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The European Cultural Influence in the Western Literary for the Reader: The Study of the Literary Reception

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ABSTRACT

The stories about the grandeur of the European culture has been widely presented in the literature. This article aims to present the European cultural trendsetter constructed as the western world through the literature. The subject of this article is the western literary works of *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, published in America by Anchor Books in 2003. Data collection on the European history classified and analysed by reading repeatedly with the descriptive qualitative techniques. In this novel, Paris, Rome and London are constructed as cities that have a sense and taste of high art with a long European history. The results of this article showed that the reader is familiar with the history of European culture, especially the culture of the church in Europe with all its dynamics can bring out to the more open public, not just based on stereotypes in the general view of Europe. With the better understanding, the reader is expected to be more tolerant of the European culture, in this case the culture of the church, which is also against the more extreme sort of paganism or atheism. Thus, the reading of this kind is becoming more open, both in the outlook and in the attitude.

Keywords: European culture, cultural construction, western literature

Introduction

Literature as one of the cultural aspect is one part of the hegemony site, which is one part of the efforts to establish or counter hegemony. Hegemony sites, such as the media, movies, music, and various other aspects of the culture, including literature, are a means to ensure influence to the other party, in this case that of the colonial to the colonized. Although colonization in Indonesia has ended, the spread of the influence has continued until now. Historically, according to Lombard (2000: 11-39) in his book *Nusa Jawa: Cross-Cultural, Historical Study Center;* Indonesia is regarded as a country of cross cultural world (*le Carrefour Javanais*) which has been heavily influenced by the culture of the world, such as Chinese, Arabic and West, in which is still an ongoing process.

Until the beginning of the 21st century, the process of foreign acculturation, including European culture, until now is still in progress as an identity-forming elements of a nation which continue to change. Even within the last 10 years, the intersection of the various aspects of culture in Indonesia is getting intensified. It is for example only occurs in the field of philosophy, literature, art, culture, science, and technology.

Literature as one piece of art also ended getting the influence. In this field, the nations of Europe are sufficiently advanced nations in developing a literary work, including in promoting it around the world, including in Indonesia. In this article, the research will describe the reception of the people of Indonesia on the development of Western literature, in this case represented by European culture, which exposes European culture.

In the current cultural exchange that took place this quickly, each individual will be in contact with other cultures. Acculturation will occur, the spread of influence, or the adoption

and adaptation of a culture by another culture. The problem, Indonesia as a developing country and at the crossroads of world culture as proposed by Lombard (2000: 11-39) as *Le Carrefour Javanais*, often become the party who is always in a subordinate position.

During the period of colonialism, Western culture is one aspect of the culture that helped strengthen the practice of imperialism. Said (1994: 75-81) in a number of his books explores the role of European culture (Western) hegemony over the role of European domination (also USA) on countries of Asia and Africa in the postcolonial era. In Said's view (1994: 75-81), the process is ongoing until now.

In the previous study, (1) "Literary Reception of French Writers in the Printed Media in Indonesia During 2000-2005" (Swandayani, 2007) or in the research of Santosa (2007) entitled (2) "The Reception on German Thinkers in the Printed Media in Indonesia During 2000-2005" the researcher has acquired a number of findings related to the influence of French and German writers in Indonesia through the printed media in Indonesia. Through the media that became the research sample, it can be determined how the role of the French and German writers viewed positively by the printed media in Indonesia. Oftenly, the France and Germany authors were used as a kind of idol, a model or a vanguard of thought in Indonesia.

This study is a continuation of the previous study. Besides being expanded into Western cultural influence or Europe (which means also including the influence of British culture, the Netherlands, Italy, Russia, Spain, Scandinavia, even Turkey), this study also tried to reach the receptions of Western or European culture on the university students.

Europe as developed countries are often seen as a *trend-setter* in the various elements of Indonesian life, especially in culture. European figure as the more developed entity has transformed into a kind of pride when Indonesia became a part of it, especially in its lifestyle. This is the concern of a number of university courses that have a European study because they are often more of a representative of the European countries than becoming the interests of Indonesian nationalism.

