

## Portrayals Of The Dutch Colonial Tea Plantation In Hella Haasse's The Tea Lords (1992)

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### ABSTRACT

*This research entitled "Portrayals of The Dutch Colonial Tea Plantation in Hella Haasse's The Tea Lords (1992)," examines how the Dutch colonial tea plantation in Java is depicted in the novel. Set during Dutch colonization in the 19th century in the East Indies, the study uses the new historicism theoretical framework to analyze various portrayals of the plantation and their impact on East Indies society, culture, and economics. Employing qualitative methods, the researcher explores the historical context presented in the novel and history books to uncover the link between literary and non-literary texts. Findings reveal that the plantation significantly influenced East Indies society, culture, and economics, with the setting playing a central role in the narrative, providing readers with a deeper understanding of colonialism's impact. The research exposes economic disparities, highlighting exploitation and hierarchy in social and labor dynamics. Analysis of the Kerkhoven family sheds light on their challenges and moral dilemmas. Identity negotiation amid colonialism is explored, with the author's Dutch background influencing the novel's narration and conveying views on historical events. The study concludes that literature like The Tea Lords can challenge established historical narratives and is intertwined with broader cultural discourse.*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berjudul "Penggambaran Perkebunan Teh Kolonial Belanda di Novel The Tea Lords karya Hella Haasse (1992)," mengkaji bagaimana perkebunan teh kolonial Belanda di Jawa digambarkan dalam novel tersebut. Ditetapkan selama penjajahan Belanda pada abad ke-19 di Hindia Belanda, studi ini menggunakan kerangka teoretis new historicism untuk menganalisis berbagai gambaran perkebunan dan dampaknya terhadap masyarakat, budaya, dan ekonomi Hindia Belanda. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, peneliti mengeksplorasi konteks sejarah yang disajikan dalam novel dan buku-buku sejarah untuk mengungkap hubungan antara teks sastra dan non-sastra. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa perkebunan secara signifikan memengaruhi masyarakat, budaya, dan ekonomi Hindia Belanda, dengan pengaturan berperan sentral dalam narasi, memberikan pemahaman yang lebih dalam kepada pembaca tentang dampak kolonialisme. Penelitian ini mengekspos disparitas ekonomi, menyoroti eksploitasi dan hierarki dalam dinamika sosial dan kerja. Analisis keluarga Kerkhoven membawa cahaya pada tantangan dan dilema moral mereka. Negosiasi identitas di tengah kolonialisme dieksplorasi, dengan latar belakang Belanda penulis mempengaruhi narasi novel dan menyampaikan pandangan tentang peristiwa sejarah. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa sastra seperti The Tea Lords dapat menantang narasi sejarah yang telah mapan dan saling terkait dengan wacana budaya yang lebih luas.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature plays an active role in shaping and evolving discourses and ideologies, as it is deeply intertwined with the cultural, political, social, and economic context in which it is produced. According to New Historicism, there is a direct connection between literary and historical texts, and literature cannot be viewed in isolation from its historical context. Therefore, when analyzing a literary work like *The Tea Lords*, it is essential to consider how it contributes to the discourse and challenges the power dynamics of Dutch colonialism in Java. This perspective encourages readers to go beyond a simple reflection of historical events and examine how the novel itself participates in shaping and challenging colonial ideologies. It also invites exploration of how characters and narrative elements in the novel contribute to the discourse of colonialism or resistance against it (Maier, 2004:80-81).

*The Tea Lords* written by Hella Haasse, is a historical novel that digs into the Dutch colonial experience in the East Indies through three generations. The novel's plot is centered on the life of Rudolf Eduard Kerkhoven, a Dutchman who completed his civil engineering education in Delft, Netherlands. The narrative of the novel characters, the Dutch colonialists in Java during the 1870s, is intricately detailed and derives from authentic family letters and archives which also include the real events of the colonial life during the period of time. The Gamboeng Tea and Quinine Plantation at the base of Mount Tilu in Ciwidey, a region in southern Bandung, was the main setting in the novel who's first owned by Rudolf Kerkhoven. He was the second offspring among six siblings, born to Rudolph Albert Kerkhoven and Aleida Catharina van Delden. The Arjasari Tea Plantation, situated near Afdeling Banjaran, was established by his father. The eldest son endeavored to emulate the achievements and pursuits of both his father and siblings. Rudolf Edward Kerkhoven's youth first opened the Gamboeng Plantation, an abandoned government-owned coffee plantation. Most of the trees had experienced desiccation. However, their root systems persistently anchored themselves within the soil. The cultivation of tea on the site had resulted in a significantly challenging circumstance. It was imperative to cleanse the fallen roots of the coffee tree.

