

**DUALISM:
KOCH'S ENTERPRISE ON AUSTRALIA'S IDENTITY**

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk memaparkan perubahan nilai yang terjadi di Australia sebagaimana yang tercermin dalam salah satu karya besar Australia yang berjudul **The Year of Living Dangerously** karya Christopher J. Koch. Paling tidak, secara garis besar, terdapat dua perubahan nilai besar dalam sejarah nasional Australia, yaitu pada akhir tahun 1800-an dan pertengahan tahun 1960-an. Nilai-nilai itu berupa pandangan nasionalisme bangsa Australia yang antara lain tercermin dalam pencairan jati diri bangsa. Apabila pada tahun 1800-an kiblat mereka ke Inggris, tahun 1960-an bergeser ke Asia, dan tentu saja ke Indonesia sebagai negara tetangga terdekat sebagaimana setting novel tersebut. Hal ini terjadi karena pada hakikatnya secara sosio-kultural dan historis antara Australia dan Indonesia adalah sama, yaitu sebagai negara poskolonial.

Karya sastra bagaimana pun juga tentu mencerminkan kehidupan dan pandang-an kehidupan bangsa sebagaimana yang ter-representasikan dalam karya tersebut. Demikian pula halnya dengan Koch lewat karya yang dibicarakan dalam tulisan ini. Australia secara biologis merupakan negara Barat (Eropa) namun secara geografis, Timur (Asia). Menyadari hal ini para penulis kontemporer Australia, termasuk Koch, mencoba untuk meredefinisikan jati diri mereka. Menurut Koch, sebagaimana terungkap dalam novel ini, jati diri Australia adalah jati diri 'blasteran' antara Asia dan Eropa. Gagasan Koch ini tentu saja diperoleh setelah dilakukan analisa teks berdasarkan pandangan teori poskolonial serta berdasarkan sejarah perkembangan bangsa Australia itu sendiri. Untuk mencapai gagasannya itu, Koch memanfaatkan sarana sastra metapor/alegori dalam bentuk dualisme yang diwujudkan dalam hampir seluruh aspek penceritaan, seperti setting ceritera, judul, teknis penceritaan dan tokoh ceritera. Yang paling unik adalah bahwa pola struktur ceritera novel ini berdasarkan struktur ceritera wayang kulit, dan Koch mengambil ceritera 'Rama Nitis'. Disini, gagasan dualisme terasa hadir pula sebab dalam ceritera ini dua epos besar disatukan. Dengan demikian, nampak pula bahwa Koch sudah mulai meninggalkan tradisi Barat—dengan tidak menggunakan mitos Romawi-Yunani dalam alegorinya—dan mulai menunjukkan pengakuannya sebagai bagian bangsa Timur—dengan memanfaatkan budaya Indonesia (baca Asia) berupa Wayang kulit dalam novelnya. Tokoh protagonis Koch pun merupakan tokoh alegoris yang terbelah antara Barat dan Timur. Kwan yang bernampilan fisik Asia (Cina) itu adalah warga Australia dengan darah campuran Asia dan Eropa. Hamilton yang bermata biru dan berambut pirang dan tinggi semampai adalah warga Australia yang berdarah Eropa tapi lahir dan dibesarkan di Asia. Secara alegoris, mereka adalah Australia itu sendiri.

Kata kunci: poskolonial (post-colonial), blasteran (hybridity), jati diri bangsa (national identity)

A. INTRODUCTION

The hegemonic relationship between the European colonizers and the Asian/ African colonized countries has brought about two differing groups: the European superiors and the Asian/African inferiors. This relationship in due course stereotypes the latter as barbarian, uncivilized, exotic, mystical, and irrational, and such images are inevitably represented in literature (*Teori Poskolonial*, 2001:VI).

Literature is 'the world of words' and not life but without a doubt the relationship between the two is indivisible. Thus, although it may be viewed as the world of 'its own', it departs from life; it represents reality. Therefore, what a work of art portrays is what people see, feel, or think that may exist in their human milieu.

