

THE AMERICAN WOMAN IDENTITY AS REFLECTED
IN *EAT PRAY LOVE* NOVEL IN HER PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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Abstract

Keywords: American culture background influences the content of literary pursuit of happiness, *ego*, *superego*, American individualism, Javanese communality. American culture background influences the content of literary work in this novel. The purpose of the research is to know an American woman identity as reflected in *Eat Pray Love* (EPL) novel in her pursuit of happiness. For that purpose, a thematic and descriptive, analysis is conducted to answer two research problems: 1) what constraint of woman to face in her attempts to achieve happiness; and 2) How the novel reflects of the American woman identity in her pursuit of happiness? The analysis finds out that woman faces the problem based on her culture. She is unhappy in her marriage, but she deal with her problem in American culture identity, she attempts individual redefinition of the self by undergoing material and spiritual search and fulfillment, and finally managed to achieve her true happiness. The *ego* wins over the *superego*, and a new identity comes out of an internal conflict and an intense spiritual process. American individualism allows this. American individualism gives greater priority to individuals.

Kata Kunci: mencapai kebahagiaan, *ego*, *superego*, individualisme amerika, orang jawa. Latar belakang budaya Amerika mempengaruhi isi karya sastra pada novel ini. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui identitas wanita Amerika yang tercermin dalam novel *Eat Pray Love* (EPL) untuk mencapai kebahagiaannya. Untuk itu, analisis secara tematik dan deskriptif dilakukan untuk menjawab dua masalah penelitian: 1) kendala apa yang dihadapi perempuan Amerika dalam usahanya mencapai kebahagiaan; dan 2) bagaimana novel mencerminkan identitas wanita Amerika dalam mencapai kebahagiaan?. Analisis menemukan bahwa perempuan dalam novel tersebut menghadapi masalah sesuai dengan latar belakang budayanya. Dia tidak bahagia dalam pernikahannya, tetapi dia mengatasi masalahnya dalam budaya Amerika, pahlawan wanita mencoba mendefinisikan kembali diri secara individu dengan menjalani pencarian dan pemenuhan material dan spiritual, *ego* menang daripada *superego* dan akhirnya berhasil mencapai kebahagiaan sejatinya. Individualisme Amerika memungkinkan hal ini. Individualisme Amerika memberikan prioritas lebih besar kepada individu.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is universal, social, and personal product. As a universal product, literature contains and conveys universal values are shares by people around the world notwithstanding of cultural and social background. As a social and personal product a literary work is a mirror or reflection of society. The author interacts with his/her society and reflects the reality in his/her work of literature. As such, literature is an expression of author through high contemplation over his environment in her/his society (literature as personal product) as well as it is a social reflection of his/her times (literature as social product). And as different authors might come from different social and cultural backgrounds, each literary work has its own particularities different from one another.

Eat Pray Love novel is about happiness problem. As Nicholas White said in *A Brief History of Happiness*: do we really understand what happiness is? Happiness has a dominant role in shaping up human and become orientation in every single person in the world. How far we can go to achieve happiness? Since thousand years ago happiness history tried to answer that question. From Plato's idea, happiness is soul harmony and ethical life goal (1-5). From this quotation happiness is one of important meaning in people's life. The happiness became the main orientation of the people in the world, especially for women in the world. Many women in the world aspire to be true happiness in their life. They can be unbalanced if they feel unhappiness in their life. It means that, if they can not pursue of their life goals or the ideality is different from reality.

In this research, the happiness focused women figure in American culture. All this time there are many opinions that woman can't do anything to achieve what they dreams are. Woman's role that is reputed *the second sex* citizen and their existences are not significant. Woman's role is only in domestic sector meanwhile man's role in public sector. (Abdullah: 1-4). This ideology had been declared by social fact about woman identity in society. In this modern period woman identity can be change along with advancement period. So many women are not satisfied with predicate as a woman that role up in only domestic sector.