Author Hella S. Haasse was able to artfully portray the narrative of the protagonist's arduous journey in establishing the plantation while also delving into his intricate personal life in the captivating literary work titled *Heren van de Thee*. Originally published in Dutch in 1992, it was subsequently translated into English by Ine Rilke under the title *The Tea Lords* (2011). The novel was also translated into Indonesian and released as *Sang Juragan Teh* (2015). Hella S. Haasse, a pioneering Dutch novelist, is renowned for her historical fiction centered on the Dutch East Indies, drawing from her firsthand experiences and cultural exposure in cities like Batavia and Buitenzorg. Her works explore the complexities of Dutch colonialism, delving into themes of race relations, displacement, and identity. Dutch readers have been familiar with Hella S. Haasse's works for many years, although she has hardly ever translated any of them into English. There is no apparent reason unless it is that her work is too rigid and unflashy to draw attention to itself. The fact that her novels gain an understated strength from her constant, appealing involvement in her characters' lives is precisely what makes them extraordinary. A depiction of three generations of Dutch colonial experience in the East Indies is one of her most extensive works in literary sympathy. Hella S Haasse's novel *The Tea Lords* appears to be less popular than her novel *Oeroeg* or *The Black Lake* in English, despite the fact that both these two novels are set in the intricate story of the Dutch colonial era in the East Indies.

According to a virtual museum, an online website dedicated to Haasse's personal life by the publisher Querido, Haasse's early life, marked by various relocations and cultural exposures, likely influenced her perspectives and storytelling, evident in recurrent themes of nostalgia and the search for identity. Despite initially studying Dutch, she shifted her focus to Scandinavian literature, which broadened her artistic development and enriched her understanding of narrative techniques. Haasse's unique approach to historical fiction challenges genre norms, substituting the past for Java

to explore historical themes in a less painful manner. Her acclaimed novel *The Tea Lords* vividly portrays Dutch colonialism in the East Indies, capturing the emotional and psychological challenges of colonial life while depicting the exploitation of the region's natural resources. Through detailed descriptions and historical accuracy, Haasse's works offer insights into the intricate connections between colonizers and their surroundings, solidifying her esteemed position in Dutch literature (The Wayback Machine, Hella Haasse Museum).

The “New Historicism” theory proposed by Greenblatt undermines the independence of both the writer and the piece of writing. The author’s role is not entirely disregarded, but the author has limited control over it. Stephen Greenblatt, a well-known new historicist critic, stated that a work of art results from an agreement between a creator or group of producers with a complex set of shared norms and social practices (Greenblatt & Payne, 2005:1). It suggests that the author’s control over a work of art is limited and that a piece of literature results from shared norms and social practices. The analysis of *The Tea Lords* novel examines how the broader cultural and historical context influences Hella Haasse’s authorship and which shared norms and practices might have shaped her portrayal of Dutch colonialism and cultural blending in Java.

In the 1980s, literary critics became increasingly intrigued by the correlation between literature and history, which led to the emergence of New Historicism. As one of the new historicists, Stephen Greenblatt argued that literary texts are indistinguishable from their historical context. Consequently, New Historicism emphasizes the significance of historical context in interpreting literary works and the significance of literary discourse in influencing history. In the book entitled *Beginning Theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*, Peter Barry defined New Historicism as an approach that relied upon the aligned reading of literary and nonliterary texts: rather than a literary “foreground” and a “historical background,” it proposes as well as implements a form of research in which literary and non-literary texts serve the same value, and tell or examine each other constantly (Barry, 2002:172). From this statement, the New Historicism gives literary and non-literary works the same status and cannot be separated in literary studies.

New Historicism’s parallel method of analyzing literary and non-literary texts provides a concise summary of the theory. The New Historicism thus compares literary and non-literary texts. Conventionally, prose and poetry are understood as literary texts that include historical events and figures’ lives. Although the purpose of history is to concentrate on the past as written by historians, there are additional reasons to study history (Munslow, 2006:220). New Historicism encourages us to consider the historical context of a literary work. When analyzing *The Tea Lords*, it is important to investigate the historical background of Dutch colonialism in Java during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Understanding this period’s broader historical events, power dynamics, and cultural influences is crucial for accurately interpreting the novel.

