

THE KABUL BEAUTY SCHOOL: DEBORAH RODRIGUEZ'S ORIENTALIST
VIEW ABOUT AFGHANISTAN



A THESIS

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ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini menganalisis pandangan penulis Deborah Rodriguez terhadap Afghanistan dalam karyanya The Kabul Beauty School. Buku ini merupakan sebuah memoar atau autobiografi yang menceritakan tentang pengalaman pribadi Rodriguez ketika berada di Afghanistan. Dalam menganalisis memoar ini, penulis menggunakan pendekatan ekspresif oleh M. H Abrams, teori ini berkaitan dengan apa yang dirasakan, dipikirkan oleh penulis, dan tentang hasil ciptaannya. Data diperoleh langsung dari memoar itu sendiri, buku-buku, jurnal, dan artikel yang berkaitan dengan teori yang akan digunakan. Dalam hal ini penulis mengaplikasikan teori Orientalisme oleh Edward Said, dengan konsep analisis berkaitan dengan strategi dari penjajah (Barat) untuk mendominasi daerah jajahannya (Timur). Setelah menganalisis memoar ini, penulis melihat Rodriguez terlalu berlebihan menilai negatif Afghanistan. Afghanistan digambarkan sebagai negara yang tidak bagus, berbahaya, tidak sehat dan lain-lain. Selain itu, di dalam memoar ini sangat jelas terlihat ketidakberdayaan wanita-wanita Afghan dalam memperoleh kebebasan dalam berkarya, memperoleh pendidikan, pernikahan yang bahagia dan hal-hal lain yang dapat merugikan perempuan saat Taliban berkuasa. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa pandangan Rodriguez terhadap Afghanistan adalah bentuk ideologi Orientalisme barat terhadap negara dan orang timur.

Kata kunci: Orientalism, Westerner, the colonized, uncivilized, and Afghan women.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

Postcolonial theory has been widely used to analyze the effects of colonization that found in the present days such as in history, culture, ideology, economy etc. It is also mentioned by Tyson in her book Critical Theory Today that “Postcolonial criticism is particularly effective at helping us see connections among all the domains of our experience—the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual and aesthetic. . .” (2006: 417). Moreover, postcolonial criticism also deals with literature which the authors use literary work to share their ideologies. Postcolonial criticism focuses on colonial purpose in colonial discourse.

There are some discourses in postcolonialism: Orientalism, hybridity, mimicry, hegemony, etc. In this case, the writer discusses Orientalism, which is introduced by Edward Said who assumed that the practice of Orientalism is the Westerner’s strategy to dominate the colonized. Besides, Orientalism is used as a tool to dominate the colonized by doctrinizing the negative judgments which are based on Western perspective.

The issue of Orientalism still exists in the present days in many writings either literary works or non-literary works. One of the writings that is related to Orientalism is a memoir. It is non-literary work. The memoir can be called as travel book. Fussell states in Robenson’s book Defining Travel: Diverse Visions, “Travel books are a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker’s encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative—unlike that in a novel or a romance—claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality” (2001: 105-

106). It shows that travel book is a part of the memoir that represents the author's experiences. Travel book can be analyzed by using Orientalism. Said states in his book Orientalism, "The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation—for example, that of philological studies, of anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature, of travel books, of Oriental fantasies—whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority". It describes that travel book or memoir is one of writings that can be discussed in Orientalism.

In this case, the writer will analyze the memoir entitled The Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriguez. This book was published in 2007. It tells about Rodriguez's experience of living in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, exactly from 2002 until 2006. Rodriguez joins with a humanitarian team named Care for All Foundation (CFAF) in Chicago to help the victims of war torn that happen in Afghanistan. This action is one of Rodriguez's tricks to avoid her second husband who was cruel, jealousy, and over protective. She finds many sad stories in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is different from America, Rodriguez's hometown. She has skill in beauty only. However, she tries to do some useful tasks to help the Afghans, such as trauma counseling for Afghan's children and receive anyone who want to have hair cut. Rodriguez's profession as a hairdresser is underestimated by people (Westerners) who have skill in health first. Nevertheless, it becomes very useful for them and Afghans there. That is why there is no good hairdresser besides Rodriguez at that time. Hence, she decides to open a beauty school and a salon in Afghanistan. Rodriguez looks like a savior for the people there, especially Afghan women.

There are several reasons for choosing this memoir. Firstly, The Kabul Beauty School is nobated as *New York Times* bestseller at 2007 and it is also released by Columbia pictures as a movie. The movie is played by an actress named Sandra Bullock (Headrick, 2008). It is about Afghan women and culture. Secondly, The Kabul Beauty School contains about one of postcolonial issues that shows the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. It seems to construct the West (Occident) as the opposite of the East (Orient). Here, Afghanistan is described by the author as the Orient which is judged negatively by Rodriguez, a Westerner. Moreover, it portrays that the practice of Orientalism still exist nowadays.