There has been a lot of Western fiction which portrays the vivid colour of Asia, and along with it, its stereotyped representation unavoidably permeates. Christopher J. Koch is one of many who is inspired by the unique culture of Asia. He is one of outstanding writers that Australia has and his writings may reproduce an Orientalist discourse as Australia is a product of the British imperial venture. However, since the World War II, Australian writers have demonstrated a different enterprise. Blaber (1993:46) says that although their writings are "constructed by and within the European gaze", they are "of lesser authority". Here, he found that although Australia broke the imperialists' traditional views towards Asia by re-evaluating them, recognizing their values, and showing a better understanding, Orientalism still colours their views. Yet, this paper does not explore such Orientalist images which are normally represented in negative views. It is aimed at searching for Australia's identity as embedded in Koch's masterpiece, *The Year of Living Dangerously*. His nationalistic project imbuing this novel is carried out through a number of literary devices, one of which is through the allegorical meaning of dualism which pervades the novel. It is this paper's concern to reveal this symbolic proposition.

B. THE POST-COLONIAL AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

The sense of nationalism as expressed in literature actually is a product of European world dominance. In relation to this, Australia has a unique position. It is a product of the British imperialism but at the same it is the colonizing agent towards the Aborigines. Although it is a multicultural country which comprises Asian and European ethnic groups as well as the Aboriginal people, those with Anglo-Saxon background obviously dominate the rest. This fortunate position may bring about a conflict, even though it may not always harm the lives of the country and its people. Since literature basically portrays human life and principally the authors cannot escape from their *Zeitgeist* (Darma, 1984:116 & Sumanto, 2002:3), such a conflict inevitably affects their national literature (Darma, 2001:1). *The Year of Living Dangerously* is one of Australia's monumental pieces. This allegorical narrative represents the writer's project to redefine Australia's identity. According to Koch (1980:75), Australia has a hybrid identity: Asian-European.

Prior to 1850, no general popular Australian identity existed. A distinct nationality and nationalism commenced to characterize the country in about the late 1800s. This change involved both the development of a national ethos and a transfer of loyalties earlier devoted to Britain to this new emerging country as this ex-British colony enjoyed more self-government. During this metamorphosis, the sense of Australian nationalism, among other things, was trumpeted through short stories and poems by an outstanding Australian prolific writer Henry Lawson. In the mid-1960s, however, the change was marked. Pioneered by such contemporary writers as Koch, Australia began to redefine itself. Biologically, it is European but geographically, it is Asian. It has a double standing as epitomized in *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

Australian contemporary literature is post-colonial literature in which hybridity is likely to be one major theme. In other words,

hybridity “has frequently been used in post-colonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural ‘exchange’” (Ashcroft, et al, 1998:119). In line with this, *Wikipedia* (2006:1) states that post-colonial theory “deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries”. In addition, Siegel (2006:7) confirms that hybridity is “an important concept in post-colonial theory, referring to the integration (or, mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures”. Thus, the idea of hybridity which is found to permeate in the novel can be taken in as the writer’s project to conceptualize Australia’s identity.

C. KOCH’S MASTERPIECE: *THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY*

In Koch’s two novels, namely, *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Across the Sea Wall*, Asia has emerged to be an important issue. In fact, Koch is not the only writer who concentrates his works on Asia. There are some others who consider Asia as an important source for their literary inspiration. Gelder (in Hergenhan, 1988: 503) lists a few quite outstanding literary writers of Australia who set their imaginative narration in South-East Asia. Here, he says that the novels they have created “juxtapose a journalistic style and a journalist’s method of representation with a fascination for the exotic mysteries of other cultures that cannot be reported”. According to Bennett (in Hergenhan, 1988: 437) the main theme of *The Year of Living Dangerously* is a further development of *Across the Sea Wall*, that is, “discovering other cultures and learning the pain of unfulfilment”. This notion is confirmed by Hill, a lecturer of Indonesian Studies at Murdoch University, Western Australia, (1979:321), as a reflection of an Australian’s view.

Although *The Year of Living Dangerously* is not Koch’s first novel to be set in Asia, it turns out to be the forerunner of his major work. It proved to be a great book which soon rocketed Koch to fame. It was first

published in 1978 by ‘Thomas Nelson Australia’. In the same year, it won an award of \$ Aust. 3, 000 for ‘Book of the Year’ through a contest held by *The Age*, the Australia’s largest newspaper (Hill, 1979:322). Surprisingly, a year later, it also won an award from the ‘National Book Council’.