The Dutch colonization of the Indonesian Archipelago unfolded against a backdrop of pre-existing cultural diversity, with Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and Portuguese having established themselves on Java before the Dutch arrival in 1596 (Soekiman, 2014:1). The Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602, initially focused on trade, constructing warehouses that doubled as defensive fortresses. Dutch dominance was solidified through strategic conquests, including Batavia in 1619 and Malacca in 1641. By 1755, Mataram was divided under VOC influence (Furnivall, 2010: 48-53). The government's shift from VOC monopoly to free trade led to debates on colonial governance and exploitation. Harsh measures during the Napoleonic Wars under Daendels were followed by reforms by Lieutenant Governor General T.S. Raffles (Burger, 1939: 57-62). The *cultuurstelsel*, a forced cultivation system, sparked dissent and economic decline, leading to its gradual abandonment after criticisms emerged in 1850. Private entrepreneurs replaced government-owned plantations after 1870, impacting agrarian laws and labor legislation but leaving village populations marginalized. In social and cultural spheres, Dutch presence influenced lifestyle, architecture, and household tools, contributing to the development of *Indië* culture and

the spread of Dutch East Indies culture beyond Batavia. Luxurious houses owned by VOC officials played a pivotal role in this cultural dissemination (Koentjaraningrat, 1984:68).

*The Tea Lords* presents a compelling subject for examination through the New Historicist lens, which emphasizes the intricate relationship between literary works and their historical, social, and cultural contexts. This theoretical framework prompts an exploration of how Dutch colonialism in the East Indies during the 19th and early 20th centuries influenced the characters, events, and themes depicted in the novel. Additionally, it encourages an investigation into how Hella Haasse drew from historical records and narratives to craft her fictional portrayal of the colonial experience. Through this approach, the novel offers insight into the complex interplay between literature and history, inviting a deeper understanding of the colonial era.

Moreover, *The Tea Lords* aligns well with the New Historicism approach of examining both literary and non-literary texts in parallel, as the lives of its protagonists are intimately connected to the historical backdrop of Dutch colonialism. By considering both the fictitious elements of the novel and the historical records of colonial operations, a New Historicism analysis can illuminate how literature actively contributes to shaping historical discourses and ideologies. The researcher sees potential in exploring the social, cultural, and biographical representations of Europeans and their relationship with their colonial homeland within the novel, aiming to uncover the significance of both the literary work and its broader historical environment through the lens of New Historicism. This research endeavor involves delving into the author's biography, the historical context of Dutch colonial tea plantations in Java, and the social background of the plantation owner's narrative, recognizing the influence of the author's background and personal experiences on the interpretation and presentation of historical events in their literary works.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employs a qualitative and descriptive approach to examine *The Tea Lords* novel by Hella Haasse, focusing on its sociocultural aspects. Primary data is derived from the novel itself, while secondary sources include historical texts. The New Historicism methodology is applied to analyze the novel's portrayal of Dutch colonization in Java. Qualitative research is chosen for its suitability in interpreting descriptive data and contextualizing phenomena within their real-world settings (Denzin, 2005:2). The study primarily utilizes qualitative data expressed through textual descriptions and narratives (Walliman, 2011:130). The research methodology involves gathering data from literary and non-literary sources, including historical accounts, focusing on Dutch colonization in the East Indies. Data collection includes reading and analyzing *The Tea Lords* novel, supplementing with information from history texts. The gathered data is organized for discussions on Dutch colonization, and analysis involves examining the novel's literary elements in historical and sociocultural contexts, guided by New Historicism principles. The research concludes by restating objectives and relating findings to the study, ensuring an objective and empirical outcome that deepens understanding of the literature-history relationship in Dutch colonial tea plantations.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Dutch Colonial Tea Plantation Landscape

In *The Tea Lords* by Hella Haasse, the setting serves as a dynamic force that shapes the narrative, characters, and themes of the story. Haasse transports readers to the Dutch colonial tea plantations in 1870s Java, a world defined by the complexities of colonialism and cultural interactions. The setting is more than just a backdrop; it is a crucial element in helping readers understand the location, time, and social context of the events. As explained by Abrams (2009), stories require a well-defined backdrop, and the setting provides a tangible foundation for the narrative, creating a realistic sense of place. It encompasses not only physical locations but also the

practices, traditions, beliefs, and values specific to that place, known as the spiritual setting. Ultimately, the setting forms the stage where all aspects of the narrative unfold, akin to a backdrop in a theatrical performance.

Setting plays a crucial role in literature, particularly within the framework of New Historicism, as emphasized by Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt argues that setting is not merely a backdrop but an active force shaping characters' behaviors, beliefs, and relationships, as well as reflecting broader cultural and historical contexts. Catherine Gallagher further underscores the importance of examining the historical backdrop against which literature is written, asserting that setting descriptions are not only descriptive but also expressive, contributing to the creation of a specific cultural and historical reality. In her novel *The Tea Lords*, Hella Haasse utilizes setting to depict the complex relationship between Dutch colonizers and the Indonesian environment, drawing from her Dutch heritage and personal connection to Indonesia. Through vivid descriptions, Haasse portrays the environmental exploitation characteristic of Dutch colonialism and provides insight into the dynamics between colonizers and their surroundings. Her perspective, shaped by her background and historical context, enriches the novel's portrayal of Dutch colonial life in Java, offering critical insights into the cultural and historical significance of the setting.

