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THE INFLUENCE OF ANNICK COJEAN'S THOUGHTS IN THE BOOK GADDAFI'S HAREM ON FORMER LIBYAN PRESIDENT MUAMMAR GADDAFI

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Abstract

This study examines Annick Cojean's perspectives in her work Gaddafi's Harem regarding the figure of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. The research employs historical methods as its primary approach. The findings indicate that Cojean portrays Gaddafi through orientalist and feminist perspectives, while also highlighting the biases of Western media, which are perceived as hypocritical. As an orientalist, Cojean is considered to have certain aims and agendas behind her work, namely, constructing a negative image of the Islamic world. She is perceived as a 'puppet' of greater powers, with 'puppet masters' who hold broader agendas toward the Middle East in order to impose a World Order, thereby subjugating the Islamic world. The book Gaddafi's Harem is divided into two main parts. The first part emphasizes the story of Soraya, the central character who, according to Cojean's narrative, experienced sexual abuse by Gaddafi. The second part focuses on the role of Gaddafi's supporters and close circle in maintaining his hegemony for 42 years.

Keywords: Annick Cojean, gaddafi harem, Libya, thought

INTRODUCTION

Annick Cojean is a renowned French journalist, born in Finistère, specifically in Brest, on August 2, 1957, to her parents Louis and Marie Germaine Cojean. She has two brothers, Michel and Alain.¹ During her adolescence, Cojean moved to the city of Rennes, where she developed an interest in law and politics, eventually enrolling at a major university in Rennes. She earned a law degree from the University of Rennes. After graduating, Cojean became actively involved as an activist and traveled to various countries in the 1980s to cover historic

¹ Gisèle Halimi and Annick Cojean, *Une Farouche Liberté* (Le Livre de Poche, 2021).

events such as wars, famines, human rights violations, and others. She later joined the newspaper *Le Monde* in October 1981.² Cojean took part in the establishment of the media communications department and served as deputy head from 1986 to 1991, before being appointed as a reporter for *Le Monde*. Cojean began to develop an interest in the Middle East during the

Gulf War in 1980. The Gulf War was a conflict between Iraq and Iran, which began when Iraqi forces crossed the Iranian border on September 22, 1980, due to prolonged border disputes between the two countries and Saddam Hussein's concerns over the Shiite resistance inspired by Imam Khomeini during the Iranian Revolution. This event drew significant global attention, particularly from Cojean, who sought to increase the visibility of her reporting by writing major stories that attracted Western audiences, as news of wars and conflicts tended to be more in demand than reports on government corruption.

In 2012, Cojean published a book titled *Gaddafi's Harem*, which was based on her investigation in Libya concerning the country's then leader, Muammar Gaddafi. The book seeks to expose the sexual crimes committed by the former Libyan leader, portraying how Gaddafi used rape as a weapon of power and as a tool of war.³ *Gaddafi's Harem* was translated into twenty languages and banned in several countries, including Indonesia. According to Cojean, the book also reflects events that have occurred in many countries, particularly in the Arab world. However, there are also opposing views regarding the claims presented in the book. NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reported that they found no evidence of the alleged rapes committed by Muammar Gaddafi and pro-Gaddafi forces. Amnesty International further stated that during its investigation, many of these allegations appeared to be fabrications by the rebels.⁴

RESEARCH METHOD

In writing this research, the author uses the historical research method, which is a set of rules for effectively collecting historical sources with the aim of reconstructing the past in a systematic and objective manner. Based on the definition of the historical research methodology above, this study is carried out in four stages used in the historical method, namely: Heuristics, Criticism, Interpretation, and Historiography.

The first method is **Heuristics**. In this technique, the search begins by reading existing bibliographies related to the research topic and seeking other sources relevant to the subject. The data are categorized as **primary sources**, such as books and documents written directly by the figures being studied in this case, the work of Annick Cojean entitled "*Gaddafi's Harem*" (*Dayang-Dayang Khadafi*), among others. In this work, the author presents the influence of Annick Cojean's thoughts, which are then used as a guideline in addressing questions raised within certain parts of society. Meanwhile, **secondary data** are obtained from books, journals, theses, newspaper articles, and online sources that discuss Gaddafi.

