

Book Review of *Eat, Pray, Love* Written by Elizabeth Gilbert

Septriana Ambarwati and Retno Wulandari

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang
50275

Abstrak

Tugas akhir ini membahas novel karya Elizabeth Gilbert yang berjudul Eat, Pray, Love. Novel ini merupakan salah satu karya Elizabeth Gilbert yang terkenal. Eat, Pray, Love adalah sebuah novel yang berisi tentang pengalaman pribadi Elizabeth yang dikemas dalam bahasa Inggris modern yang mudah dimengerti dan sarat pembelajaran tentang kehidupan yang dapat dijadikan contoh yang baik bagi pembacanya. Dalam tugas akhir ini penulis menganalisis lebih dalam tentang tema karena tema merupakan unsur intrinsik yang paling dominan. Novel Eat, Pray, Love memiliki tiga tema yang berbeda yaitu kesenangan duniawi, religi, dan percintaan. Penulis juga menganalisis kelebihan yang dimiliki novel ini yaitu format penulisan yang unik, tema, gaya bahasa, penggunaan bahasa asing, dan keragaman budaya. Selain itu penulis juga menganalisis sudut pandang subjektif, dan alur yang merupakan kelemahan dari novel Eat, Pray, Love.

Kata kunci: tema, kelebihan, kekurangan

1. Introduction

Eat, Pray, Love is a story about a woman who tries to heal herself from depression after her unsuccessful marriage. After she decides to end her marriage, Elizabeth makes plans to visit Italy, India, and Indonesia. At first she visits Italy to search the worldly pleasures, and then she goes to India to find God, the last she visits Indonesia to balance the worldly pleasure and to devotion to God. These experiences make her learn to conquer her fears and depressions.

The writer has chosen this book because *Eat, Pray, Love* can motivate people to keep fighting for their independence and happiness. Because of her dissatisfaction, Elizabeth leaves her luxurious life to find

peace and happiness. She inspires people to always have positive thinking. By reading this book the readers can learn how to face a problem with confidence and patience. In addition, this novel is also a fun book to read since it is taken from the real situation and written in a simple language style.

2. The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this final project are :

- 2.1. To analyze the theme of *Eat, Pray, Love*,
- 2.2. To reveal the strengths and the weaknesses of *Eat, Pray, Love*.

3. Elizabeth Gilbert and Her Works

Elizabeth Gilbert was born on 18th July 1969 in Waterbury. She grew up in Litchfield, Connecticut. She got married to Michael Cooper in 1994, but they divorce in 2002. Ever since January 2007, she has been married to Jose Nunes.

Elizabeth studied politics at New York University. In 1991 she got her Bachelor of Arts degree. After she moved to New York, she works at Spin, GQ, and The New York Times magazine as a journalist. She ever became a finalist for The National Magazine for three times. *Coyote Ugly* is a movie based on Elizabeth's article in GQ about her experiences as a bartender on the Lower East Side.

Her first novel *Stern Men* was published in 2000. The next two years, in 2002 she published her non-fiction book *The Last American Man*. In 2006, her traveling memoir *Eat Pray Love* was published. Elizabeth Gilbert's recent novel is *Committed*, the continuation of novel *Eat Pray Love* which was published in 2010.

4. Summary

When Elizabeth Gilbert turns to thirty one years old, she enters the worst period in her life. She feels depressed and unhappy with her marriage. She is afraid that someday she must settle down in one place and has babies. One night when her husband is sleeping, she sneaks out from their bedroom and cries in the bathroom floor. She says over and over, "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." Then she prays to God for the first time in her life. From that night Elizabeth starts to realize the presence of God around her.

Seven months later, Elizabeth decides to divorce her husband. In the middle of her difficult divorce process she meets David, an actor and a writer. But their relationship does not work out. They break up and reunite for several times.

One day Elizabeth gets a chance to visit Bali, Indonesia. During her visits in Bali her Yoga trainer introduces her to Ketut Liyer, a ninth-generation Balinese medicine man. Ketut Liyer reads Elizabeth's palm. He says that someday she will return to Bali and become his English teacher for three or four months.

When she returns to New York, her husband is ready to discuss the terms of their divorce settlement. After hearing her husband's requirements, Elizabeth asks her lawyer to make a modified deal. Finally her husband approves the modified deal and they officially divorce.

After she gets divorce from her husband, she quits her job, and makes plan to travel around the world alone. At first she goes to Italy and studies the art of pleasure. During her visits in Italy, Elizabeth goes to various cities in Italy to eat and learn Italian language.