The story is set in Indonesia in 1965 just before the fall of Sukarno. However, a precise literary analysis will show that the story has a double setting place as it moves into two parallel worlds: ‘private’ and ‘public’. The *Wayang Bar* of Jakarta’s luxury Hotel Indonesia serves as setting for the private world; whereas Jakarta with its slums and the surrounding areas of West Java are the setting for the public world.

Koch tells a tale of the life of Western journalists in Jakarta during the political tension against the West shown by Indonesia. This country under Sukarno was propagandized to crush Malaysia, through which the influence of OLDEFOS (the Old Established Forces) of colonialism, a neo-colonialism and imperialism such as the Dutch, French, Americans and British, is perceived to be alive. Accordingly, those journalists are subject to being labeled as *Nekolim* (*Neo-Kolonialis*=Neo-Colonialists), except Billy Kwan, the only Chinese Australian among them. He believes that his physical appearance has contributed to saving him: “No one takes me for a *Nekolim*—they think I’m Indonesian Chinese” (Koch, 1986: 5). The others find their safety by their dependence on one another gathering around the bar to avoid the antagonism they may feel, and this situation has created the *Wayang Bar* as protection from the reality of the outside world (Hill, 1979: 320). Jakarta and its neighbouring cities turn to be the place where the political crisis is strongly felt to emerge, and where the public ‘hero’, Sukarno, demonstrates his power as well as his charisma, “creating this country” (Koch, 1986: 13) through his speeches and mingling with the people in a slum area of *Pasar Baru*.

Billy was fascinated by the story of the Bung going to *Pasar Baru* at night, disguised in shabby civilian clothes, to ‘bathe in the crowds’, to rub against the

masses who intoxicated him. (Koch, 1986:133)

Concerning the setting of the story, Wilde (1986:393) endorses the dualism by considering the novel to be “an engrossing narrative which meshes public [world of the Indonesian people] and private [world of the Western journalists in Indonesia]. Again, here, this shows its dualism.

This novel is entitled in accordance with the theme of Sukarno’s three hours long oration to commemorate Indonesian Independence Day. This oration was delivered in *Merdeka Square* before the presidential palace in Jakarta on 17 August 1964. As usual, President Sukarno gave a title to the year to which his speech referred at every anniversary of Indonesian Independence Day. He called the year 1965, ‘the Year of *Vivere Periculoso*’ or ‘the Year of Living Dangerously’. This is revealed in Great Wally’s words to Hamilton.

‘Do you know what the President called this year in his Independence Day speech last August? He gives each year a title, Guy, and I take the Sukarno year to run from one *Merdeka Day* to the next. The one we’re now in is called the Year of Living Dangerously. (Koch, 1986:11-2)

In fact, the number of people who came to listen to the president was estimated to be around one million. These witnesses proved that this first Indonesian president was a national idol who was full of charisma and loved by all his people.

Roskies (1989:36), in “A View of Asia from Down Under: The Politics of Representation in *The Year of Living Dangerously*”, accused Sukarno of having “slyly purloined [the title] from Mussolini’s platform blatherings”. However, if a closer look is taken, it is obvious that Sukarno at the time of his speech underwent the same experience as Mussolini did. Both dreamt of becoming a great leader. Mussolini wished to build a new Roman Empire; Sukarno wanted to create an empire of *Nefos* (New Emerging Forces which mostly refers to Asia, Africa and Latin America) under

his feet. But the dreams never came true. Instead, they led them to disaster.

In terms of the title, Sutherland asserts (2003:1) that it symbolically implies “a very dangerous year for the president and also the central characters of the novel” who are on the whole westerners. Here, Sutherland is in line with Wilde in hinting that dualism which pervades the novel constitutes the major theme. In fact, in order to understand what is presented beyond the narrative, the metaphorical idea of dualism here needs exploring, for the dualism is Australia itself. This ‘European’ country has brought with it its ancient culture from the northern hemisphere but is nurtured in Asian environment. It needs to be aware of its position and, therefore, value the role of its close neighbouring countries including Indonesia. Koch himself has touched upon this in his narrative. He interlocks the public world of Indonesia and the private world of the West. Here, he obviously values the role of Indonesia (Asia) in Australia’s national life or, at least, shows what is expected by Australia to live in Asian environment. The title suggests that Indonesia (Asia) and Australia may share the same destiny. The book recounts that the heroes of the two worlds are exposed to the same danger. Indonesia and Australia may share an equal problem which needs their cooperation for the solution. For this, Habibi, the Indonesian minister of research and technology then, (Iswalono, 1995:115) asserts that “together with Australia, we the Indonesians, are embarking to the age of science and technology in the 21st century”. Both cannot escape from this fact; they are on the same boat—sharing the same destiny by living in the same region.