The second stage is **Criticism**. This stage is carried out to select the data that have

² Annick Cojean, *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story of a Young Woman and the Abuses of Power in Libya* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2013).

³ Barnaby Rogerson, 'Rule by Viagra', *TLS. Times Literary Supplement*, 2014, p. 10
<<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A686107623/AONE?u=anon~890eacfb&am>>.

⁴ Ahmad Fajri and Azmi Fitrisia, 'Studi Historiografi Buku "Gaddafi's Harem" Karya Annick Cojean', *Galanggang Sejarah*, 1.2 (2019), pp. 149–65.

already been collected choosing data that are relevant to the topic and discarding those considered less appropriate. This selection aims to determine which data are truly needed and suitable for the discussion. For example, the author obtained several books and journals discussing Libya and Gaddafi. In addition, some sources describe the early history of the formation of Libya as a state, the colonial period, and other data concerning Gaddafi's government. In this case, the author uses them only as supplementary data to broaden insights into perspectives on Libya and Gaddafi.

The third stage is **Interpretation**. The interpretation stage in historical research consists of historical analysis, which can be carried out through two methods: **analysis** and **synthesis**. Analysis is the process of breaking down information, while synthesis is the process of unifying it. The purpose is to bring together a number of factual data obtained from historical sources and arrange these facts with an accurate and comprehensive interpretation.

The fourth stage is **Historiography**. Historiography is the final stage in the historical research method. It is the process or technique of writing and presenting the final report of the historical research that has been conducted. This stage is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the researcher's process, from the initial data collection to the conclusion. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to conclude the influence of Annick Cojean's ideas in her work entitled "*Gaddafi's Harem*." These methods were employed by the author to obtain data sources relevant to the topic, thereby facilitating the writing of this thesis. The data sources consist of books, theses, dissertations, newspaper articles, magazines, as well as additional data downloaded from online media. In addition, the data were also obtained from several libraries, including the Library of Padang State University.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Annick Cojean is one of the renowned journalists in France.

Media or reporters are channels used to deliver information or messages, whereas journalism is writing characterized by presenting facts or descriptions of various events without attempts to interpret and without opinion.⁶ Media such as radio and public television have always been marginal enterprises. As described by Bob McChesney, there was a struggle in the 1920s and 1930s over whether the media should belong to the public sphere or be handed over to private hands. We would eventually know which side would prevail. When television arrived, there was little debate it was simply handed over to business groups.⁷

The problem, however, is that today's media, whether 'liberal' or 'conservative', are dominated by giant corporations, owned by and interconnected with even larger conglomerates. Like other corporations, they sell products to a market. The market consists of advertisers, which are other business groups. Meanwhile, the product is the audience. For the media elites who design the basic agenda later adopted by other outlets, that product, more specifically, is an audience that relatively holds privileged rights.⁸

Therefore, there are large corporations that sell wealthy and privileged audiences to

⁶ J D Gray, *Dosa-Dosa Media Amerika* (Ufuk Press, 2006)

<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=JxJiAAAAMAAJ>>.

⁷ N Chomsky, *How the World Works - Bahasa Indonesia* (Bentang Pustaka, 2022)

<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=97eBEEAAQBAJ>>.

⁸ Chomsky, *How the World Works - Bahasa Indonesia*.

other companies. It is no surprise that the worldview they present reflects narrow and biased interests while accommodating the values held by the sellers, the buyers, and the product itself.

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To serve the interests of those in power, the media must present a worldview that is realistic and tolerable. Professional integrity and honesty are sometimes contaminated by an unavoidable mission. The doctrinal system, which produces what we call 'propaganda' when discussing enemies has two distinct targets. This system instills basic social values: passivity, submission to authority, rejection of greed for wealth and personal achievement, lack of concern for others, fear of enemies both real and imagined, and so on. Its goal is to ensure that the bewildered herd remains bewildered.¹⁰