Thes things that are a barrier to learning foreign languages, especially European languages (in this context also literary works). Indonesian students need to recognize and deepen Europe (including one through the study of literature) but not to be swept away "tobe" Europe. There is a need for critical approach to European culture resulting in a sense of nationalism that sees Indonesia equal to the European parties. However, we should avoid hatred, sense of revenge, resentment or sense of *xenophobia* against Europe or European culture.

The balance in viewing Europe will be established if the Europe are examined proportionally and balanced in the context of cultural pluralism. Europe is no longer considered a *trend-setter* to be traced but it is not an entity that must be suspected. Understanding of the (cultural) European pluralistic character of a person can develop into a better direction.

Research Methods

The object of this research is cutting-edge novels set in Europe, especially foreign literature that has been translated into Indonesian. The novels in question are novels that have realistic background story of European region. Given the existing limitations and in accordance with the scope of this research study, sampling of the research object has been conducted. Sampling technique used in this research is *purposive sampling technique*. The study was also limited to the object of research related to the image of Europe and those many responded in Indonesia.

After doing a search for such works, eventually the reaearcher acquired a number of literary works that were sampled in the study: ((1) *The Da Vinci Code* (Dan Brown), (2)

Angels & Demons (Dan Brown), (3) Foucault's Pendulum (Umberto Eco), (4) Baudolino (Umberto Eco), (5) The Name of the Rose (Umberto Eco), (6) Kitab Lupa dan Gelak Tawa (Milan Kundera), (7) The Historian (Elizabeth Kostova), (8) Ikan Tanpa Salah (Alfred Birney), (9) Namaku Merah Kirmizi (Orhan Pamuk).. Especially for this article, the focus is limited to the novel The Da Vinci Code.

Data collection techniques used in this study are in the form of reading and note technique. The collected data was then categorized, analyzed, and interpreted. The instrument used to collect data in this study is in the form of a data card. This data card is used to facilitate the recording of a number of data and also in order to facilitate the categorization of data

For the validity of research data, the researcher used semantic validity technique and the reliability of research data, the intrarater and interrater technique were used. Semantic validity is by analyzing the meaning context of the text. As for the reliability of data, the researcher used intrarater technique that is by reading over and over in order to obtain the data consistency and interrater in the form of discussion by the lead researcher Dian Swandayani with members of the researcher, Iman Santoso, Ari Nurhayati, and Nurhadi.

Data were collected and categorized and then analyzed descriptively in a qualitative manner. Data which have been categorized based on the formulation of the problem and then analyzed descriptively so the description of the background picture of Europe could be known, the reflected and deconstructed European image, the response in Indonesia, and the Indonesian perceptions of the latest novels set in the Europe.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study refers to four findings. These four findings include the description of the background of the location, diachronic background, the background of the European social status of each novel, and the image of Europe reflected and constructed in such novel. The findings on the novel *The Da Vinci Code* can be read in the following table.

Table 1

The European Background Tabulation in Recent Novels Translation

No.	Title of	Background of the Novel			
	the	Setting	Time	Social status	
	Novel				
#	The Da	Louvre	Present time	Academic figures who	
	Vinci	Museum, Paris	then wandered	laid bare the lives of	
	Code	which was then	on medieval	important figures of	
		widened to	times	medieval Europe	
		many other	associated with	associated with figures of	
		European	a history of	artist, scientist, or a	
		regions such as	Priory of Sion	famous clergyman Europe	
		Switzerland	group		
		and the United			
		Kingdom			

The model of storytelling in this novel is actually about the same as that of *Angels & Demons*, another Dan Brown's work which was actually published first, but in Indonesia the novel *The Da Vinci Code* was introduced or published much earlier than *Angels & Demons*. Background of place, time setting, and Europe social background in the novel of *The Da Vinci Code* as well as the context of the story are outlined in the following explanation.

The story of *The Da Vinci Code* begins with the death of a head of the Secret Brotherhood in the Louvre by an albino Opus Dei, one of the opponents of the truth of the Holy Grail, the truth of the Divinity of Jesus. The killing is done so that the real truth about Jesus, a man who married Mary Magdalene, did not spread and lead to the collapse of the power of the church of the Vatican today.