Due to its national acclaim, the book was made into film in 1982. It is starred by Mel Gibson, Sigourney weaver, and Linda Hunt. What is out of the ordinary here is that the male camera man, Billy Kwan, is played by the British diminutive actress Linda Hunt, who won an Academy Award for her performance. The movie was financed and distributed by MGM, and directed by Peter Weir. Instead of in Indonesia, the film location was taken in the

Philippines and Australia. Based upon political considerations, the Indonesian government under Suharto's presidency banned the film. The censorship was only revoked in the era of President Abdurrahman Wahid. Its showing for the first time on Indonesia's national TV must have been taken as a renewed resonance of the relationship between Indonesian and western attitudes since the tragic bombings in Bali and Jakarta a couple of years ago. As long as Australia has not disposed of its near-sight by acknowledging its 'destiny' as part of Asia, as suggested by Koch, and as long as Australia still deploys a colonial attitude in a post-colonial country such as Indonesia such undesired crises like those in Bali and Jakarta will not come to an end but they may still occur even though in a different degree or form.

D. AUSTRALIA—INDONESIA IN KOCH'S EYES: A HYBRIDITY

The Year of Living Dangerously is a novel of high quality. It is a 'living history' (Hill, 1979: 319) which has its basis in a historical event in Indonesia. Furthermore, Hill writes that a lot of historical facts that Koch inserted in this novel are derived from his brother's experiences. The brother, Philip Koch, used to be a journalist with the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Jakarta up to the time of the Communist abortive coup d'état. Christopher Koch himself once came to Indonesia on a UNESCO mission in 1968; and since then he has showed his greatest interest in the Javanese culture (1985:17-25). It is no wonder, then, that Javanese colours take up a great proportion of the novel. Even the story is structured in three parts to correspond with the three sessions of the 'wayang' play: "*Patet Nem: Hamilton's Dwar*", "*Patet Sanga: Water from the Moon*" and "*Patet Manyuro: Amok*". The writer demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the culture in the novel. He consciously blends his cultural knowledge with his creativeness. This shows dualism: an eastern epic and a Western narrative.

Koch patterns his narrative after the wayang story entitled "The Reincarnation of

Rama", which is, according to Sujamto (1992:14) and Brandon (1970:12-4), of Indonesian origin. This story centres on Rama's incarnation to Kresna, both of whom are, in fact, the god Wisnu's incarnation. Rama, the hero from the *Ramayana* epic, needs Wisnu to end the fierceness of Rahwana, the malicious giant king from Alengka who kidnapped Rama's wife, Dewi Shinta. Wisnu incarnated in Kresna so as to help the Pandawa to seek justice against the Kurawa as found in *Mahabharata*. Koch (1993:24) discloses his artistic consciousness of the wayang which he adopted in his novel.

When I wrote my novel [*The Year of Living Dangerously*], I made a study of the wayang . . . When Joyce gave *Ulysses* a sub-structure based on Homer's *Odyssey*, he introduced a device with rich possibilities for the novel; taking this as my model, I found I was able to utilise a classical Indonesian wayang play, "The Incarnation of Rama", all the episodes of which correspond to the progressions in my book.

Not only did Koch pattern his novel according to the performance of the wayang, but he has also suggested close correspondences between the wayang figures and his own characters as well as between their deeds. Hamilton is presented as having a distinct correspondence with Arjuna, and Kwan with Arjuna's divine servant, dwarf Semar.

However, Koch's employment of the wayang kulit is to serve as his allegorical purpose to expose the dualism permeating the novel (Iswalono, 1995:113). Elsewhere, Koch (1993:12) suggests that Australian writers must necessarily be concerned with dualism. He discerns the socio-cultural circumstances of a transplanted nation of European culture living in an Asian-Pacific land, coupled with "an age of divisions, cultural, spiritual and psychological" (1993:12) in which Australians live. To convey his obsession, Koch makes use of the wayang figures like Wisnu, Arjuna, and Semar for his symbolic and metaphoric purpose. The wayang itself philosophically

renders dualism: the good and the bad sides mingle in ambiguity. Kwan (Koch, 1986:265), comparing the philosophy incorporated in the *wayang* to the conventional philosophy of the West, says:

The West asks for clear conclusions, final judgments. A philosophy must be correct or incorrect, a man good or bad. But in the *wayang* no such final conclusions are ever drawn. The struggle of the Right and the Left never ends, because neither side is wholly good or bad. The *kasar* can have noble qualities; the *alus* mean ones.