Woman role in this modern period had been change from domestic sector to non domestic sector. Woman's identity in social life is part of norms what they have, such as custom and certain tradition, in this matter woman's identity to pursue happiness is in life.

Nowadays woman's identity reputed as a subject but also as a commodity object or marginalization woman's identity. Woman's identity in *eat pray love* well defined as a woman that have optimistic and positive mind in lead life and the way to solving problems what they face. To get deeper understanding about woman's identity, Peter J. Burke and Jan E Stets said in *Identity Theory*: identity is meaning unit that describe person who has certain role in society such as student identity, worker, parent etc. the more important thing is how far this identity influence their behavior, mind, feeling, and this emotion bind up them to the wide society. Individual and society are closely related. (3).

Elizabeth Gilbert is an American authoress. She is an essayist, short story writer, biographer, and memoirist. She is most known for her 2006 memoir. Her first book was *Pilgrims* (1997) which was followed by her novel *Stern Men* (2000) and *The Last American Man* (2002), a biography of a modern woodsman and naturalist.

The primary objective of this study is study of American woman in pursue of happiness as reflected in *Eat, Pray, Love* novel by Elizabeth Gilbert's. Then scopes of the study are as follow thematically, this study is focused on novels in the context of American woman identity and her realizations in terms of women's ways in her pursuit of happiness and defining her identity. Moreover, in doing so, the main sources of the data needed for the study are Elizabeth Gilbert's novel *Eat, Pray, Love* while also taking biographical information of the writer on woman identity and happiness. This will focus on the main characters. In Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* the discussion will focus on the Liz, an American woman living in New York, in pursuit of happiness.

This research is meant to elaborate more about how the heroine of the novels redefines her identities in dealing with their problems and in pursuing her happiness. In so doing, the following more specific questions are put forward as

the elements of analysis (1) what constraint of woman to face in her attempts to achieve happiness?, and (2) how the novel reflects of the American woman identity in her pursuit of happiness?

Theoretical Framework

Novel *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, the character of Liz (American woman), her character describes American culture values in matter of identity and happiness to achieve truly happiness, novel is popular and the cannon literature.

Eat Pray Love novel was written in 2001 and published in 2006. In a certain era that is called communication and globalization era. The most important event in this era was: September 9 tragedy in 2001 that is destroyed two symbols of the biggest center trade in America: WTC and Pentagon building. The 21st century as a postmodern era who people live in anxiety and it affects the social world politics, culture and the literature world. Human will seek their own guide to go out from irregularity and uncertainty condition. A part of society that felt uncertainty condition are women. The *Eat Pray Love* novel describes the woman uncertainty and irregularity condition in 21st century and to try to find a truly happiness. The 21st century in America even in the world is information technology which is influence social world and pattern of human life. The uncertainty conditions also influence the pattern of human life in daily life. The rapid growth of technology and economy has changed the values in society.

The *Eat Pray Love* is romance and the way woman pursue her happiness while also dealing with societal norms and the issue of self-identity. However, as each of the heroine comes from American cultural background, This research is purposefully intended to explore the of woman take in pursuing happiness and defining her self-identity.

According to Freud, there are three psychic zones in every human's personality: *id*, *ego* and *superego*. The *id* is the reservoir of Libido, the primary source of all psychic energy. It functions as the primordial life principle, which Freud considers to be the pleasure principle. The *id* is characterized by tremendous and amorphous vitality. The *id* in this case is two women that want to

pursue happiness in their life. The character of Liz in *The Eat Pray Love* describe an established and well-educated American woman but she doesn't have balance of life then try to find balance of life in herself, this matter is her personal right which must be fulfilled. Because *id* is the only one personality component which present since we born and it is done by conscious, if it is not be fulfilled there will be unbalance in life. In this matter the demand to achieve a balance of life in order to get composure in life.