The art curator who served as head of the secret brotherhood, Jacques Sauniere, tried to offer the truth about the Holy Grail to his granddaughter, Sophie Neveu, with the help of Robert Langdon, a symbologist who he believed has adequate knowledge about the Holy Grail from Langdon's various research accomplishments.

However, the police captain, Bezu Fache, assumed that it was Langdon who killed Sauniere because his name inscribed on the floor near the body. Though few sentences beside the body are simply symbols to solve the puzzle of truth that has been stored and guarded with the life of the Priory of Sion. Therefore, Sophie knew that Langdon was innocent, trying to believe and save Langdon from charges by escaping from the Louvre Museum and dechiper the code left by her grandfather, Sauniere.

They went to the Depository Bank of Zurich after discussions in order to decode the code, which finally came to a *cryptex* stored in the bank. After getting this object, they asked help from the bank chief, Andre Vernet, to get them escape from the police. But he then felt deceived by these two and decided to join Fache stating that they are guilty, plus they bring Sauniere's relic from the Depository Bank of Zurich.

Langdon and Sophie who have managed to escape from Vernet, rushed to Villette Manor where Langdon's companion reside. He was also very fond of any info about the Grail. At the home of Teabing, Sophie explained the origin of the Holy Grail, its history, and its relationship with all the symbols that exist today.

On the other hand, Bishop Aringosa an official from Opus Dei, agitated as Silas, the albino could not find the keystone. They were deceived by the Priory of Sion about the truth of where the Holy Grail placed. Therefore, two of them together with the Master, the one who ordered Silas to kill the four officers, re-planed tactics to find the Holy Grail.

Silas followed Langdon and Sophie to the home of Leigh Teabing with the intention that they will give him the *cryptex*, but instead he was captured even tied. He also brought to escape along with Langdon, Sophie and Teabing so they realized that they were also followed by police to the Villette Manor.

They hurried toward the field Le Buerget while discussing about the Priory of Sion, the Holy Grail, and some hints of the symbols or anything related to him and helped to think together to dechiper Sauniere's code which was already in the hands of Sophie and Langdon. The first *cryptex* code has been successfully resolved in a plane to Biggin Hill, containing the second code to unlock *the* smaller *cryptex*. When it is solved, then map to the Holy Grail is not a dream anymore.

In the UK, they first tried looking into the Old Church that supposedly enclosed the Templar tomb in the code of Sauniere. However, after they were told by the officer on guard there that the place was not a tomb, they soon realized that something was missing.

At the tomb, they also were struck by the presence of Remy stating he wanted the keystone on Langdon's hands. He also captured his own employer, Sir Leigh Teabing, after successfully seizing the keystone. For that reason, he hid behind the limousine belonging to Teabing, and drove Silas into the center of Opus Dei in London. That's what the Master told when he called.

Langdon and Sophie that had escaped from Remy and Silas tried to crack the code of the Templar soldiers buried in London by askimng for the help of the Library of King's

College, England. After searching long enough, they both concluded that the tomb mentioned by Sauniere is the tomb of Sir Isaac Newton buried by Pope Alexander in London.

The teacher who is none other than Sir Leigh Teabing finally inevitably killed Remy for having show his face in front of Sophie and Langdon. It will reveal who was behind the killing of the four Priory of Sion officers if Remy was left alive. That is why he wanted to receive the *cryptex* from Remy, not Silas, as his mission to kill. However, in the end he was arrested by the police because he blindly hunted the Holy Grail by risking everything, even to kill

In spite of everything, Langdon and Sophie could finally breathe. Map towards the Holy Grail is on hand. They then visited Rosslyn Chapel which unexpectedly also revealed the identity of Sophie, who when her history traced, is a direct descendant of Jesus. She met her grandmother and all the history of Sophie was told. When asked about the Holy Grail, Grandmother Marie was not convinced that Holy Grail was hidden in the chapel.

Not getting results, Langdon finally returned to Paris. After two days departed from Rosslyn Chapel, Langdon finally managed to crack the Sauniere's code. He realized that the search for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene that he had found in the basement complex of Louvre museum, according to the instructions of Sauniere.