By exploiting this mythology, according to Iswalono (1995:113), Koch has broken the western traditions. Instead of referring to the Roman-Greek mythology for his purpose, he opted for the *wayang*. The story to which he patterns his narrative structure also bears dualism. It mingles the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The allegorical role of the *wayang* mythology in his novel is to give a tangible depiction of Koch idea of Australia's identity, i.e. dualism.

The story, which is told in the first person, is also directed in dualism: Cook and Billy Kwan. Koch enables the reader to take a more comprehensive vision by presenting all the people in the book viewed through the neutral gaze of Cook, who is identified only by the initial R. J. Cook that he supplies to his occasional footnotes. He is one of the expatriate journalists who lives through the events with Kwan and Hamilton but about whom the reader learns very little as he is presented only hovering at the back of the story. However, he is a confident and observer professedly untroubled by the kinds of problems that life presents to the others. He narrates the story by reconstructing the events from Kwan's purloined files and his memory. According to Clancy (55), the similarities between R. J. Cook and C. J. Koch are inescapable, for Koch is descended from a German immigrant, and "Cook is Koch in German".

Kwan, who has a mystical sense of Indonesia, is the central figure in the story. He is

Hamilton's camera man. To a certain extent, the reader is given hints by Kwan about what is to be expected. He may be viewed as the writer's mouthpiece who is made use of to carry out a special 'job', that is, introducing the story's issues through his dossiers and revealing to the reader on what basis the story will progress. As the story is exhaustively coloured by the Javanese people and their life, Kwan warns that prior to the understanding of Java, a sound knowledge of '*wayang*' has to be comprehended. Of course, he does not give an explicit direction to the reader as Cookie does. He clearly aims his warning to Hamilton but implicitly to the reader: "If you want to understand Java, Ham, you'll have to understand the *wayang*" (Koch, 1986:81). This *wayang* underlies the story's progress. His uncertainty of self makes his life a continuing search for the meaning of his own and others' natures.

Cookie who gives the neutral gaze in his reports is fully aware of being dislocated, just as the other journalists. They cope with their uprooting from home as a condition of their careers. Nevertheless, as Cook/Koch warns, Java ... Asia ... cannot truly be home for them. Evidently, Koch invents this neutral narrator to voice his post-colonial idea on self-identity.

Different from Cookie, Kwan sides with the misfortune of Indonesia. He shows his sympathy with the *ibu* and idolizes Sukarno. Despite Hamilton's ignorance, he is aware that both of them are Australian hybrids. Kwan is an Australian of mixed Chinese-Caucasian, whereas Hamilton who has a western physical appearance was born and reared in Singapore. He is psychically Asian. Again, different from Hamilton, he shows a clear comprehension of the socio-cultural environment in which he is posted. His understanding of his environment is reflected in his notion of the significance of the *wayang*. To Ham, the "two-dimensional leather puppets ... [are] too alien and scarcely human ... [they resemble] insects ... [or] weird cartoons" (Koch, 1986:82). This reveals that, unlike Ham, Kwan has demonstrated his

maturity and ability to come to an understanding of his own identity and environment in which he finds himself.

By employing a technique of telling a story through a double view, i.e. one is neutral and the other is sided, Koch seems to emphasize a point that the latter should be accepted as more realistic. Kwan and his near-sighted colleague are metaphorically the embodiment of Australia itself: a hybrid of Asia and Europe. Accordingly, through his invented narrators, Koch prefers to look at the reality of post-colonialism by accepting the idea of hybridity.

E. HEROES FROM THE TWO WORLDS

Dualism is also found in the heroes of the novel. The successive heroes who represent their successive worlds indicate distinctive features of their own. There are, at least, two major heroes in the novel, i.e. Kwan and Hamilton from the private world of the *Wayang* Bar in the novel and President Sukarno who makes up the hero from the public world of Indonesia. This public hero constantly hovers behind the screen of the heroes from the private world. These heroes are all compounded into a whole from a mix of the two halves. Kwan and Hamilton have dualism of ethnic origins, as confirmed in Kwan's remark (Koch, 1986:83):

You're a hybrid, old man, and so am I. It shows in our physical appearance. Scots ancestry makes you a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Celt. I'm a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Chinese. But I think it runs a little deeper than that. I'm unable to be Australian because of Chineseness. You're unable to be Australian because of your Englishness.