Based on the reasons above, the writer is interested in conducting this research entitled **The Kabul Beauty School: Deborah Rodriguez's Orientalist View about Afghanistan.**

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

The Kabul Beauty School is a memoir or an autobiography written by Deborah Rodriguez. The memoir touches the idea of Orientalism. In this case, Rodriguez describes the social condition of Kabul in Afghanistan before and after her staying there. It focuses on Afghanistan and the people especially Afghan women. It shows her Orientalist perspective towards Afghanistan and Islam in general. Rodriguez as an American also constructs the positive image of America. America is described as a better place, interesting, civilized and modern.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

Orientalism is a wide study that does not only focus on literature but also on other aspects such as politic, cultural, music, art, etc. Scope of the research is needed to make

the analysis clear and focuses on the topic of the research. There are several points to be analyzed as the focus of this research:

1. The portrait of Afghanistan before Rodriguez's coming there (2002) and during her living there (between 2002-2006) based on Rodriguez's view.
2. The analysis of Rodriguez's Orientalist ideologies about Afghan women as reflected in The Kabul Beauty School.

1.4 The Objective of the Research

The research is designed to prove that the way Rodriguez sees Afghanistan which reflects her colonial interest as found in The Kabul Beauty School. It makes the writer believes that Rodriguez is one of American authors who uses her writing as an instrument to share her colonial discourse. Besides, the writer also wants to show how Rodriguez judges Afghanistan and the people especially Afghan women based on her Orientalist perspective. It is combined by Rodriguez who expresses her pride as an American.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Kabul Beauty School is a memoir written by Deborah Rodriguez. This book touches the issue of Orientalism. Orientalism is a literary theory that is introduced by Edward Said who states that the way of Westerner dominates the colonized. The Westerner (the colonizer) dominates the Easterner (the colonized) by giving the negative judgments based on the Western's perspective. In the memoir, Rodriguez portrays the social condition of Afghanistan before her coming there (2002) exactly under Taliban reign and the social condition during her living there (between 2002-2006) exactly after the fall of the Taliban. First, Rodriguez describes the bad social condition in Afghanistan before Rodriguez's coming there. Afghanistan is under Taliban reign. Taliban emerges bad influences toward Afghanistan and the people especially Afghan women. There is no right for Afghan women in getting freedom both for expression and for to determine their husband. Second, during Rodriguez's living there, Afghan people especially Afghan women have a progress. Even though the situation of the building is still bad that is caused by the war torn at that time. Some Afghans have started to run their business. Whereas, Afghan women have bravery to go out, to work, and to get higher education. On the other side, Rodriguez shows the pride of American that is assumed to be different from the Afghans.

Furthermore, the writer analyzes the Orientalist ideologies of Rodriguez that reflected in The Kabul Beauty School. Rodriguez's Orientalist ideologies focus on Afghan women. Rodriguez judges Afghan women based on her Western perspective. Firstly, Rodriguez describes the limitation of Afghan women's freedom. It influences

their limitation in progressing their economic level, in getting higher education, in doing anything that they want. Afghan women seem to be tied with Taliban's rules. Secondly, Rodriguez describes about the barrier of Afghan women's life in marriage. It is seen from many Afghan women who get forced-marriage that is ruled by their parents, family violence that is committed by their husband and their mother in law and marriage for profit practiced by the Afghan fathers in daughter's marriage so that the Afghan woman are such things.

In this research, the writer thinks that Rodriguez describes the images of Afghanistan through her thought, ideas and perception about her experiences there. In one side, she judges Afghanistan negatively, on the other side she does the goodness to Afghanistan by opening a beauty school and salon for Afghan women. Rodriguez has transferred her Western's social cultural values, such as give freedoms for Afghan women both of to express, to get higher education, to support their economic condition, and to determine their couple through her beauty school and salon. As if, she is considered as a savior for Afghan women. However, in this case there are some differences among the Western's social cultural values with the Afghan's social cultural values. Rodriguez judges Afghanistan based on her Western perspective, without understanding the Afghan's social cultural values deeply. It shows the binary opposition between West and East. By regarding this case, Rodriguez can be said as an Orientalist author who uses her nonfiction work to share the idea of Orientalism that sees the East is inferior to the West. In fact, the changing of Afghan women has really happened since after the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

In general, it can be concluded that the main findings of this research are reconstructions of social perception on Afghan women, Afghan women's ideologies,

social cultural values concerned with Western interest or Western perspective. The practices of this modern colonization have the nature of hegemony, without violence, it shapes the consent of Afghan women. This aspect obviously indicates the practice of destroying the social cultural values of Afghan women in stealth and systematic ways. This modern colonialist practices are intended to reconstruct the patterns of identity and social practices in accordance with Western interest and domination.

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