*The sturdy Batak ponies trotted onwards at a steady pace beneath the tamarind trees. 'Batavia looks at its best in the twilight,' said Cateau. 'Look, the moon is rising.' Rudolf was enchanted. The sultry breeze carried whiffs of unfamiliar scents, of fruits and flowers, burning charcoal fires, exotic herbs and spices from roadside food stalls lit by flickering oil lamps. (Haasse: 1992:52)*

In the novel, the characters embark on a journey from Batavia to Preanger, taking two to three days, riding Batak horses beneath tamarind trees, depicting their voyage. Through the lens of New Historicism, Hella Haasse's descriptions of the landscape, including the tamarind trees and exotic scents, serve to highlight the colonial power dynamics at play. The portrayal of Batavia in twilight reflects a romanticized view common among European colonizers, challenging prevailing historical narratives by showcasing their tendency to beautify surroundings despite underlying exploitation. The vivid depiction of exotic sights and scents reflects the European colonial obsession with the exotic, while also shedding light on the economic exploitation inherent in Dutch colonialism. However, Haasse's inclusion of these sensory elements suggests a broader colonial aesthetic appreciation for the region's natural beauty, challenging simplistic narratives of colonialism as purely economic exploitation. Through the character of Rudolf, enchanted by the surroundings, the novel portrays colonizers' fascination with the landscape juxtaposed with the power dynamics of colonialism. Haasse's narrative style, influenced by her Dutch background and personal connection to Indonesia, offers insights into the complex relationship between colonizers and their environment, challenging dominant colonial discourses by revealing nuanced interactions with and perceptions of the colonies.

*The constant stream and counter-stream of calashes, victorias, gigs and small native drays, the ladies in summery gowns, smiling and nodding to acquaintances, the smell of the horses, the lanterns on the front and back of the vehicles, the torchbearers running alongside a few luxurious carriages, the moon rising honey-coloured over the trees ... it all felt to Rudolf like a dream. (Haasse: 1992:53)*

Haasse presents an idealized portrayal of the Batavian countryside, depicting moonlit scenes, carriages, ladies in summery gowns, and lanterns, contrasting with the harsh realities of colonial exploitation and violence often mentioned in historical accounts. By romanticizing the colonial environment, Haasse challenges simplistic views of colonialism as solely oppressive, encouraging

readers to consider the complexities of colonial life and the psychological experiences of both colonizers and colonized. Rudolf's description of the scene as dreamlike reflects the colonists' sense of displacement and nostalgia for their native countries, highlighting the emotional challenges faced by colonizers navigating unfamiliar environments. This emotional dimension humanizes the colonizers and challenges prevailing historical narratives by portraying them as complex individuals with their own struggles and conflicting emotions.

The novel is set in the Dutch colonial tea plantations of Java, specifically in locations such as Arjasari, Gamboeng, and Malabar, which are part of the Land of Priangan. Priangan, also known as Preanger in Dutch, is a mountainous region in West Java, Indonesia, with a rich cultural and historical significance. The term "Parahyangan" translates to "homeland of the gods" in Sundanese, reflecting the traditional belief that the mountains in this area are sacred. Historically, the Mataram Sultanate and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) contested territory in Parahyangan, leading to Dutch administration and the implementation of the Preangerstelsel policy in the early 18th century. By the early 20th century, Priangan was described as the "Switzerland of Java" due to its picturesque landscapes and natural beauty, attracting travelers from across Java. Despite its fertile land and abundant resources, Priangan experienced exploitation under colonial rule, with the colonialists benefiting economically while the local population suffered. Before the advent of plantation cultivation, the people of Priangan lived relatively freely, practicing shifting cultivation to meet their agricultural needs. However, colonial exploitation changed the landscape and livelihoods of the local population, highlighting the complex interactions between colonizers and the colonized in the region's history. Hella Haasse's Dutch author background and viewpoint are closely incorporated into her narration of *The Tea Lords*, particularly in her realistic depiction of the novel's environment.