The two halves that make up a compound in Sukarno are his duality of religion. Kwan's *Dossier S 9* on Sukarno (Koch, 1986:132) uncovers this.

RELIGION: Muslim. But his mother, a Balinese, was high-caste Hindu. His father was a Muslim of the *priyayi* class. Thus he unites in himself the two

great religions of Java. A double man, a man of dualities!

Sukarno's psychic doubleness is complexly enhanced by Kwan's saying of him (Koch, 1986: 264), "You're not simply Muslim or socialist; you were both; ... a man of dualities". Koch's assertion of Sukarno's qualities (1993:22) underlines Kwan's words, "... Sukarno was very much a man of duality: both Hindu and Muslim by birth; poet and demagogue; a member of the aristocratic *priyayi* class, and yet a man of the people—a socialist". Sukarno himself acknowledges the polarized extremes of his nature in the autobiography scripted by Adams (1966:18), "because I am two halves, I can exhibit all shades, understand all sides, lead all people. Perhaps it is mere coincidence. Maybe it is another omen. But these two halves of my nature make me all embracing". In addition, Lehmann states (1979: 69) that, akin to the *wayang*, Sukarno "combines within himself both left and right". He is the embodiment of Indonesia itself.

Kwan, the de facto hero of the novel, is a more deeply divided person because of the fact that racially he is half Chinese and half Australian. Outwardly his appearance is predominantly Chinese yet inwardly he claims himself as an Australian. He rejects his Chineseness by confessing that he does not speak Chinese at all, and that it is awkward to "manage to belong to [the Chinese] culture [he] never grew up in" (Koch, 1986: 84). However, Kwan still shows racial ambiguity, for he "played an upper-middle-class Australian or Englishman of the pre-war era. Yet sometimes he played a special role as an Asian" (Koch, 1986: 68). This condition that Kwan finds himself in is described by Turner (1973:95), in his book *The Ritual Process*, as liminality:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space.

Liminal entities are neither here or there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.

As a hybrid person, Kwan searches for a personal cultural space but finds that everywhere he is an outcast, caught betwixt and between.

Koch, then, comes to concentrate on human private life as a means of exploring Australian contemporary nationalism. He portrays the difficulty of being mixed allegiance. Kwan remarks (Koch, 1986: 85): "It's rather a bore to be *half* something". Being confined to his oddity as a Chinese-Australian, combined with his physical deformity, Kwan seeks to transfer his alter ego as a compensation to perfect his shortcomings. He finds his alter ego both in Hamilton and in Sukarno. He worships both men. Sukarno is drawn from his public world into Kwan's private world. In spite of their physical difference, Kwan and Hamilton are tied by the fact that they are hybrid products of two different nationalities. So, they are psychologically associated. This seems to underlie the reason Kwan chooses him as his hero, his transferred identity. In one of his files in which he associates himself with Hamilton, Kwan confidently writes (Koch, 1986:186) that Hamilton "is myself! I should have been him".

Kwan also finds in Sukarno a vehicle to fulfil his desire. He idolizes him as a perfect leader. In Kwan's eyes (Koch, 1986:132), Sukarno is "the incarnation of the god *Vishnu*, who sometimes comes to the earth as a dwarf!". Kwan's increasing admiration of Sukarno is pointed out by his imitation of Sukarno's habit of wearing a black cap, or *peci*. To convince himself, he asks (Koch, 1986:101): "Who do I look like?" On a different occasion, Kwan tells Hamilton that he shares the same identity and astrological sign as Sukarno, and he explicitly comes to the conclusion that he "could have been" Sukarno himself (Koch, 1986: 99).

However, the heroes whom Kwan idolizes betray him as Hamilton, his man of outstanding physical attributes, and Sukarno, his man of ideas and action, fail to fulfil his

desires. In view of the failure of the sources of his identification, Kwan meets with disappointment and disintegration which result in his ultimate alienation.

