does not originate from the object itself but from the observer’s perspective (Van Alphen, 2016). Cultural difference becomes aesthetically attractive when it is viewed from a position of distance, whether geographical, historical, or cultural (Neelam, 2022).

This perspective suggests that exoticism is not an inherent quality of a place or a person. Rather, it is a representation constructed by those who possess the power to describe and define others. In colonial literature, this perception often leads to the romanticization of foreign lands, cultures, and people while simultaneously reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Exoticism in Postcolonial Discourse

In postcolonial studies, exoticism is understood not only as a cultural perception but also as a mechanism connected to colonial power structures. Huggan (2006) argues that exoticism functions as a strategy through which cultural difference is marketed and consumed within global cultural production. Therefore, postcolonial exoticism operates through several characteristics.

First, commodification, in which cultural difference is transformed into a product that can be consumed by Western audiences. Second, marginal discourse, where voices from colonized societies are presented as marginal or peripheral while still being mediated through Western frameworks (Huggan, 2016). Third, literary strategy, where writers strategically use exotic elements to attract readers by emphasizing cultural differences. Fourth, constructed authenticity, in which cultural representations are

presented as authentic even though they are shaped by narrative conventions and external expectations.

These characteristics show that exoticism in postcolonial literature is not merely an aesthetic category but also a political and ideological process. Through exoticism, literary texts may simultaneously reveal fascination with cultural difference while reinforcing unequal power relations between the West and the non-West. Therefore, examining exoticism within colonial narratives allows scholars to understand how literary representations contribute to the construction of cultural hierarchies and identities.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in postcolonial literary analysis. The primary data source is *An Outcast of the Islands* by Joseph Conrad, with a particular focus on the characterization of Aissa as a representation of colonial exoticism. The unit of analysis includes narrative descriptions, character interactions, and selected textual passages that portray Aissa's physical appearance, behavior, and relational position within the colonial setting.

The data collection process was carried out through close reading of the novel. During this process, passages that describe Aissa's physical features, emotional responses, interactions with European characters, and narrative positioning within the story were identified and documented. These quotations were selected because they contain representations that potentially reflect colonial perceptions of exoticism on a native girl.

After the relevant passages were collected, the data were categorized into themes related to exoticism and colonial discourse, including the depiction of physical difference, the construction of otherness, and the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. These thematic categories were then interpreted using a postcolonial theoretical framework (Abdul-Jabbar, 2019; Tirkey & Xaxa, 2024), particularly the concept of othering proposed by Said (2014) and the notion of postcolonial exoticism (Huggan, 2006; Huggan, 2020; Kujath, 2019).

The interpretation process involved analyzing how the selected passages construct Aissa as an exotic figure within the narrative. Through this approach, the study examines how literary representation reflects broader colonial ideologies and power relations embedded in the text.