*He stood in the deep cool shade at the edge of the forest. Flecks of sunlight quivered at his feet. Raising his eyes, he gazed past the shifting masses of foliage at the glaring afternoon sky. The ground was still damp from the last shower. He inhaled the green fragrance of Gamboeng. He heard the breeze whispering in the treetops, the soft rustle and creak of twigs within the tangled undergrowth." (Haasse: 1992:289)*

Haasse skillfully employs sensory imagery to transport readers into the lush and vibrant environment of the Gamboeng tea plantation, situated amidst the natural beauty of West Java. Through vivid descriptions of the landscape, she challenges the conventional historical narrative, which often overlooks the environmental and aesthetic aspects of colonialism in favor of focusing solely on economic exploitation. By immersing readers in the sights, sounds, and fragrances of the plantation, Haasse invites them to experience the colonial landscape firsthand and to recognize its richness and complexity. The protagonist's retreat into nature as a form of solace from colonial challenges highlights the dual nature of colonialism, wherein colonizers both admire and exploit the land simultaneously. This portrayal challenges existing historical narratives by emphasizing the nuanced relationship between colonizers and their environment, revealing a complexity beyond mere exploitation. Haasse's meticulous attention to historical accuracy, informed by her deep knowledge of Dutch colonial history, allows her to recreate Indonesia's natural beauty with authenticity. By grounding the narrative in this richly depicted environment, Haasse encourages readers to reconsider their understanding of Dutch colonialism and to appreciate its multifaceted nature, incorporating both economic exploitation and the profound connection between colonizers and their surroundings.

New Historicism examines cultural interactions within a historical context, including the exchange between Dutch colonizers and indigenous peoples, as described in the work. The lush landscapes of Priangan, spanning back to the nineteenth century, symbolize more than economic wealth; they represent the intertwining of cultures and the creation of new identities. This interaction shaped the Priangan highlands, where tea plantation owners, known as Preangerplanters, engaged in activities like hunting. Notably, families descended from the van der Hucht lineage, such as the Holle, Kerkhoven, and Bosscha families, owned tea estates in Sukabumi, Bandung, and Garut, reflecting the interconnectedness of colonial and indigenous cultures in the Dutch East Indies (Suganda, 2014: 20).

Essentially, Haasse can incorporate the setting into its narrative, adhering to the New Historicism principles popularized by Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher. Haasse's Dutch background and upbringing in the Dutch East Indies enhance the examination of Dutch colonial history, with a focus on the Priangan region of Java as a representation of economic exploitation, cultural clashes, and environmental impact. Through vivid descriptions and historical details, Haasse immerses readers in the landscapes and social intricacies of the time, highlighting the tension between the picturesque Batavian countryside and the characters' yearning for familiarity. The portrayal of Gamboeng's natural surroundings serves as a means to convey the economic exploitation and contradictions inherent in Dutch colonialism.

### **3.2 The Kerkhoven Family: Characterization and Historical Parallels**

Character refers to a person's manner of thinking and behaving, influencing their actions within various contexts, as delineated by Klarer (2004) and Abrams & Harpham (2009). In literature, characters can be "flat" if dominated by one trait, while complex characters display a range of qualities. Characters in literary works are depicted individuals, interpreted by readers as possessing moral, intellectual, and emotional traits based on dialogue and actions. Characterization, the process of crafting and developing characters, aims to reveal distinctive traits, including moral aspects, to create vivid portrayals for readers, as described by Myers-Shaffer (2002). Bertha de Rijck van der Gracht-Kerkhoven's letter from 1959 suggests that attention to everyday details enriches our understanding of the past. Haasse utilizes private documents to create a fictionalized yet authentic story. The characters Rudolf and Jenny exemplify the complexities of Dutch colonialism, with Rudolf symbolizing economic prosperity and colonial identity, and Jenny's psychological journey shedding light on colonial repercussions. Characters like Rudolf and the Holle family represent the colonial elite, revealing the economic motivations behind Dutch colonialism, particularly in the tea industry, and reflecting broader historical contexts such as the Agrarian Law of 1870.

#### **3.2.1. Rudolf Kerkhoven**

The portrayal of Rudolf Kerkhoven depicts the Dutch colonial elite in the Dutch East Indies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His personality was inseparably linked to the economic aims and concerns of the Dutch colonial tea plantation activities. Rudolf Kerkhoven was a well-educated, respectable, and ambitious young man from Delft who "behaves more stiffly than he would have wished" on occasion. In the early 1870s, he gets caught by the East Indies and ventures into the undiscovered tropical foothills of West Java's highlands to work as a tea producer with his father. Rudolf was reserved, steadfast, thrifty, and always strived for virtue; many years later, and on facing devastating challenges.

As a Dutch author, Hella Haasse certainly created her distinct viewpoint and background experiences to the narrative of the main character, Rudolf Kerkhoven, set in the backdrop of a Dutch colonial plantation in West Java. It can be examined from her personal and cultural background that shaped her representation of Rudolf and the larger colonial story through the lens of New Historicism.