Claremont (1980: 25) argues that "self-recognition and alienation as the divided self" constitute the common themes that have always been present in twentieth century Australian fiction. Furthermore, she says, Koch's theme of alienation and identity are exclusive, that is, "the achievement of the self is gained at the price of further alienation". Koch's key characters are not in the end united; they are excluded, the lost. His characters remain divided, just like Kwan, who instead of coming to the solution of his personal quest, faces his tragic flaw. Although Hamilton, under Kwan's influence, finally acknowledges others' value and accepts imperfection in others while recognizing it in himself, he is still lost in the novel. He experiences further alienation. His heart reaches out to Australia as a home, but he is destined for another hemisphere, Europe. Apart from his appreciation of Indonesia, Hamilton does not fancy living permanently in Indonesia. Were he to accept living in Indonesia, he might have found the resolution to his personal quest.

Kwan also needs a figure who shares his fate. He gives his choices to the dwarfs who originate from two different spheres. In his *Dossier B 26* (Koch, 1986:117), Cookie manages to trace Kwan's private, mythological reason for this identification. In a footnote (1986:117), Cookie says that

I have traced it in the mythology section of his *Dwarf* dossier. In a long thesis on the origins of the Arthurian dwarf, Kwan notes that ancient dwarf-figure *Pelles* was 'split into two men – a knight and his dwarf squire'. And this, he says, can be traced to the fact that his ancestor *Bilis*, in Celtic legend, had a giant brother called *Brian*, or *Bran*.

The one belongs to his European ancestor's legend, *Pelles*, and the other one belongs to his Asian ancestor's mysticism, *Semar*. This association in Kwan, as Holliday

(1992: 54) has concluded in his thesis “Australian Hybrids in Asia’s Spiritual Ambiguity—A Close Reading of *The Year of Living Dangerously*, “bring(s) into contact the three areas of interest to Koch: Europe, Asia and antipodean Australia”. Billy Kwan’s dwarf-heroes are shaped by a dualism just like Australia itself.

Differing from Kwan and Hamilton who are nationally divided, Sukarno is the embodiment of Indonesia; he is the national symbol. His psychic dualism takes a multiplicity of forms. Koch (1993:20) says that “casting about for a leader with whom Billy could identify, I finally hit on President Sukarno of Indonesia, and everything fell into place”. Koch utilizes him as a vehicle for his invented hero’s identification.

F. CONCLUSION

During the early settlements of the European, primarily British, people a psychic link between the people of Australia and their mother country was strongly felt. However, the great change in this relationship and the new nationalism in this country was seen to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, realizing its position as a post-colonial country living in the Asian-Pacific region. Not only has the great change happened in socio-politics and culture but also in their national imagining as well. Different from their previous writing, since those years, many Australian artists have begun to recognize the role of their Asian neighbours not just as a source of inspiration but also as an arena for Australia’s quest of identity. One example worth mentioning is *The Year of Living Dangerously*. This novel is set in Indonesia in 1965 just before the fall of President Sukarno. Several years later, due to its early success, it was made into a film by MGM. Thus, the early success of the book that once rocketed Koch into fame is subsequently more recognized through the movie.

Koch has proven his craftsmanship in his *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Through this book, not only has he demonstrated his gift to invent a particular form of writing fashion but

also to take advantage of the narrative to voice his idea of Australia’s post-colonial identity. He has shown his inventiveness in the book. He has ingeniously developed it as a sort form of journalists’ report on the crisis of the final stages of Sukarno’s presidency with parts that a journalist will fail to report like the unique culture of ‘*wayang*’ which is the concretion of the country’s mixed belief of Muslim, Hinduism and Javanese mysticism. Here, Koch’s novel carries out the special ‘job’ in covering these parts.

Although the novel is set in Indonesia portraying Indonesia’s struggle for creating a nation, it is still about Australia. Indonesia in this text is merely used to invent the sense of the Other exploited to define the national self of Australia. Evidently, this book is Koch’s enterprise to voice his idea of identity through the issue of dualism which is present throughout the book. The story setting, the title, the *wayang* structure after which he patterns his narration, the technique he uses to develop the story, and the heroes he invented show this idea. As a matter of fact, this notion merely constitutes Koch’s device to voice his idea of Australia’s post-colonial identity. They are metaphorically employed to accomplish his project that Australia is shaped by dualism—caught between Europe and Asia.

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