The background story of *The Da Vinci Code*. Broadly speaking, the European background of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and the context of the story can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2

Tabulation on the Europe Background in Novel of The Da Vinci Code

Back	ground of the	Novel	Contexts of the Story
The place	Time	Social status	
Louvre	Present	Academic	Robert Langdon, Harvard University
Museum,	time then	figures	symbologist character from the United
Paris which	wanders	which laid	States, reveals the death of Louvre
was then	on	bare the	Museum art curator, Paris, named
widened to	medieval	lives of	Jacques Sauniere. In a joint
many other	times	important	investigation with Sauniere's
European	associated	figures of	granddaughter, Sophie Neveu, they
regions	with a	medieval	finally meet up with other figures that
such as	history of	Europe	lead to the secrets of the history of
Switzerland	Priory of	associated	medieval Europe.
and the	Sion	with figures	In addition to the Priory of Sion,
United	group	of artist,	Langdon also unraveled the mysteries
Kingdom		scientist, or a	of the works of Leonardo Da Vinci, the
		famous	holy grail, Masonic buildings, Roslyn
		clergyman	Chapel, Isaac Newton to specific groups
		Europe	such as Opus Dei, and others.

.Although the main character of this novel, Robert Langdon came from Harvard University, USA, the background does not intersect with America, but Europe. Jacques Saunier's mysterious murder, his body naked by establishing certain signs (the Vitruvian Man) and the writing of the secret anagram occurred in the heart of Paris is the Louvre

Museum. In this city actually Langdon will deliver a public lecture on a number of disclosures of European history.

From the museum in the city of Paris, the story of this novel then moves to different areas in the city of Paris to the territory of Switzerland and then to the British territory, to a typical building called Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland. The background of story happens in the present time. The social status occurs in academia and the other intellectual. Nevertheless, such as Dan Brown's earlier novel, *Angels & Demons*, Langdon character is finally struggling with an issue that sparked the history of the fight between the Catholic Church with a secret society called the Priory of Sion. The antagonist of this novel, Silas, who killed Sauniere was a follower of Opus Dei, a part of the Catholic.

If in *Angels & Demons* Dan Brown explained a lot of the works of Benini located around the Vatican and Rome, in the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the American author described more of the works of Leonardo da Vinci. The famous artist whi was born in Vinci, province of Firenze, Italy, 15 April 1452 - died at Clos Lucé, France, May 2, 1519 at the age of 67 years (id.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Leonardo_da_vinci). The novel does not only examine the mystery disguised by Leonardo but also shedding his behavior as a character of the Priory of Sion, a revelation that opposes the current official version of history.

The interpretation of the painting *The Last Supper, Mona Lisa, The Virgin of the Rock* or the *Madonna of the Rock* in the novel is invigorating stuffs that had been unknown to the public. The novel is at least featuring a new interpretation of the works of Leonardo. In *The Las Supper*, a very famous painting depicting the last moments of Jesus before the crucifixion, the figure who is exactly on his right is Mary Magdalene. This woman in the dialog between characters in this novel is described as Jesus' wife, who is pregnant with the King's son. The story of Mary Magdalene is then related to various stories of events in the history of the church with a different version. Descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalene are the responsible for the conception of a number of kings in the territory of France.

Mona Lisa is also described as a mix between a man and a woman; a mix between an Old Egyptian male deity named Ammon, and a woman deity named Isis. Monalisa name comes from the combination of two names of these main deities. By doing so, the background story of this novel not only tells about the present to what was done by Langdon, who ,this time, was accompanied by Sophie Sauniere, nevertheless it widened in the story long before Jesus, concerning the Egyptian gods. A study that was associated when someone talks about groups of occult such as Priory of Sion or Knight Templar which is based on the teachings of Kabbalah, the teachings of which are older than the Jewish doctrine which is based on prior knowledge of ancient Egypt (Baigent, et al, 2006; Baigent, et al, 2007; Picknett and Prince, 2006).