After a few months in Italy, Elizabeth thinks that she must clarify her relationship with David. They agree to end their relationship. She feels sad for a while but then Elizabeth spends the rest of her time in Italy with joy and happiness

On 30th December, she goes to India. She makes plan to live in the Ashrams (a place of religious retreat for Hindus). She finds many difficulties at the beginning of her stays in Ashram. She cannot concentrate while meditating. But then she can master her mind by addresses her prayer for Nick, her nephew. After she spends four months in India, Elizabeth finds peace in her soul.

Elizabeth continues her journey to Bali. Her main purpose in Bali is to meet Ketut Liyer. When she arrives in Ketut Liyer's place, he forgets who Elizabeth is. When Liz says that she is a book writer from New York he remembers about her. She spends her time in Ubud as Ketut's student to learn the art of balancing the worldly pleasure and the divine transcendence.

In the middle of her journey in Bali, she meets Felipe, a Brazilian man. Elizabeth realizes that she loves Felipe, but she is afraid of getting hurt again. But then they spend their days together in Bali with love and pleasure. Elizabeth can fulfill her purposes in Bali to enjoy the worldly pleasure but she still devotes herself to God.

5. Review

5.1. The Theme

The themes in this novel are divided into three sub-chapters, they are:

5.1.1. Eat (the Pursuit of Pleasure)

The word *eat*, in this case refers to the worldly pleasure, because eating is one of people's efforts to satisfy their physical desire.

In this part of the story, Elizabeth tries to escape from depression by searching the worldly pleasure after she fights to solve her problems. Elizabeth chooses Italy to search the worldly pleasure because she thinks that Italian people know how to enjoy their life with pleasure. The Italian people love to make a celebration for all the goals that they achieve. As Elizabeth says, "... Italians have traditionally always been hard workers, especially those long-suffering laborers known as *braccianti* (so called because they had nothing but the brute strength of their arms – *braccie*- to help them survive in this world). But even against that backdrop of hard work, *il bel far niente* has always been a cherished Italian ideal. The beauty of doing nothing is the goal of all your hard work, the final accomplishment for which you are most highly congratulated" (Gilbert, 2007:61).

Furthermore, Elizabeth learns from the Italians about how to do nothing after her hard works to solve her problems. She spends four months to eat and learn Italian language.

5.1.2. Pray (Religious)

In this part of the story, Elizabeth gives her religious view. Elizabeth is not a religious person before. She believes in God but she admits that she does not adhere in a particular religion. After she gets various problems in her life, she begins to feel the presence of God on the night when she sobs very hard on the bathroom floor. She says on the page 16, "instead, I would call what happened that night the beginning of a religious *conversation*. The first words of an open and exploratory dialogue that would, ultimately, bring me very close to God, indeed" (Gilbert, 2007:16).

The most dominant aspect in this chapter is religion. Elizabeth tells about her spiritual journey during her visits in India for four months. Her motivation to visit India is to learn Hinduism in an Ashram. It seems like Elizabeth wants to invite the reader to find out the Hinduism. She uses a lot of Hinduism terminology and philosophy, such as *Gurukita*, *Shiva*, and *Brahma*. During her stays in Ashram, Elizabeth can eliminate all her sadness and pressure by meditation. She gets new insights about how to resolve the problems, she also learns to surrender herself to God (not only satisfy her worldly pleasure).

5.1.3. Love

In this part of this novel, Elizabeth finds her love in Bali. At first her motivation to visit Bali is to balance the pursuit worldly pleasure and the understanding of divinity. She learns at Ketut Liyer's place to master how to balance her soul.

But starting from the middle of the story, the romance element begins to dominate the story. In Bali Elizabeth finds her lover, Felipe, a Brazilian man who can erase her trauma of love. She also finds best friends who love her such as Yudhi, Ketut Liyer and Wayan. During her time in Bali, Elizabeth finds someone that can understand her. She can forget her broken heart and starts to love Felipe. She also realizes that love will make her life more meaningful, and she finds it all in Felipe.

5.2. The Strengths of *Eat, Pray, Love*

The strengths of this novel are :

5.2.1 The Unique Format

This novel has a unique writing format. Elizabeth gets the inspiration from *the japa malas* (the string beads which is used by the Hindus or Buddhist to staying focus during prayerful meditation). She divides this novel into three parts and in each part has thirty six tales. In every chapter, the reader can find a different theme with thirty six different stories. This makes the novel "*Eat, Pray, Love*" different and the readers do not feel bored reading novel through short stories.

5.2.2. The Theme

In fact, the themes in this novel are very simple and based on the real situation. But those themes actually make this novel become attractive and reasonable because the reader can understand the problems which happen in this story. The title *Eat, Pray, Love* consists of three unrelated word, however those three words are the title of each chapter. A novel with more than one theme is difficult to find. However Elizabeth can integrate those themes into an interesting novel.

