

# THE NARRATIVE DISPLACEMENT AND UNHOMELINESS IN INDONESIAN EXIL WRITINGS

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**Abstrak.** Makalah ini membahas dan menganalisis narasi *displacement* dan keterpinggiran oleh penulis eksil Indonesia yang tinggal di Eropa, terutama di Jerman dan Belanda. Lebih khusus, tulisan ini mencoba untuk melihat bagaimana para penulis ini menggunakan narasi untuk berbagi pengalaman eksil mereka. Ilusi kepulangan selalu hadir dalam tulisan-tulisan orang buangan, dan citra negara asal mendominasi karya mereka. Berfokus pada isu *displacement*, ketunawismaan (*unhomeliness*) dan keterpinggiran, artikel ini mengkaji pamer diri dalam narasi. Konstruksi-diri saat ini sebagai individu yang lebih sosial antara lain ditandai dengan nostalgia.

Kata kunci : *narrative, exile, displacement, unhomeliness*

## INTRODUCTION

John Simpson in *The Oxford Book of Exile* writes that exile “is the human condition; and the great upheavals of history have merely added physical expression to an inner fact” (Simpson “Introduction”). It means that exile is taken to be identical with self-alienation in the modern term. In this kind of situation one cannot help but feel like an outsider. One who experiences exile must confront with aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, he /she never feel at home and is always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and the future.

A story about a man who was forced to leave his homeland has existed since the time of Adam and Eve. Mary Mc Carthy states that “ exile was punishment decreed from above , like the original sentence of banishment on Adam and Eve, which initiated human history” . Even in the Qur'an, the story of the forced displacement of the prophet Muhammad used as an early marker of the Hijra calendar. Forced displacement that

resulted in someone into exile, always due to the interference of power . Being thrown out of one’s home, searching for home and returning home , are also found in Indonesia’s folklore. One folk tale that tells the story of banishment is **Cerita Panji**. In addition to folklore, Indonesian exile literature can also be found in the history of Indonesian literature. The Indonesia exile writers have close links with the political upheaval that occurred in 1965. In a book entitled *Di Negeri Orang : Puisi Penyair Indonesia Eksil* , Indonesian exile writers shared their experiences of being exiles, banishing from his home land and their longing for returning home.

Living in exile and staying in foreign countries are exposed by these writers. Using Indonesian Language, these writers convey thoughts, observations and dreams to readers. Although the memories of life in Indonesia is more dominant as a source of inspiration, it does not mean that the life in exile was not mentioned. Agam Wispi in his poem, entitled "Penyair Mencari Sarang" shows his anxiety in

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search of a place to stay where he wants to be part of it. Besides Agam Wispi, texts written by Indonesia exile writers also showed their "sense of marginality" for their consciousness they are not in their hometown. In addition to feeling as a marginal, their writings also describe their displacement and unhomeliness.

Based on the above reason, this study raises the following questions;

1. How is displacement described in the texts produced by the Indonesian exile writers?
2. How are the lives of Indonesian exile writers exposed explicitly and symbolically in the text?

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Post -Colonial Literary Approach

Foulcher and Day stated that the study of postcolonial literature is a strategy on reading that generates questions that can help to identify the signs and effects of colonialism in critical texts and literature(3). Foulcher added that "postcolonialism is a term for a critical approach to understanding the effects of colonialism that continue to exist in the texts, while 'postcoloniality' is a word that refers to the nature and spread of these effects" (3). While Ashcroft pointed out that postcolonial literary work is 'the literature produced under imperial licence by natives or 'outcasts' (2). Outcast means those who are **exiled for opposing the ruling** government. Furthermore Lois Tyson added that postcolonial literary criticism " the experience and literary production of peoples whose history is characterized by

extreme political, social, and psychological oppression"(363). Tyson tema-tema sastra kolonial mencakup " the initial encounter with the colonizer and disruption of indigenious culture...; exile (the experience of being an "outsider" in one's own land... ;the struggle for individual and collective culture identity and the related themes of alienation, unhomeliness, double consciousness and hybridity '...(374). Homi Bhabha said that 'postcolonial interpretation literary texts' " might be studied in terms of the different ways cultures have experienced historical trauma, perhaps such traumas as slavery, revolution, civil war, political mass murder, oppressive military regimes, the lost of cultural identity and the like (375) .