The interpretation of European history, or more precisely the interpretation of the Christian tradition occurred in the dialogue between characters of this novel. In the dialogues of characters, the readers are treated to a different interpretation, even against the current understanding that had been believed. This is what makes the theme of the issues raised in this novel becomes controversial. Of course, this kind of background story, a framed story or some kind of story that adds insight of the readers. Especially for readers of Muslim-majority Indonesia who did not understand the Christian world and the history of its development, particularly in Europe. Notice one of the following quote, which is a dialogue between Teabing and Sophie accompanied Langdon about the *Last Supper*.

"Where is Jesus sitting?" Teabing asked.

"In the middle."

"Good. Any food eaten by Jesus and his disciples?"

"Bread." Obviously.

"Very good. And what he drinks?"

"Wine. They drink wine. "

"Great. And one final question. How many glasses of wine on the table?"

Sophie paused, realizing it was the trick question. *And after dinner, Jesus took the cup of wine, sharing it with His disciples.* "One cup," she said. "Holy Grail." *The bowl of Christ. Holy Grail.* "Jesus passed a single chalice of wine, just as modern Christians do at communion."

Teabing sighed. "Open your eyes."

Sophie opened her eyes. Teabing was grinning smugly. Sophie looked down at the painting, seeing to her astonishment that *everyone* at the table had a glass of wine, including Christ. Thirteen cup. Moreover, the cups were tiny, stemless, and made of glass. None of the chalice in the painting. There is no Holy Grail (Brown, 2004: 329).

This is the form of denial about the Holy Grail in the Christian tradition that is presented in the novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Through the voices of Teabing who interprets the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, Dan Brown did a counter to what had been believed by Christians as a holy grail. Then consider the explanation and the dialogue below.

Teabing's eyes flickered. "Do not you think a little strange, considering that both the Bible and the legend that Grail celebrate this moment as the definitive arrival of the Holy Grail. Oddly, Da Vinci appears to have forgotten to paint the Cup of Christ.

"Of course, art scholars must have noted that."

"You would be shocked to learn what anomalies Da Vinci included here that most scholars either do not see or simply choose to ignore. This image, in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery. Da Vinci lays it all out in the open in *The Last Supper*.

Sophie scanned the work eagerly. "Does this fresco tell us *what the* Grail really is?"

"It's not *what it is,"* Teabing whispered. "But *who* is he. The Holy Grail is not a thing. Indeed, the Holy Grail was ... *someone* (Brown, 2004: 329-330)."

Here is an excerpt of the painting of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci which became the main topics of the figures this novel, chatter representing authors statements about the mystery that would be submitted by one of the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion from 1510-1519 (Brown, 2004: 454). The painting *of the Last Supper* translates to have enough central role in the story. It could be, this is the main message of the novel wrapped in a plot frame model of investigative plot or a detective story. Figure to the right of Jesus is often interpreted as John discussed by the leaders of this novel as Mary Magdalene.

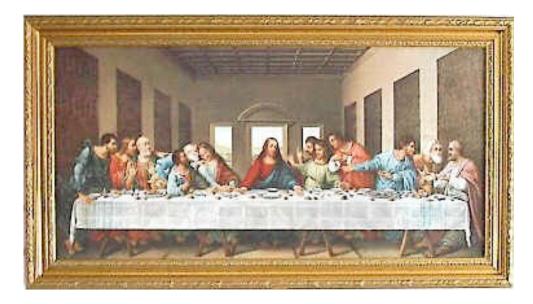


Figure 1. The painting *The Last Supper* of Leonardo da Vinci

The following excerpt continued dialogue of the characters in the novel who talked about the interpretation of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci.

"Wait a minute," said Sophie. "You told me the Holy Grail is a woman. *The Last Supper* is a painting of thirteen men."

"Really?" Teabing raised his eyebrows. "Look closely."

Uncertain, Sophie approached the painting, scanning the thirteen figures in it-Jesus Christ in the middle, six disciples on His left, and six other students in his right hand.

"They are all men," said Sophie.

"Oh?" Teabing said. "How about the one sitting on a place of honor, to the right of *the Lord?"*

Sophie checked the figure who sits just to the right of Jesus. She focused her attention on the figures. When she studied the face and body of the character, a wave of admiration over her. The red-haired figure hung, folded her soft arms, and chest beckoned. No doubt ... that is a woman.