5.2.3. Simple Language Style

According to the book *Theory of Literature*, "language is quite literary the material of the literary artist" (Wellek and Warren, 1973:174). Language style is the language used by the writer in his/her literary works. The language style that is used in this novel is very simple and does not use theoretical language. So the readers who do not understand the literature theory are able to understand the story. This novel is also suitable for foreign readers because Elizabeth uses modern English which is easy to understand.

5.2.4. The Use of Foreign Languages

In some cases there are many difficulties in the use of foreign language in a novel. This occurs because the author does not give a clear explanation or a footnote. But in novel *Eat, Pray, Love* the use of foreign language such as Italian, India, and Indonesia is easy to be understood by the readers. The use of foreign language here actually makes this novel become

interesting. Elizabeth always gives the definition in every foreign terms, words, or sentences in this novel.

5.2.5. The Cultural Diversity

At the beginning of the story Elizabeth has explained that this novel will be divided into three chapters that tell the readers her experiences in the three different countries. Every country of course has its own cultures. The readers indirectly learn about the cultural diversity in every country that Elizabeth visits. The readers can learn about the culture, the people and their lifestyle in Italy, India, Indonesia, and America. The cultural diversity that exists in this novel is certainly useful for the readers who want to add their knowledge on foreign cultures.

5.3. The Weakness of *Eat, Pray, Love*

This novel also has some weaknesses, such as :

5.3.1. The Subjective Point of View

Eat, Pray, Love contains Elizabeth's journey memoir to several countries. Because Elizabeth is the author and also the main character in this novel, there are many problems which raises here is taken from Elizabeth's point of view. It makes this novel become too subjective for some readers. For example when Elizabeth tells about Yudhi's childhood, "... The family was Christian –an oddity in this part of the world." (Gilbert, 2007:247). Elizabeth's statement that tells about being Christian is something strange for Indonesian certainly does not have a strong reason and

too subjective. In reality the Moslem and the Christian in Indonesia live in peace together as a nation. For Moslems (the majority population in Indonesia), being Christian is not something strange and for the Christians, they feel comfortable to live in the middle of Moslems.

5.3.2. Plot

According to Perrine, "Plot is the sequence of incident or events which the story is composed and it may conclude what character says or thinks, as well as what he does, but it leaves out description and analysis and concentrate ordinarily on major happening" (1974:41). *Eat, Pray, Love* uses multi-plot, because the story has one main plot with several sub-plots that interconnected. Multi-plot is divided into two, episodic and concentric.

Eat, Pray, Love uses the episodic plot, it can be seen from the beginning of the story especially in chapter Italy, the plot is hard to understand for the beginning readers because it uses flash back plot. Elizabeth tries to explain about her past, she tells about her acquaintance with God, her romance problems, and her meeting with Balinese healer that motivates her to make plan traveling across Italy, India, and Indonesia. The chapter one not only tells about her journey in Italy but also the background why then she decides to make a long journey for a year across those countries. The readers should be careful because the story that is presented in chapter one sometimes is unrelated or jumping from one story to another story. However,

the next chapters, chapter two and chapter three, are in good order. The stories in chapter two and three are connected to each other and they tell about Elizabeth's journey through India and Indonesia.

6. Conclusion

Eat, Pray, Love a novel written by Elizabeth Gilbert is one of the greatest novels that the writer has ever read. It contains a lot of Elizabeth's own experiences that can make the readers especially women learn to be stronger and more independent. Besides that the novel *Eat, Pray, Love* can give a big impact to the readers because in modern time, people become more materialistic and always pursuit the worldly pleasure. But Elizabeth can prove that the worldly pleasure is not a guarantee to become happy, even sometimes we have to lose it all to find the true happiness. *Eat, Pray, Love* is also can make the readers learn to respecting other cultures. From Elizabeth's experience the readers can get more knowledge about another culture in four different countries (America, Italy, India, and Indonesia).

In this final project the writer analyzes the theme, because it is the most dominant intrinsic aspect of this novel. There are three different themes in this book that makes this novel become interesting. While the strengths of this novel are the unique format, the simple language styles, the use of foreign languages, and the cultural diversity. This novel is also has weaknesses such as the subjective point of view and the plot.

7. Bibliography

- Elizabeth Gilbert Official Website. *Biography of Elizabeth Gilbert*. 2006.
<<http://www.elizabethgilbert.com/>>
3September 2012.
- Gilbert, Elizabeth. 2006. *Eat Pray Love*. New York : Penguin Books.
- Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary. 2000. Third Edition. London : Oxford University Press.
- Perrine, Laurence. 1974. *Literature Structure, Sound, and Sense : Third Edition*. Orlando, Florida : Harcourt Jovanovich Publishers.
- Wellek, Rene and Warren, Austin. 1949. *Theory of Literature*. New York : Penguin Books.