It can be concluded that discussing postcolonial literature also includes discussing the literary works produced by authors who live in exile caused by political mass murder' or 'oppressive military regimes', as well as psychological problems related to identity, or more specifically "individual identity and cultural beliefs" (374). As a part of postcolonial literature, exile literature also discusses displacement, marginality and search for identity.

### Displacement

According to Ashcroft displacement results " the alienation of vision and the crisis of self-image". ... the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place."(9). Displacement does not only mean dislocation, a movement from one place to another, it is more on how to adjust with the new environment and begins a

new life, and in particular the necessity of mastery the new language. No matter how hard someone adjusts with the new environment, he will feel unhomeliness in a new place. He will occupy the position of margins and on the other hand their identity will not disappear without a trace in a new life.

### **Unhomeliness**

Unhomeliness is the sense of being culturally displaced, of being caught between two cultures and not “at home” in either. This term is introduced by literary theorist, Homi Bhabha that describes 'the unhomely moment' in which personal and psychic histories intersect with the violent dislocations of colonialism. Bhabha's analysis of the unhomely moment in literature draws on Freud's essay "The 'Uncanny' ", which argues that "the *Unheimlich* [translated as 'uncanny'] is what was home-like, familiar; the pre-fix 'un' is the token of repression" (Bhabha, p. 450).

### **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

This study uses qualitative method in terms of close reading technique in scrutinizing writings of Indonesian exile writers. Qualitative research methodology is appropriate for this study because it is suitable for uncovering complexities of meaning or the nature of experience. This methodology is used because it can provide an enriched understanding of life, literary experiences, interpersonal interactions, and complex socio-cultural contexts. Bogden and Biklen (1998) point out several characteristics of qualitative researchers: qualitative researchers are concerned with process

rather than simply with outcomes; they are interested in capturing the informants' meaning, such as what they are experiencing and how different people make sense of their lives; and they believe that theory emerges from the data inductively.

Qualitative methodology is marked by an in-depth approach rather than an extensive or numerical approach. Creswell states that qualitative approach is when “ the researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data” ( 2003:18). Using descriptive design, this study is attempted to portray situation and events accurately because “ the purpose of descriptive research is to determine what presently exists with regard to the problem or phenomenon”( Moore, 1983: 74).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. Displacement**

New Order in Indonesia dates back to the era of 1965 after the G 30S / PKI. When it came to power, the New Order government has banned a number of literary works written by authors who were allegedly involved in the G 30 S / PKI. In addition to prohibiting their work, the government also alienated the author for his creative idea does not develop so they cannot communicate with his readers. Some authors ended up staying abroad as a person who lived in exile. these authors living outside Indonesia mostly live in Western Europe such as in the Netherlands, France and Germany. Those who choose to live abroad believe that they will be thrown in

jail or killed if they returned to Indonesia. From these reasons the authors chose not to return to Indonesia and lived as an exiled in a foreign land.

Staying in a foreign country with the weather, language and a different culture does not discourage the Indonesian exiles writer working. Using bahasa Indonesia as a medium to communicate with their readers in Indonesia, these poets show that culturally they are still tied to their homeland. they do not want to be uprooted culturally though they are alienated from Indonesia. The use of bahasa Indonesia also shows that they have a high sense of nationalism. nevertheless a sense of displacement seen in their works such as in Agam Wispi's poem intitled "Penyair Mencari Sarang" and Supriadi Tomodihardjo "Bukan Mauku",.