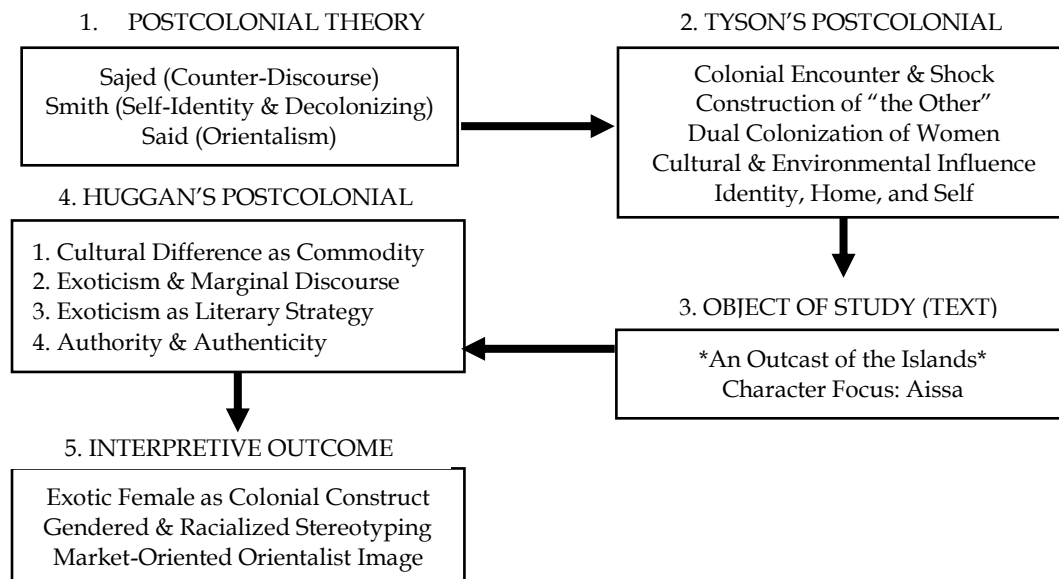


Figure 1. Analytical Model of Postcolonial Exoticism

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework used in this study to analyze the representation of exoticism in *An Outcast of the Islands*. The model demonstrates how postcolonial theory – drawing on Sajed’s notion of counter-discourse, Smith’s emphasis on self-identity, and Said’s concept of Orientalism – is operationalized through Tyson’s postcolonial reading strategies to examine the literary text. The character of Aissa is positioned as the central object of analysis, whose portrayal is interpreted using Huggan’s four dimensions of postcolonial exoticism: cultural difference as commodity, exoticism as marginal discourse, literary strategy, and constructed authority and authenticity. This analytical model reveals how colonial ideology, gendered exoticism, and Orientalist stereotypes intersect in literary representation, ultimately exposing the persistence of colonial power structures within narrative and cultural imagination.

Data were collected through close textual reading, using a purposive sampling technique to select passages that explicitly or implicitly construct Aissa as an “exotic” figure. These excerpts were then systematically categorized according to Graham Huggan’s four dimensions of postcolonial exoticism: (1) cultural difference as commodity, (2) exoticism as discourse of the margins, (3) exoticism as literary strategy, and (4) constructed authority and authenticity.

The analytical procedure follows Lois Tyson’s postcolonial reading strategies, which emphasize the examination of colonial power relations, representation of “the other”, and ideological positioning within literary texts. Interpretation is further informed by Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s notion of counter-discourse and self-identity, and Alina Sajed’s critique of colonial historiography, enabling a multi-layered reading of the text (Said, 2014).

To ensure analytical validity, the interpretation of textual data is consistently cross-referenced with established postcolonial theories, allowing theoretical triangulation between Huggan, Said, and Tyson. The analysis prioritizes contextual

interpretation rather than authorial intention, positioning Aissa's character as a colonial construct shaped by Western imagination rather than as a naturalized or autonomous subject.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The textual analysis of *An Outcast of the Islands* by Joseph Conrad reveals several recurring patterns in the representation of Aissa that reflect colonial exoticism. These patterns correspond to the characteristics of postcolonial exoticism proposed by Graham Huggan, namely commodification, marginal discourse, literary strategy, and constructed authenticity. The findings indicate that Aissa is consistently described through narrative elements emphasizing her physical appearance, emotional intensity, and cultural difference. These descriptions highlight her dark skin, mysterious beauty, and passionate temperament, which are repeatedly contrasted with those of European characters in the novel. Through such depictions, the narrative constructs Aissa not simply as an individual character but as a symbolic representation of the "exotic native woman."

Furthermore, the narrative structure often positions Aissa within unequal relational dynamics with European male characters. Her presence is framed through desire, fascination, and fear, reinforcing the perception that she belongs to a world that is both attractive and threatening to the colonial observer. As a result, Aissa's characterization reflects a broader literary pattern in which indigenous women are represented through exoticized images shaped by colonial imagination.

The findings can be summarized according to Huggan's framework of postcolonial exoticism in Table 1.

Table 1. Huggan's framework of postcolonial exoticism

Aspect of Exoticism	Representation in Aissa
Commodification	Aissa's beauty and physical difference are emphasized as objects of fascination for Western characters.
Marginal discourse	Aissa's voice and perspective are limited, while the narrative authority remains centered on European viewpoints.
Literary strategy	Exotic descriptions of landscape, culture, and female beauty are used to create dramatic narrative appeal.
Constructed authenticity	Aissa is presented as a "naturally exotic" native figure, although this authenticity is constructed through a Western narrative perspective.

These findings demonstrate that Aissa's representation operates within a broader colonial discourse that frames indigenous femininity as exotic and fundamentally different from European identity. This research is in line with what Jost said, that exotic deals with seeing the beautiful things in others and otherness, that the things have distant spaces. Therefore, the concept is related to Huggan's ideas when it is applied to Aissa.