*He had thrown himself into these preparations with unshakeable resolve. He went to Bandoeng to parlay for the necessary licences, and to Batavia for financial negotiations. As his plan advanced, with an encouraging take-up of the Malabar share issue, he felt a growing sense of triumph, although he realised that he was driven by the desire to show his relatives that he could do without the kind of income they granted him, as if it were a gratuity to an underling. Henceforward he would use his natural thriftiness, and what even Henny had to admit was his 'talent for reckoning', to achieve an aim which he had previously not regarded as the be-all and end-all of existence: to get rich! To provide Jenny and the children with such wealth as to throw that of the Dutch fustspots in the shade. (Haasse: 1992:246)*

In Hella Haasse's portrayal, economic success emerges as a central theme in the Dutch colonial context, with Rudolf's relentless pursuit of licenses and financial negotiations depicted as essential for his advancement within the colonial system. These challenges prevailing historical narratives by foregrounding the economic motivations that drove individuals like Rudolf in their interactions within the colonial hierarchy. Rather than solely emphasizing political or cultural aspects, Haasse highlights the economic imperatives that shaped colonial society. Rudolf's continuous efforts to secure authorizations and negotiate financial terms illustrate the paramount importance of economic success in the Dutch colonial environment. Motivated by aspirations for prosperity and status within a culture highly valuing financial achievement, individuals like Rudolf were driven by economic goals. His ambition to establish himself independently, apart from his family's wealth, reveals the intricate social hierarchy and familial dynamics pervasive during the colonial era. Moreover, Rudolf's desire to surpass the financial status of his compatriots underscores the materialistic principles prevalent in colonial culture, challenging simplistic narratives and illuminating the complexities of colonial motivations and interactions influenced by familial ties and social status.

*He had made the rounds of the factory hangars, had seen the new machines for withering, drying, and sorting. Among the workers there he had recognized several who were born and bred in the kampong, the sons and daughters of Martasan and Moehiam and Kaidan and Moentajas and Sastra. (Haasse: 1992:290)*

In Hella Haasse's depiction, Rudolf's regular inspections of the factory hangars and his familiarity with the local labor force challenge prevailing historical narratives by highlighting the active role Dutch plantation owners played in managing their businesses. Rather than solely portraying colonialism as a system of exploitation and oppression, Haasse underscores the economic complexities of colonial society, showing how Dutch colonizers were actively engaged in the operation and management of plantations producing essential commodities for export. This challenges simplistic views that overlook the agency and involvement of colonialists in shaping colonial economies. Haasse's mention of new machinery for tea processing reflects the technological advancements introduced by Dutch colonizers to enhance efficiency and output in the tea industry, challenging existing historical narratives by illustrating the role of technological innovation in colonial economies and its impact on local labor practices. Haasse suggests that Dutch colonialists actively sought to modernize and industrialize colonial industries, challenging



traditional perceptions of colonial economies as stagnant. Rudolf's active involvement in plantation operations highlights the social dynamics of Dutch colonial society, where plantation owners wielded significant power over both machinery and local labor forces. Haasse thus challenges existing historical narratives by emphasizing the close connection between Dutch colonizers and colonial economic activities, illustrating how the success of colonial enterprises depended on the active participation and management of Dutch plantation owners like Rudolf. This nuanced perspective challenges simplistic portrayals of colonial societies, revealing the complex interactions and dependencies that characterized colonial economies.

The fourth generation of the Priangan tea dynasty, known as "de professionals" or the professionals, inherits the success of their predecessors and demonstrates the ability to advance tea plantations through determination and technological advancements. R.E. Kerkhoven, a key figure in this generation, receives technical education at Polytechnic School Delft and arrives in the Dutch East Indies in 1872. Starting as an administrator at Sinagar tea plantation, he gains experience under E.J. Kerkhoven's mentorship before taking over the Gambung tea plantation purchased by his father in 1873. Initially an unused coffee plantation, R.E. Kerkhoven transforms Gambung into a successful tea plantation by bringing in workers from the Arjasari plantation (Wiryawan, 2022:217).

As a Dutch author, Haasse was writing in the background of the colonial history of the Netherlands. This colonial history shaped Dutch identity and views toward colonies such as the Dutch East Indies. Haasse's awareness of the historical context would have informed her portrayal of Rudolf's performance as a colonial plantation owner. Haasse's Dutch ancestry and upbringing would have given her a cultural lens through which to examine and portray Rudolf's character. Her knowledge of Dutch customs, morals, and social standards influenced her portrayal of Rudolf's relationships with other Dutch characters and attitudes regarding colonial life.