The *ego* is psychic agency which protects the individual and society. Though the ego lacks the strong vitality of the *id*, it regulates the instinctual drives of the *id* so that they may be released in non-destructive patterns. the ego is governed by the reality principle. This matter is seen in character Liz when he has problem in her life. Liz is unhappy with her husband that has bad temper and rude, and Liz is also unhappy because the conflict with her husband and she feels her marriage is fail. this character tries to fulfill the demand from *id* because the role of *ego* is to ensure that encouragement from *id* can be fulfilled or can be realized, in this matter is the demand to achieve happiness. *Ego* tries to satisfy the desirability of *id* certainly based on principle that exists in its society. And the other regulating agent that which primarily functions to protect society is *superego* is the moral censoring agency, the repository of conscience and pride. When there is a demand to fulfill the demand from *ego* so the norm which is exists in society will organize it. Liz describes an American modern woman character that is *superego* role in this matter norms or rules in society is not too significant to influence her in process to achievement truly happiness.

The concepts of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* are considered necessary in analyzing how woman deal with her problems and pursue their true happiness, because in every human conduct there always involved the agent and the norms or values (especially moral ones) that govern the agent's conduct.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach model as a problem-solving procedure investigated, to support this investigation to be more accurate and accountable, a quantitative approach model is needed in the form of an analysis of a novel entitled *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. In collecting data, the researcher uses literature study data techniques, namely by understanding and looking for what is the research study. Furthermore, in analyzing the data researchers used qualitative data analysis techniques. Dealing with the justification, it is obviously stated that the main purpose of this current research is to investigate the American woman in pursue of happiness as reflected in *Eat, Pray, Love* novel by Elizabeth Gilbert's.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The story represents a main character; she is Liz as American woman that who came from middle or upper class in America. Exactly, she lives at New York. She lived at postmodern American. She has full freedom to decide and doing something. Setting of place of time novel is in New York, India, and Bali. she is an educated woman with a good career. She is married to a handsome man and they live in a luxurious house. There was a significant time when the main character Live at the time. i.e. there had been wtc bombing at September, 11 201. The end of the story is happy ending because she found true happiness in her journey.

American woman identities as reflected in *Eat Pray Love*.

The focus of this thesis is about the woman's identity concept. The woman identity concept in this research context is defined as woman's identity reputed as a subject and a commodity object or marginalization woman's identity. To get deeper understanding about identity, Peter J. Burke and Jan E Stets said in *Identity Theory*: that the identity is meaning unit describing a person who has certain role in society such as student identity, worker, parent and so on. the more important thing is how far this identity influences their behavior, mind, feeling, and emotion

binding up them to the whole society. Individual and society are closely related (3). From the above statement, it means that there are varieties of identity behaving in society. Some people identity is related to their occupation or profession. This occupation influences them when they do social intercourse in daily activity. So, in this study the research is had great focus on the woman's identity. In *Potensi Perempuan Amerika* the woman's identity here is aspects in her inwardness forming the concept of who she is and of how she drives herself into her life. In this framework, the woman is looked upon as an individual in relation to herself and to the society and the norms held or in which she lives (Juliasih, 364-367). There are many aspects that may be included in the concept of identity but this research will only focus on those aspects of prominent identity in novel, i.e. those which have either direct or less direct impact on the way of the woman in pursuit her happiness and how she achieves happiness.

In the above definition, the woman identity elements are religiosity or spirituality, intellectual, emotion, physique, sociality, individualism, independence, and creativity. Yet, in accordance with this research, the writer will be limited to the spirituality or religiosity, independence, domesticity, emotion, and sexuality, because the elements become the strongest in this novel. Then, the elements are defined as though:

1. American woman Identity as reflected in *Eat Pray Love*.

a. Spirituality/religiosity.

Spirituality values of a women are really seemed what Liz does. It is proven when Liz has some troubles in her household and she has quarrel with her husband frequently. Then, she tries to communicate with God as seen in below quotation:

I need a proper name, in order to fully sense a personal attendance. For this same reason, when I pray, I do not address my prayers to the universe.....even the most poetic manifestation of God's name, taken, I believe, from the Gnostic gospels : The Shadow of the Turning.” (Gilbert, *EPL* 14).