The main issue today is that most Europeans and Americans get their news from television, if not from AM radio stations owned and heavily monitored by 'Right Wing groups.' Television news today has become something that can be called a 'farce,' much like 'professional wrestling' within the world of journalism. Before the Gulf War broke out, television news was not a money-maker for TV networks. In fact, many television news programs operated at a loss. Since then, other TV news organizations have begun to pay close attention to ratings and program rankings. In the Western world, it is scandal and sensationalism that drive high ratings. The proof is that a president having an affair is more interesting than a president employing a 'criminal' to inform the public.¹¹

Looking at her biography on her personal website, Cojean has never received an education in journalism, nor any formal training in the field, and has never had any prior experience as a reporter.¹²

After joining *Le Monde*, Annick Cojean was often compared to Sean Hannity, a prominent American journalist known for his exceptional debating skills. Her success stemmed from her ability to win debates regardless of the side she was on, combined with her remarkable talent in journalism. In fact, in 1996, Cojean received an award as the best journalist and book author in France. Cojean has been actively involved with *Reporters Without Borders* for international affairs, and she even interviewed Lady Diana, Princess of Wales, in an article published just days before her death. The interview became a sensation, as Lady Diana discussed political and personal issues that exposed scandals within the British royal household. Following Diana's death, Cojean was interviewed by the AP Archive about the tragedy. In addition, her various reports and investigations on violence against women, particularly in war zones, further established her reputation as a reporter.¹³

Feminists and Women's Advocates in the Middle East.

Feminism is a movement that emerged in Europe in the 18th century AD, whose core aim is for women all over the world to be equal to, or even superior to, men. Broadly speaking, feminist women challenge the power relations between men and women, the division of roles

⁹ Chomsky, *How the World Works - Bahasa Indonesia*.

¹⁰ M F Zein, *Kezaliman Media Massa Terhadap Umat Islam* (Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2013) <<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=2XB9DwAAQBAJ>>.

¹¹ Gray, *Dosa-Dosa Media Amerika*.

¹² Etonnants Voyageurs, 'Cojean Annick' (Rennes) <<https://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/COJEAN-Annick.html>>.

¹³ Fajri and Fitriasia, 'Studi Historiografi Buku" Gaddafi's Harem" Karya Annick Cojean'.

and responsibilities based on gender within the household, the construction of social roles, and the need for structural change.¹⁴

In the 21st century, the role of women especially in the context of development has often been discussed and is no longer unfamiliar in its significance. However, what is more essential is not merely talking about the enhancement of 'roles' within the status quo, but the development of the very concept and status of women themselves¹⁵

True emancipation is by no means anti-male, even though in the West, certain strands of feminism may carry such a label. On the contrary, women's emancipation actually invites men to participate in creating a more egalitarian, better, and fairer society. On the one hand, women are expected to take an active role in development, but at the same time, the emphasis remains on their primary duties as wives and mothers.

In matters of sex (gender), anatomically, men appear more aggressive, while women are often associated with passive eroticism being the vessel, the receiver, and the nurturer.¹⁶ Such is the social interpretation, although it has never been proven either in studies on sexuality or in real life. A woman's tendency to cry easily is, in fact, cultural, educational, and ideological; women are permitted, even expected, to cry and to express emotion. Yet beyond that, a woman's tears stem from her feelings, her life shaped by a kind of impotent rebellion. And she knows that the more she cries, the more confused a man becomes; thus, it becomes her most powerful weapon.¹⁷

The feminist movement did not emerge without cause. Feminists today, such as Cojean, observe that from Ancient Greece until now, women have continually been discriminated against and oppressed by men. Throughout human history, women have repeatedly become victims of brutal rape as part of warfare. From a sociological and historical perspective, rape has been carried out as an inseparable means of humiliating, suppressing, and breaking the spirit of the enemy in times of war. The rape of women in a nation carries the meaning of violating the dignity of that nation itself. Shana Swiss and Joan E. Giller have documented the fact that in recent years, mass rapes have occurred in Bosnia, Cambodia, Liberia, Peru, Somalia, and Uganda.¹⁸

For this reason, women's advocates or feminists such as Cojean have written extensively and documented events in the Middle East and other parts of the world, revealing the cruelty and brutality of rulers toward women in Libya, Syria, and beyond. Annick Cojean, a feminist who is often active on the international stage, has recorded the oppression of women by authoritarian regimes, beginning with the Arab Spring in Tunisia and the overthrow of President Ben Ali, who had ruled for 24 years.¹⁹ A popular movement emerged and then created a domino effect. This is what happened in the Arab world, from Tunisia to Egypt and

¹⁴ M Walters and D S Ariani, *Feminisme: Sebuah Pengantar Singkat* (Ircisod, 2021)

<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=R_kOEAAAQBAJ>.