*He looked at the tablet engraved with her name and dates, set in the masonry before him. The headstone to the right was nameless. A little further on there was another grave, without a stone. It was forty-five years since he had planted his first tea on this mountainside. (Haasse: 1992:289)*

In her depiction of Rudolf's forty-five-year involvement in cultivating tea on the mountainside, Haasse underscores the lasting impact of Dutch colonization in the region, challenging prevailing historical narratives that view colonialism as temporary. Instead, she emphasizes the enduring presence and influence of Dutch colonialists in the Dutch East Indies over generations. Rudolf's dedication to the tea plantation business reflects the economic pursuits of Dutch colonialists, illustrating the complexities and challenges they faced in their endeavors. Despite potential hardships and opposition, Rudolf's continued involvement suggests the persistence of Dutch colonial control. His mixed identity and connections with the local populace highlight the hybrid nature of colonial society, challenging simplistic views of colonial identity. Additionally, Rudolf's unwavering devotion to his family underscores the novel's emphasis on familial relationships and portrays him as a character deeply rooted in his values and commitments.

*Bertha's presence was Rudolf's comfort and consolation. To him, housekeepers, however competent and well-mannered, were too intrusive, Experience had taught him that it was best to let Bertha take charge of the regiment of servants: three houseboys, three baboes, two cooks, two laundrymen, one seamstress, and various gardeners, grooms and errand boys. He observed her with respect and satisfaction as she went about her daily tasks, giving instructions in the morning, bargaining with vendors of rice, fruit, vegetables, chickens and ducks, keeping count of laundry items, and in the afternoon and evening, especially when*

*they had guests, which was very often, pouring tea, seeing to the table, and making sure that any people staying overnight were as comfortable as possible. When she was not needed in the house she would go into the garden with the dogs. Seeing her in the panorama unfolding from his office window gave him a sense of tranquillity and fulfilment. He was not looking for change. He had all he wished for. But one day Bertha (Haasse: 1992:295).*

Rudolf's character underscores the importance of family dynamics within the Dutch colonial elite, as he strives to maintain a family legacy in Bandoeng, emphasizing the significance of personal relationships and familial ties often overlooked in historical narratives. His relationship with Bertha highlights the active role of women in colonial households, while his preference for her presence over housekeepers reflects the importance of trust within his family. Rudolf's dedication to family alongside his pursuit of economic success through tea estates reflects the complexities of colonial identity and ambition. Haasse invites readers to reconsider traditional views of colonial elites, exploring the nuanced motivations within colonial society. Rudolf's commitment to environmental conservation further exemplifies Dutch colonial principles of "cultural imperialism." Ultimately, his character represents the hybrid identity and multifaceted nature of colonial life in the East Indies, serving as a lens through which the story exposes various aspects of Dutch colonization and family dynamics.

### 3.2.2. Jenny Roosegarde

Around the 1870s, Rudolf Kerkhoven married Jenny Roosgarde's and raised five children, all of them were born in Gamboeng. Jenny's character was notable not just by her ancestry as Herman Willem Daendels' granddaughter but also by her active involvement in more significant political and social issues. Jenny Roosgarde's character underwent significant changes as she travels from Batavia's prosperous lifestyle to Gamboeng's solitary existence. This shift focuses on the psychological consequences of colonial living, such as depression, anger, and a sense of purposelessness. Her character lends depth to the novel's exploration of historical and psychological dynamics by painting a realistic picture of the difficulties faced by individuals throughout the Dutch colonial era.

Jenny's personality can be affected by her ancestors, as she is the granddaughter of former governor-general Herman Willem Daendels. Concerning the New Historicism notion, this lineage demonstrates a historical heritage of Dutch colonial authority. Her family's relationship with a notable figure such as Daendels underlines their social standing and authority inside the colonial system. As stated in the quotation of the novel,

*He had not obstructed Jenny's fierce engagement in political and social affairs, which found expression primarily in the endless telephone conversations she held with a small number of like-minded souls, nor had he opposed her contributing financially to a good cause, at least when circumstances allowed. It was largely thanks to Jenny's efforts that signatures in support of Captain Dreyfus were collected on the grandstands of the Bandoeng racecourse in 1899, six months after the publication of Emile Zola's famous open letter, J'accuse (Haasse:1992:293).*

*From his correspondence with her sister Marie he had learned, to his shock and dismay, that Jenny had known bitter disappointment in the early years of their marriage, long before he had the least suspicion that all was not well. Marie had sent him a page from an old letter written in 1890, in Jenny's familiar, flowing script: '... I don't want to deceive myself. I am not happy; it is not in my power to be so. I tell myself that there are other forms of happiness besides the luxury of passion. I have not known such luxury. And yet, my life has a purpose. There is*

*also satisfaction to be found in doing one's duty and caring for others. My children are my happiness. (Haasse: 1992:291)*