Above quotation explains that Liz is having conflict in her life and she tries to get rid of from this all.

b. Independence.

The Liz's character describes a figure which is independent in deciding something determining her life existing in her own inwardness. This thing certainly relates to individualism as an American basic character. It is come true through the freedom in doing something to solve problems without the existence of the tradition norms managing to do something in achieving the true happiness. What determines the success is in one's own hand or destiny. The role of the environment does not influence someone in the achievement. The individualism and independence characters are obvious of what Liz does. We can see below quotation:

I Just wanted to slip quietly out the back door, without causing any fuss or consequences, and then not stop running until reached Greenland (Gilbert, *EPL* 13).

c. Domesticity.

The Liz's character describes a different female figure to non-domestic figure as well as the character puts on the woman that the woman only move to the domestic sector which her activity is only as a housewife, taking care of children and completing the household activities. The Liz's character breaks all because she is able to do something out of her home. Here, she proves it by having journey to the third countries in the world to pursue the true happiness. This is obvious that the domestic character puts on the woman's inwardness for that long. Liz shows up in the post-modernism era with the female character which is free to go somewhere. This is proven to which she says to the below quotation:

I don't want to be married anymore. I don't want to live in this big house. I don't want to have a baby (Gilbert, *EPL*10).

d. Emotion.

The character of Liz as a woman in the world in general having the universal values like the right to love and to be loved and fond of beauty, has great concern for and is had great concern for other persons and bears baby from a household. We can see it from below quotation:

...instead, as my twenties had come to a close, that deadline of thirty had loomed over me like a death sentence and I discovered that I did not want to be pregnant.... “having a baby is like getting a tattoo on your face. You really need to be certain it’s what you want before you commit.” (Gilbert, *EPL* 11)

From above quotation, Liz expects to have a child and she waits for him or her even her age is about thirty but it seems that she does not have any sign showing that she is pregnant. In addition, she is very disappointed when she gazes at her relative’s son which is suckling on the breast. Liz dreams like her relative. She also wants to be like her relative to have a child being able to color her household. Nevertheless, Liz cannot be pregnant and cannot have a child like her relative. She is disappointed and somewhat desperate with that condition. Yet, as a woman, she tries to hold out and not to drag over the sadness. Finally, she is able to pass it and able to solve it.

e. Sexuality.

Sex is a biological need which has to be fulfilled. As a woman Liz needs things relating to lust which has to be fulfilled as a God creature in this world. Liz who before indeed having sexual problem, remains to have sexual desire which she has to fulfill. Here we can see below quotation:

Of course sometimes I really do become overcome with lust. I walk past an average of about a dozen Italian men a day whom I could easily imagine in my bed. Or in theirs. Or wherever. To my taste, the men in Rome are ridiculously, hurtfully, stupidity beautiful. More beautiful even than Roman women, to be honest. Italian men

are beautiful in the same way as French women... (Gilbert, *EPL* 70).

The above quotation describes Liz as she is. The cities in Italy represent to pursue contentment cling to the mundane. Liz when she is in Italy cites that she has had sexual intercourse with a dozen of Italian men from one to another.

CONCLUSION

In *Eat Pray Love*, the woman basically lives in post-modern America, even if she undergoes her process of self-development and self-redefinition as she travels around to Rome (Italy), India, and Bali (Indonesia). In such an individualistic society as America, everybody is considered as individual being with every individual right to decide on what is best for one's life. The society and its norms, the *superego*, has a quite loose control over individual in dealing with individual, the *ego*'s, personal life. That is why the heroine of *Eat Pray Love* can freely choose her best ways in dealing with her marital problems. By means of questioning the basic of her identity and attempting to redefine it through material and spiritual search and fulfillment in a particularly personal process, she finally managed to redefine herself in her pursuit of true happiness, without any intervention from her society. The *ego* wins over the *superego*, and a new identity comes out of an internal conflict and an intense spiritual process.

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