¹⁵ Walters and Ariani, *Feminisme: Sebuah Pengantar Singkat*.

¹⁶ Accademia della Crusca, *Studi Di Filologia Italiana* (G.C. Sansoni., 1981)

<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=dqfrAAAAMAAJ>>.

¹⁷ S.T.A.A.S.I.A.M.M.A.M.S.N. Muhammad Sabiq, *Telaah Kritis Atas Kenyataan Gender, Agama Dan Budaya Di Indonesia* (CV Azka Pustaka, 2022)

<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=yr_MEAAAQBAJ>.

¹⁸ Julia Suryakusuma, *Agama, Seks, Dan Kekuasaan* (Komunitas Bambu, 2012).

¹⁹ N Soyomukti, *Ben Ali, Mubarak, Khadafy* (Nuansa Cendekia, 2024)

<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=fcD9EAAAQBAJ>>.

subsequently to other countries, particularly Libya.²⁰

At the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy in 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland, Cojean presented many of her arguments regarding her observations in Tunisia, where women played an active and enthusiastic role in the changes brought about by the Arab Spring. However, according to Cojean, this was not the case in Libya. In Libya, there were widespread demonstrations and war, yet she noted from newspapers and photographs that she never saw women appearing in such reports.

According to Cojean, the media often portrayed Gaddafi traveling to various countries, surrounded and protected by women who were officially his security guards. Gaddafi frequently spoke of Arab greatness, of freedom, and of his ambition to make Libya a model of the modern Arab woman. Yet, during her observations in Libya, Cojean asked why women were rarely seen outside their homes.

In Cojean's view, during the Libyan revolution, women had a profound impact on the overthrow of Gaddafi. However, they played their own roles, which were certainly not through bearing arms. This contribution, however, was concealed or remained invisible in international media coverage.²¹

Cojean also received testimonies from several women in Libya stating that they had been tortured and raped by pro-Gaddafi forces during the outbreak of the revolution. According to Cojean, women were trapped in silence, unwilling to speak about these experiences because such matters are considered taboo in a conservative country like Libya.²²

In Libya, according to the information obtained by Cojean, women who were imprisoned were beaten, abused, and even tortured with electric shocks. However, strangely, when Cojean asked one of her informants directly whether she had experienced such treatment, the woman replied, 'No, no, no, someone I know told me about it.' Orientalists like Cojean often construct information with certain purposes or propaganda intentions to tarnish the image of the East. Moreover, in much of the field data collection, as we can analyze with common sense, most of the sources interviewed were secondary sources rather than primary ones, which should have been the main focus of Cojean's research.²³

The Influence of Annick Cojean's Thought on the Book "*Gaddafi's Harem*"

An individual's personality and thinking are influenced by the socio-cultural conditions in which they live and are a representative outcome of their environment. One scholar, Mark A. May, proposed a concept of personality as that which enables a person to act effectively and to exert influence on others. In other words, personality reflects the social prejudices or values a person holds. From a philosophical perspective, William Stern stated that personality is a unity directed toward specific goals and encompasses the unique characteristics of the individual, who is free to determine their own self.²⁴

Like Cojean, who was influenced by the strong current of Orientalism in Europe. Europeans regarded the East as their discovery. Ever since ancient times, the East has been

²⁰ Soyomukti, *Ben Ali, Mubarak, Khadafy*.

²¹ Cojean, *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story of a Young Woman and the Abuses of Power in Libya*.

²² Cojean, *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story of a Young Woman and the Abuses of Power in Libya*.

²³ Cojean, *Gaddafi's Harem: The Story of a Young Woman and the Abuses of Power in Libya*.