From what Huggan says previously, he has 4 qualities of postcolonial exotic that can be applied to Aissa.

On the first point, as Huggan says, cultural variety is seen as a commodity. In this novel, Aissa is portrayed as assigned aesthetic and commercial value in the global market in which she can be consumed, traded, and marketed, as can be seen in the following quotation:

"When he approached her ... As he approached her, the woman ... caught up the mass of loose black hair and brought it over her shoulder and across the lower part of her face" (Conrad, 1975)

The quotation above shows how the character Aissa and her exotic figure is constructed in the story through Willems as a black hair girl and the hair and brought in to her shoulder to cover her lower part of face that means, the narrator wants to highlight that the exotic girl acts as an exotic girl in the qualification of Huggan, she becomes a commodity that is injected to western readers that Aissa is exotic with certain quality in this case, her black hair that is different from many western readers who have blond or brown hair and the western girls do not have shyness or alertness to face a stranger more over if this happens in jungle. This commodification of Aissa in a certain quality makes her consumed by Western readers that Aissa as typical of the Eastern girls who have exotic hair and exotic behavior as she covers her face.

The second point of Huggan that exoticism deals with the discourse of the margin can be seen in how Aissa, as an exotic girl, helps the rebels as a resistance movement member, influencing a good white man like Willems to help the rebellion, a sit is seen in the following quotation, as in Table 2.

Table 2. Postcolonial Exoticism in the Representation of Aissa

No	Dimension of Postcolonial Exoticism (Huggan)	Textual Evidence	Interpretation
1	Cultural Difference as Commodity	"...caught up the mass of loose black hair..." (Ch. IV)	Aissa's physical traits are aestheticized and commodified for Western readers, positioning her as an exotic object of visual consumption.
2	Exoticism as Discourse of the Margins	"...the touch of her fingers at the nape of his neck..." (Ch. IV)	Aissa's emotional and sensual influence destabilizes Willems, reinforcing the stereotype of the native woman as morally dangerous.
3	Exoticism as Literary Strategy	"Aissa's lap, while Syed Abdulla flies down the muddy river..." (Ch. V)	Conrad uses exotic settings and sensual imagery to construct the East as mysterious and seductive for the Western imagination.

No	Dimension of Postcolonial Exoticism (Huggan)	Textual Evidence	Interpretation
4	Authority and Constructed Authenticity	"Aissa... for him is both alluring and base." (Ch. IV)	Aissa's identity is shaped by colonial authority, reducing her to a stereotypical Oriental figure rather than an autonomous subject.

"the touch of her fingers at the nape of his neck effaced instantly the hard lines around his mouth; his eyes wavered uneasily; his lips trembled slightly." (Conrad, 1975)

The above quotation shows how Aissa, as an exotic girl with her mysterious behavior, contributes to the downfall of Willems after she helps the conspirators with the rebellion with the assistance of Aissa. Further, perhaps Aissa may not be explicitly joining rebellion with Willems, but her influence on emotional, sensual, and psychological aspects is instrumental. Without her seductive hold over Willems, he could not have opened up or lost his moral grounding. Thus, in literary terms, Aissa functions as a kind of "catalyst" for Willems's moral and existential downfall, which leads to the betrayal and destruction central to the novel's tragedy. This statement is in line with what Huggan says that the event shows the discourse of margins because the rebellion is a kind of an effort to fight against colonialism.

Point number three is literary representation, in which it deals with the author's strategy, in this case Conrad, through character Aissa, to show the Western global readers that Aissa is an exotic girl in her surroundings. The statement is supported by the following quotation:

"Aissa's lap, while Syed Abdulla flies down the muddy river ..." (Conrad, 1975)

The quotation above shows that an exotic Dutch East Indies girl, like Aissa, is seductive that can endanger a protagonist like Willems, who comes from a superior Dutch family. The author has the ability to shape the idea that an exotic girl is seductive by having qualities of a sexy girl, even though she lives in the jungle. Conrad uses the jungle to emphasize the exotic life of the jungle, which cannot be found in Europe. The jungle becomes a setting to portray the beauty of the East. As it is stated above in the line "flies down the muddy river". Point number four is authenticity and authority that reflects how, like what Edward Said says, it is the colonial writer who coins the beauty of the East. The representation of the East is actually a kind of stereotyping of the others. The following quotation can be proof:

"Aissa .. for him is both alluring and base" (Conrad, 1975).