In Hella Haasse's portrayal, Jenny's marital discontent reflects the power dynamics and societal expectations placed on women in Dutch colonial society. Her dissatisfaction within her marriage to Rudolf hints at a power imbalance and limited agency for women, challenging traditional narratives that overlook the complexities of marital relationships in colonial contexts. Through Jenny's correspondence with her sister, Haasse reveals the isolation and secrecy surrounding her struggles, shedding light on the emotional challenges faced by colonial women. Jenny's acceptance of her situation underscores the cultural constraints imposed on women, reflecting societal norms prioritizing familial duties over personal fulfillment. Haasse illustrates Jenny's transition from luxury in Batavia to solitude in Gamboeng, highlighting the psychological toll of societal transformation on individual well-being. Jenny's character development challenges simplistic portrayals of colonial women, emphasizing their agency and resilience despite societal constraints. Haasse's depiction of Jenny's resignation to societal expectations challenges traditional narratives, highlighting the emotional complexities faced by women in colonial marriages. By exploring Jenny's experiences, Haasse offers a nuanced reflection on the multifaceted nature of colonial society and individuals' negotiations with cultural norms and societal expectations.

One of the primary indicators of an individual's status is their lifestyle, encompassing various customs, traditions, behavioral habits, and mentality as characteristics of the social class in the Dutch East Indies. All these features influence the Dutch colonial daily lives, as they are deeply rooted in a worldview shaped by two cultures, namely Dutch and Javanese. As members of the ruling class and descendants of a community that supports two different cultural roots, they strive to showcase their distinct greatness compared to the majority, i.e., the Native population. In this context, they refer to symbols of Javanese authority and the grandeur of European dominance. Through their luxurious lifestyle, they uphold their dignity and colonial authority. Their position as the ruling class compels the Indo community to maintain prestige and status through various means to distinguish themselves from other societal groups. Authority, wealth, and grandeur are exhibited to appear more opulent and majestic than other societal groups, intending to preserve their power in the Dutch East Indies (Soekiman, 2014:100).

In summary, the novel narrates Dutch colonialism in the Dutch East Indies, primarily through Rudolf Kerkhoven and Jenny Roosegarde. Rudolf, a representative of the Priangan tea dynasty, embodies the economic complexities of the Dutch colonial elite, showcasing the intertwined aspects of wealth, plantation management, and familial commitment. The characterization of the main protagonists as Dutch colonial history was able in capturing economic, social, and environmental facets. Similarly, Jenny's character reveals the challenges women faced in Dutch colonial society, exposing power imbalances and societal expectations. Her shift from Batavia's luxury to Gamboeng's isolation reflects the profound impact of colonial life. Haasse skillfully intertwines personal struggles into the historical narrative, addressing broader themes of gender, societal norms, and the lasting effects of Dutch colonialism. The New Historicist approach enhances the analysis, providing a deeper understanding of power dynamics, societal norms, and the intricate interplay between personal experiences and the broader colonial context.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research employs New Historicism to thoroughly analyze Hella Haasse's novel, *The Tea Lords*, delving into its portrayal of Dutch colonialism in Java during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The study adopts a comprehensive approach to explore various themes within the novel, revealing the intricate complexities of Dutch colonial society and its impact on local culture and the environment. Recognizing the interconnected nature of the novel's themes, the research uncovers the depth and richness of its depiction of Dutch colonialism. Haasse skillfully weaves a family story into the broader context of colonial history, providing readers with a multifaceted narrative that offers insight into both Dutch and local perspectives in the Dutch East Indies. The analysis highlights the novel's detailed portrayal of the colonial tea plantation landscape in Java, emphasizing its environmental and economic dimensions. Haasse's vivid descriptions of the surroundings and the ecological changes wrought by colonization offer readers a nuanced understanding of the environmental impact of colonialism, challenging established historical narratives. Moreover, the novel exposes the economic disparities and labor dynamics inherent in colonial systems, providing a critique of the economic foundations of colonialism through its characters' experiences. Overall, *The Tea Lords* offers a compelling portrayal of Dutch colonialism in Java, enriching our understanding of the historical and cultural dimensions of the colonial experience.

#### 5. SUGGESTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The research into the representation of Dutch colonial tea plantations in *The Tea Lords* using New Historicism suggests two recommendations for further study:

Firstly, a postcolonial study is recommended to shift the narrative focus from Dutch colonialists to the colonized Javanese population, exploring their experiences, agency, and responses to Dutch imperialism. This approach aims to bring forth the voices and perspectives of the Javanese individuals impacted by colonial authority, investigating resistance strategies, cultural preservation efforts, and the complexities of cultural identities resulting from interactions with Dutch colonization.

Secondly, the research could explore Readers' Perception Theory to understand how diverse readers, both contemporary and historical, perceive and respond to "The Tea Lords." Analyzing reader reactions across different historical periods and cultural backgrounds sheds light on changing societal perspectives and values, revealing the novel's ongoing relevance and its role in shaping collective memory. Incorporating these viewpoints would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's portrayal of Dutch colonialism and its implications in the Dutch East Indies.

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