²⁴ J Rakhmat, *Psikologi Agama : Sebuah Pengantar* (Mizan, 2013)

<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=p2-bAwAAQBAJ>>.

imagined as a place of romance, exotic beings, memories, beautiful landscapes, and remarkable experiences. However, that was in the past. Today, the Middle East has changed; the old narrative has faded, and its time has passed.²⁵

For Europeans, the East was not merely a neighboring region. More than that, Europeans regarded the East as their largest, richest, and oldest colony. Indeed, some Europeans particularly the British and the French believed that the East also helped to define 'Europe' itself, as its contrasting image, idea, character, and experience.²⁶

According to Edward W. Said, the British and French Orientalists, such as Annick Cojean, were not content merely to study the East through imaginative texts that captivated readers. Beyond that, they felt compelled to visit it, to photograph it, and, if necessary, to manage it consistently. From these journeys, they wrote down their personal experiences in the East. And, as we know, such personal writings would later become a kind of scholarly text that could be officially cited by those with particular interests.²⁷

However, every European who explored and conducted research in the East had to protect themselves from the endless external influences that constantly emerged.²⁸ Otherwise, they would fail to produce magnificent and sensational writings about the East. For this reason, when they wrote about the East, they sought to position it not as a geographical region, but as an imaginative stage that could later be treated at will. This is precisely what Annick Cojean did when she wrote about Libya and Muammar Gaddafi.²⁹

It is therefore not surprising that in her Orientalizing of the East, Cojean not only set boundaries in concrete terms but also edited it. For example, when writing about Libya, she often erased or fabricated elements that might disturb European sensibilities, aside from her own humanitarian sympathies. In Cojean's works, as in other Orientalist texts, the East is almost always portrayed as a people who transgress sexual morality.³⁰ Everything about the East, or at least Libya, Cojean presents as a kind of stage that seemingly always displays a spectacle of sex, one that threatens the health of family life with its excessive 'sexual freedom,' even though such a condition is not normally so apparent. This portrayal, however, becomes evident in Cojean's works. Yet it does not stop there. Orientalists not only portrayed the threats of sexuality in the East, but also presented other dangers, no less alarming threats that undermined the precision and rationality of time, space, and even the personal identity of Europeans.³¹

In fact, Orientalists such as Cojean once made a startling revelation at the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy a few years ago, stating that the sources of data from her investigation during the clashes in Libya and Syria were based on interviews with rebels who, of course, would present their stories in the most favorable light to tarnish their political opponents before the international community. More importantly, such narratives reinforced the negative stereotypes of the East in the eyes of the West, depicting it as a

²⁵ Edward W Said, 'Orientalism', in *Social Theory Re-Wired* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 402–17.

²⁶ Said, 'Orientalism'.

²⁷ Said, 'Orientalism'.

²⁸ A Badawi, *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Orientalis* (LKIS PELANGI AKSARA)
<<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=MRp9DwAAQBAJ>>.

²⁹ Said, 'Orientalism'.

³⁰ Badawi, *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Orientalis*.

³¹ Said, 'Orientalism'.

'backward country,' an 'uneducated country,' and an 'undemocratic country.' From these stereotypes, Western powers sought to impose their model of democracy on the East or the Middle East. Ultimately, the East came to be regarded as a donkey in the eyes of the West, particularly the United States, Britain, and France.

CONCLUSION

The so called Gaddafi harem was constructed from a body of thought and research aimed at unraveling the mysteries behind issues within a nation, such as Libya. Cojean's perspective on Gaddafi was framed through the lens of Orientalist ideology, feminism, and the hypocritical Western media. She bears responsibility for the causality arising from such thinking and research, for in the conservative and religious Arab world, such claims are difficult to accept quite the opposite of the liberal West, where individual and group freedoms are guaranteed as long as they do not contradict the constitution or national consensus.

However, the narrative presented by Cojean must be questioned and re-examined, for Annick Cojean being an Orientalist, a feminist, and an actor of the hypocritical Western media surely carries a larger purpose and agenda behind her work: to tarnish, if not to destroy, the image of the Islamic world. Cojean, who serves as a 'puppet' on this global stage, must therefore have a 'puppeteer', one with vast resources, seated comfortably upon the thrones of 'gold' and 'oil,' and wielding the power to enforce a World Order that seeks to subjugate those of us in the East, or in Islam, to their will.

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