The above quotation shows that the word shows how Conrad portrays Aissa as a simplification of an Eastern girl who has an allure that means to seduce Willems, a good

Christian and superior white man, into a downgraded man, and the use of the word “base” that means morally low. Willems is a superior man in social classification during colonialism and represents the ideal good man who falls into “base” because of the seduction of a dark-skinned jungle girl in Kalimantan. This quotation shows how the concept of authenticity and authority works. Conrad presents a native girl who is formed by his imagination, it is his own subjectivity for his works, not an actual one. This means he creates his own character, not the factual Aissa. He generalizes into the Western mind that Aissa is a typical Eastern girl in Kalimantan or Borneo who can seduce someone coming from the Western world because of her low morals. Therefore, it can be said that Conrad, through the character Willems, is portraying a girl from Asia as exotic, a girl with beauty, but she is very dangerous.

Discussion

The findings above can be understood more critically through the framework of postcolonial theory, particularly the concept of othering proposed by Said (2014). In colonial discourse, the Orient is constructed as fundamentally different from the West, and this difference is often embodied through gendered figures such as the exotic native woman (Elaref, 2023; Mohrem, 2020). Aissa’s characterization illustrates this process of othering, as she is simultaneously admired for her beauty and positioned as culturally and morally inferior within the narrative hierarchy.

From the perspective of exoticism theory proposed by François Jost, the fascination with Aissa does not arise from her inherent qualities but from the Western observer’s perception of cultural distance (Pérez, 2018). Her beauty becomes “exotic” precisely because it is viewed from outside her own cultural context. This perception transforms cultural difference into aesthetic attraction while maintaining the hierarchical distinction between observer and observed. More specifically, the findings strongly support that exoticism functions as a representational strategy in postcolonial literature (Huggan, 2020; McNamara, 2016). In Conrad’s narrative, Aissa’s character operates as part of a literary strategy that emphasizes cultural difference to enhance narrative appeal. At the same time, her marginal position within the narrative reflects the colonial structure of power in which indigenous voices remain secondary to European perspectives.

The ideological implications of this representation are particularly significant when examined through the intersection of colonialism and gender. Aissa is not only constructed as culturally “other,” but also as a gendered figure whose identity is mediated through male colonial desire. Her body and emotional intensity become narrative sites where colonial fantasies about the East are projected. In this sense, the representation of Aissa reinforces both colonial hierarchy and patriarchal structures within colonial literature. This analysis also reveals how colonial discourse contributes to the long-term formation of cultural perceptions about beauty and femininity. The colonial imagination that constructs native women as exotic continues to influence contemporary attitudes toward beauty and identity in postcolonial societies. Thus, the representation of Aissa in Conrad’s novel can be interpreted not merely as a literary

device but as part of a broader ideological system that shapes how non-Western women are perceived and valued.

The analysis of exotic representation in *An Outcast of the Islands* begins with a simple but important question: why does the image of the “exotic Eastern woman” still feel familiar today? The term exotic, often used casually in Indonesia as a compliment, does not emerge from a neutral cultural space. It is deeply rooted in colonial history, where Western discourse constructed the colonized, especially women, as mysterious, sensual, and fundamentally “different” (Hasan, 2005; Saissi, 2022). Literary works such as Conrad’s novel did not merely reflect this imagination; they helped shape and circulate it.

Unlike many previous studies on Conrad that focus broadly on imperial power, racial tension, or identity crisis, this research specifically centers on the exoticization of Eastern women. The novelty of this study lies in narrowing the analytical lens to the construction of “exotic femininity” itself. Rather than treating Aissa simply as a symbol of colonial encounter, this study reads her as a gendered figure whose body, beauty, and identity are framed through Western fantasy and control. By doing so, the research brings gender more explicitly into postcolonial discussions of Conrad’s text.

Using postcolonial perspectives from Said, Tyson, Jost, and especially Huggan, this study shows that exoticism is not just an aesthetic description. It is a representational strategy shaped by power. Through close textual analysis, Aissa appears as the “exotic other”: beautiful yet threatening, desirable yet morally questionable, admired yet never fully humanized. This ambivalence reflects the colonial gaze that both romanticizes and diminishes indigenous women.