"That is awoman!" Exclaimed Sophie.

"Who is she?"

"That," Teabing replied, "is Mary Magdalene."

Sophie turned. "That prostitute?"

Teabing gasped, as if the world had just hurt her feelings. "Magdalena's not like that. A wrong conception that is the legacy of a smear campaign propagated by the early church. The Church must erase the name of Mary Magdalene to cover a dangerous secret-her role as the Holy Grail."

"The *role* of her?"

"As I mentioned," Teabing explained. "Church when it has to convince the world that the mortal prophet, Jesus, is someone who has the nature of God. Therefore, any teaching that explains the mundane aspects of the life of Jesus to be omitted from the Bible. Woe to the previous editor, a single theme that is very disturbing mundane recurring in the gospels. Mary Magdalene. "Teabing paused." More specifically, her marriage to Jesus Christ."

"Sorry?" Sophie's eyes leads to Langdon and then back to Teabing.
"This is according to the historical record," Teabing said, "and Da Vinci obviously well aware of the fact. *The Last Supper* specifically called out to the audience of the painting of Jesus and Mary were married couples (Brown, 2004: 339-340)."

This is the background in addition to the main background as shown in Table 2 above. Additional background of this kind almost colored throughout the book. That is, the main background as on the findings of the second table is just a frame which covers a variety of background events that stretched into the future life of Jesus, even to the time of Ancient Egypt. Range of the background of location is not as simple as any background but reaching out to the main historical events that stretched nearly to the territory of Western Europe, about France, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Historical figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, Jesus, Mary Magdalene and others describe these figures are key figures that characterize the history of Europe or even determine the direction of European history. The novel is loaded with a plethora of information about European history or the history of the church. Not only that, actually, this novel also elevates the role of the secret society of some sort of Priory of Sion, a group which is described as having a major role in the span of the history of Europe (Crystal, 2005; Baigent, et al, 2006; Baigent, et al, 2007; Picknett and Prince 2006; Oktar, 2003; Oktar, 2003a).

Conclusion

Through the works of literary such as *the* novel of *The Da Vinci Code*, European facial image or the image of European history is often portrayed, it becomes a description of historical, geographical, sociological elements or through the exposure of the background story. In the novel of *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, it spanned a fight between the church's secret group that is considered to play an important role and the history of Europe. This group came up with various names ranging from the Kabbala, Knight Templar, and the Priory of Sion, Illuminati, Freemasonry and a number of other names. The information contained in this novel is speculative. However, the information in this kind of novel is often a reference for the conspiracy theorists as their real existence and indeed the determinant of the direction of events in European history from the revolution in France, in Italy, in England, in Spain and Portugal, up to to the revolution in Russia.

This novel tells that Europe in the course of its long history is filled with fights between secret church groups such Freemasonry in the novel called the Priory of Sion. Information contained in this novel is very rich in describing it. A number of other important events reinterpreted like supposition that Jesus died on the cross reinterpreted if he did not die after the crucifixion. Instead, he married Mary Magdalene and had descendants who later became the ruler in the South of *France*. In the history, Europe knows two times of the Crusades. First, with the Muslims in the area of Jerusalem. Second with the Cathars (Christians who adore Mary Magdalene, which is different from the Christians of Rome) in the region of southern France. This is the wealth that is featured in a number of novels like *The Da Vinci Code*.

For readers in Indonesia, the novel could be the embellishment in knowing or learning Europe to be more enjoyable. By reading the works of this kind, Indonesian readers may be more familiar with the European culture. This could be a relation in deciphering Europe, looking at Europe. The introduction of this sort could be a real opening insights into European culture and not be based on stereotypes that have been introduced. In the process of

reading a person will experience a transformation of thought, including in the European view, looking at the history of Europe, looking at the geography of Europe, and even social status or European culture in general.

The introduction will open up a better insight into what is then expected to be an open acceptance of the other party and to be more tolerant of others, in this case Europe. This then led to the attitude of pluralism, particularly to Europe.

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