#### *Penyair Mencari Sarang*

penyair mencari sarang ditepi kanal amsterdam  
camar melayang meninggalkan sarang  
digelisahkan air tenang  
penyair dan camar sama-sama dikejar gelisah  
senja usia  
penyair sarangmu adalah kata  
camar gelisahmu matahari senja  
terpaut perahu puisiku di kanal Belanda

In "Penyair Mencari Sarang" Wispi( 2002) captures with the metaphor of seagulls and twilight. His fear of growing old is simbolized by gulls running for a nest for the evening will come. This is the tone of one who is discourage because he does not know where to go home, he also does not have a place to stay forever.

mari reguk habis segelas bir sebelum kata terakhir untuk berpisah pulang ke rumah kubasuh muka dan bersibak lalu menulis sajak

The effect of living in exile appears both as a liberating experience as well as a shocking experience. The last stanza of his poem shows a paradox. It is a paradox because it is just a manifestation of the tension that keeps the strings attached and taut between the writer's place of origin and the place of exile. Whatever may be the geographical location of the exiled writer, in the mental landscape the writer is forever enmeshed among the strings attached to poles that pull in opposite directions. The only way the writer can rescue oneself from the tautness of the enmeshing strings is by writing.

The next poem talking about displacement is a poem written by Supriadi Tomodihardjo (2002) "Bukan Mauku",.

Bukan Mauku  
Bukan mauku singgah disini  
Berdamai dengan impian  
Membunuh sepi dan kejemuhan  
Perjalanan.

...  
Bukan mauku bermukim disini

...  
Merayakan hari natal  
Tahun baru dan karnaval

For Supriadi Tomodihardjo life is journey. As a journey, he does not want to stop to stay celebrate Christmas and carnival. According to this poet, Christmas and carnival are not part of his culture. These two cultural products do not belong to him, therefore he feels

displace with his surrounding. But he has to stay because the ship's captain never comes to pick him up, he keeps on waiting for the ship that never anchored in his place.

Jadi pun dalam sepi dan sendiri  
Pada saatnya kita berangkat  
Menepuh gelombang tinggi dan  
panjang.  
Sedikit sayang  
Nakhoda tak juga datang.

There is always a sense of not belonging to the nation one is exiled to and a longing for home. The illusion of return and the imagery of the home country present in this poem.

## B. Unhomeliness

In addition to displacement, this poem tells the readers the unhomeliness of the person who live in a new place. Home and the loss of home constitute a recurring motif in exile Literatures. Supriadi Tomodihardjo (2002) poem's *Bukan mauku* means it is not my wish. The speaker does not wish to stay and has a family' *beranak bercucu di sini*". It is not a place that he wishes to build a family, because this place is not his home in which he welcomes as he said "menahan murung apabila hati luka tersinggung, menelan sindir dan maki apabila datang hari gersang"

To overcome his feeling of unhomeliness, the speaker sought peace with the situation around by saying "kita dilahirkan tanpa hak memilih bumi", this is a sense of compromising and relief but at the same time hopelessness. The relief is only a temporary condition. Even if a writer consciously tries to justify one end

but unconsciously, there arises a longing for the other.

A feeling of unhomeliness also appears in A Kembara's poem "Kehadiran"

Aku datang di negeri multatuli  
Aku tertegun pada bumi ini  
Di wajahku terbayang gapaian  
tangan van Gogh  
Menyanyikan alam, manusia, cinta  
dan keindahan

Seorang menepukku mengucapkan  
kata selamat datang  
Aku menengadah menatap jauh  
Tampak olehku awan hitam di  
depan  
Masih menggantang

Speaker in this poem arrives to a place and is greeted warmly, unfortunately he does not feel the warmth of the people. He is hesitated because he comes to a place he does not want even though people welcomed him. Using a black cloud as a symbol of gloom, he is not sure whether he would feel at home in a new country.

## CONCLUSION

Wispi, Supriadi and Kembara's story is a story of alienation from the country they loves but cannot at present inhabit. These poets seem to explain that they may have victory and its temporary comfort but it is accompanied by a deep sense of alienation and other consequences. What these writers benefited from their exile was freedom of speech but they could never forget the shock of their original expulsion. They always believed that it was their right to be home, yet those who were privileged

to return home, were often disappointed with the changes. At home few friends remained and they missed the society of like-minded intellectuals that they had formed during the time and in the place of their exile. Once-an-exile becomes forever-an-exile and the works of such writers hold the verve of their restlessness

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