

PLACE, DISPLACEMENT AND IDENTITY IN *A BORDER
PASSAGE* BY LEILA AHMED: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
of the Degree of Sarjana Sastra

BY:

DWI PUTRI AMELIA

05 185 038



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - FACULTY OF LETTERS
ANDALAS UNIVERSITY
PADANG
2009



ABSTRAK

Dalam penelitian ini penulis menganalisa karya Leila Amhed, *A Border Passage* melalui kajian pascakolonial dengan konsep tempat (*place*) dan identitas diri pada masyarakat yang terjajah oleh kekuasaan kolonialisme Inggris. *A Border Passage* adalah sebuah *memoir* (autobiografi) tentang seorang tokoh yang bernama Leila. Tokoh ini tumbuh pada zaman kolonialisme Inggris dimana dia mencoba mencari jati dirinya sebagai wanita mesir yang juga dianggap sebagai bagian dari bangsa Arab. Penulis memaparkan bagaimana identitas-identitas diri tersebut terkait dengan tempat dapat membuat Leila merasa terasing atau *displaced*.

Penulis menggunakan konsep tempat (*place*), keterasingan (*displacement*) dan identitas diri yang dikemukakan oleh Ashcroft, Griffiths dan Tiffin, dalam ruang lingkup pascakolonial. Melalui pendekatan pascakolonial dapat diketahui bagaimana tempat dan perubahan tempat dapat mempengaruhi jati diri masyarakat yang telah terjajah oleh suatu bangsa. Penulis menggunakan penelitian kepustakaan dalam pengumpulan buku-buku dan referensi yang berkaitan dengan topik analisis. Kemudian dilanjutkan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengambil kutipan-kutipan yang mendukung analisa penulis. Hasil analisa tersebut dipaparkan melalui metode deskriptif.

Setelah penelitian ini diselesaikan, penulis menemukan bahwa karya Leila Ahmed menampilkan bahwa tempat dan pengalaman seorang individu dengan tempat dapat mempengaruhi pembentukan identitas jati diri individu tersebut. Sebagai tempat yang telah terjajah, ikatan seseorang dengan suatu tempat sangatlah bersifat menentukan dalam pembentukan jati dirinya. Selain itu, tempat selalu dapat berubah dan perubahan tersebut dapat menyebabkan seseorang merasa terasing karena kehilangan identitas dirinya pada masa pascakolonial.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The rise of European Imperialism developed when the British Imperial powers began to take over more than three fourth of the nations around the world, invading, occupying and annexing a huge area of the globe. This dominating stance impacted directly on the invaded countries in such fundamental ways that it has affected and influenced their culture, heritage, tradition and also literature. In Egypt, which was once part of the British Empire, many authors have used their experiences with imperialism as the major themes of their work, including the memoir *A Border Passage* by Leila Ahmed.

Leila Ahmed is an Egyptian born lecturer of Women's' Studies in Massachusetts. In this memoir Leila searches for the meaning of her identity, what it means for her to be a woman, an Arab and an Egyptian and how these categories shapes her place in the world. During her childhood, Leila moves unconsciously between the imaginative realm of her home and an English school where western or European ideas were revered above all others. From the enchanting gardens of her house in Ain Shams, Cairo to the forests of England, place becomes an important figure in *A Border Passage* as Leila uses the idea of place to explore the conflicts of identity in a world where cultural identifications are complex and political.

Growing up in the last days of the British Empire, Leila's childhood fell in that era when the words 'Imperialism' and 'the West' had not yet acquired the

connotations they have today (Ahmed 5). It was entirely ordinary for Leila and the people of similar social classes to grow up speaking English or French or both and quite ordinary to attend an English school, where her schoolmates shared the same attitudes, revering and admiring European things.

Upon entering Cambridge University, Leila instantly felt at home and life for her there was continuous with the assumptions, beliefs, and ways of living that she had known in Egypt. The meditative mood of her campus, a place of books, gardens, quiet, and trees was very much like the environment in which she grew up in, in her home, Ain Shams. However, arriving back in Egypt after the revolution Leila no longer found the lovely, enchanting and richly imaginative realm of Ain Shams. Her home and garden were dishevelled and slowly subsiding into decay. This situation no doubt reflected Leila's own feelings, that of disorientation. The revolution had affected Leila and her family in fundamental and irreparable ways as she no longer recognized the world in which she found herself

Since literature reflects human life, *A Border Passage* can be seen as exactly that, a rich insight into the conflicts of identity which she faces during her life and how these issues represents conflicts that are faced by people affected by colonialism. According to Edward Saïd, in his book *Culture & Imperialism*, colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. Imperialism means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory (Saïd 9).

Post-colonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies from the moment of colonization to the present day. As a literary theory or

criticism it deals with literature produced in countries that were once colonies of other countries including African countries, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Pacific countries and in this case, Egypt (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, *Empire* 2). In relation to the above, I am interested in analyzing how the concepts of place and displacement play a key role in the shaping of identity towards people affected by colonization, in this case, the character of Leila in *A Border Passage* by Leila Ahmed.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

The memoir *A Border Passage* portrays a journey of finding Leila's identity and what it means to hold such an identity, since nationality and identity are difficult to conceive for colonized peoples. The research focuses on the concepts of place and displacement proposed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin and also the concept of cultural identity proposed by Stuart Hall to analyse how these two concepts play a key role in the shaping of Leila's identity, from the viewpoint of post-colonial literary criticism.

1.3. Scope of the Research

In this research, the writer focuses on the character of Leila, concentrating on the following research questions:

1. How was Cairo before Leila left for Cambridge?
2. How was Cairo after Leila's return from Cambridge?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th Ed, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- , *A Border Passage*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Ashcroft, B. *Post-Colonial Transformation*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- , *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- , *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd Ed, New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Barnet, Sylvan and William E. Cain. 9th Ed, *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature*. New York: Longman, 2003.
- Benwell, Bethan and Elizabeth Stokoe. *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Bogdan, Robert C. *Qualitative Research Education: An Introduction to Theory and Method*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1982.
- Carter, Paul. *Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*. London: Faber & Faber, 1987.