Organizing the findings around Graham Huggan’s four qualities of postcolonial exoticism, such as commodification, marginal discourse, literary strategy, and constructed authenticity. The discussion reveals how Aissa’s portrayal reinforces broader colonial patterns in representing women of the Dutch East Indies. This framework highlights how exoticism operates as a mechanism that transforms cultural difference into a consumable object within colonial narratives. Moreover, Aissa’s characterization reflects the persistent positioning of indigenous women as marginal figures whose identities are defined through Western perspectives. As a result, the text reproduces hierarchical power relations that sustain colonial ideology and limit the agency of colonized female subjects.

More importantly, the implications of this study reach beyond the literature. When exoticism is unmasked as a colonial construction, it invites reflection on contemporary beauty standards in Indonesia. The persistent idea that Indonesian women must become “whiter” or physically resemble Western ideals to be valued echoes the same colonial hierarchy embedded in the exotic label (Muhr & Salem, 2013). By deconstructing this inherited narrative, the study suggests that Indonesian femininity does not need to be altered to gain legitimacy. What has long been called “exotic” can instead be understood as culturally authentic, once freed from the colonial gaze that originally defined it.

Contribution

This study provides a new perspective: the use of terms such as “exotic,” still common among Indonesians today, is inseparable from colonial-era biases that stereotyped the image of colonized peoples during Dutch rule. Indirectly, Indonesians validate the thoughts of the former European colonizers and normalize these views.

Consequently, this study is useful for uncovering sexist, gender-biased, and discriminatory discourses against indigenous peoples, especially Indonesian women, perpetuated by the Western world. This research investigates the biases of Europeans toward Indonesia in the past, especially toward women, through their racist, gender-biased, sexist, and discriminatory depictions of Indonesian girls with exotic imagery in a postcolonial reading. The study will further expose colonial biases still present in Indonesian society today. Future research will examine issues of race, culture, and particularly gender, which remain highly patriarchal as a legacy of colonial times, as Table 3.

Table 3. Research Contribution

Aspect	Contribution of the Study
Theoretical	Extends Huggan’s postcolonial exoticism to the Indonesian colonial context.
Cultural	Reveals internalized colonial perceptions among Indonesians.
Gender	Exposes gendered Orientalist stereotypes of indigenous women.
Literary	Repositions Aissa as a colonial construct rather than a naturalized character.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the representation of Aissa in *An Outcast of the Islands* by Joseph Conrad is closely linked to colonial discourse that constructs Eastern women as exotic, dangerous, and morally inferior. Through the theoretical frameworks of exoticism proposed by François Jost and postcolonial exoticism developed by Graham Huggan, the analysis reveals that Aissa is not portrayed as an autonomous individual character but as a literary construct shaped by Western imagination and colonial ideology. Conrad’s narrative emphasizes her cultural difference through descriptions that commodify her identity, marginalize her voice within the narrative structure, and present her as an exotic figure situated outside the moral and cultural norms of Western society.

The findings indicate that Aissa embodies the four key dimensions of postcolonial exoticism, such as commodification, marginal discourse, literary strategy, and constructed authenticity. These dimensions collectively transform the eastern female body into an aesthetic object of fascination while simultaneously portraying it as culturally and morally threatening. Such representation reflects broader colonial and patriarchal ideologies that position indigenous women within hierarchical power relations shaped by colonial authority and Western cultural dominance.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to postcolonial literary studies by providing a focused analysis of how exoticism operates specifically in the representation of indigenous female characters in colonial literature. While many

previous studies on Conrad's works have examined themes of imperialism and racial hierarchy, this study highlights the gendered dimension of exoticism by analyzing how the figure of Aissa is constructed through colonial imagination and patriarchal narrative structures. In addition, this study contributes to gender representation studies by demonstrating how colonial literature participates in shaping stereotypical perceptions of non-Western women that may continue to influence cultural attitudes in postcolonial societies.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The analysis focuses primarily on a single literary text and concentrates on the representation of one female character within Conrad's narrative. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to all colonial literary representations of indigenous women. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to textual interpretation based on postcolonial theory and does not include comparative perspectives with other colonial or postcolonial literary works.

Future research may expand this study by examining similar representations of indigenous women in other colonial novels or by conducting comparative analyses across different literary traditions and historical contexts. Further studies could also explore intersections between gender, race, and cultural identity in postcolonial literature in order to understand more comprehensively how colonial narratives continue to shape contemporary perceptions of identity and femininity in postcolonial societies.

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