

**BEING AT THE CROSSROADS OF IDENTITY IN THE
NOVEL *EXIT WEST* (2017) BY MOHSIN HAMID**

THESIS

*Submitted as a Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements
to Obtain Strata 1 (S1 Degree)*



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Being At The Crossroads of Identity in The Novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid

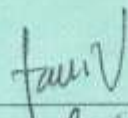
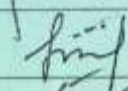

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Abstract

Randa, Asherly. 2020, *Being at the crossroads of identity in novel Exit West (2017) dari Mohsin Hamid. Skripsi. Universitas Negeri Padang.*

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This article is about the analysis of a novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid. The problem of this analysis focuses on the issue of being at the crossroads of identity. The aim of analysis is to find out how far the characters Saeed and Nadia expose the issue of being at the crossroads of identity. This analysis involved fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting to reveal the issue of being at the crossroad of identity in the novel. The analysis deals with the concepts of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha that is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows that the protagonists are a young man and a young woman who are faced with a condition that places them to be at their identity to be at the crossroads of identity. They are faced to the hybridity culture condition. Thus, the character makes the effort to adapt his own culture and adopt to the new culture. The efforts to adapt his own culture and adopt to the new culture can be seen through the attempts they make to blend with the society in attaining their identity. The effort of adapt his own culture and adopt to the new culture adapt his own culture and adopt to the new culture lead the characters become mimickry.

Key words: *Hybridity, Adapt, Adopt, Identity, Mimickry, Culture.*

Abstrak

Randa, Asherly. 2020, *Being at the crossroads of identity in novel Exit West (2017) dari Mohsin Hamid. Skripsi. Universitas Negeri Padang.*

Pembimbing: Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D.

Skripsi ini merupakan analisis dari novel *Exit West* (2017) dari Mohsin Hamid. Analisa dalam masalah ini focus terhadap isu saat berada pada persimpangan identitas. Analisa ini bertujuan untuk memperlihatkan sejauh mana karakter Saeed dan Nadia menunjukkan bagaimana isu saat berada di persimpangan identitas. Analisa ini kontribusi elemen fiksi (karakter, seting, dan plot/konflik) memberi gambaran bagaimana isu saat berada di persimpangan identitas di novel ini. Dalam analisa ini menggunakan konsep hybridity dari Homi K. Bhabha yang mendukung teks dan konteks interpretasi. Hasil dari analisa ini menunjukkan tokoh protagonist adalah perempuan remaja dan laki laki remaja yang dihadapkan dengan kondisi kebingungan saat berada di persimpangan identitas. Mereka di hadapkan pada dua budaya yang berbeda. Kedua karakter ini membuat perilaku untuk beradaptasi dengan budaya barat dan mengadopsi budaya barat. Perilaku beradaptasi dan mengadopsi budaya barat ini merujukan mereka pada mimikri terhadap budaya tersebut.

Kata kunci: *Hybriditas, Adaptasi, Adopsi, Identitas, Mimikri, Budaya.*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the problem

In postcolonial era, many people from the former Western colony often follow and implement cultural expression of the West. They do this because they think that the Western culture can improve their social status. They mix their native language with the language of the West. They eat the same food as the westerners. Many of them want to go to the West. They want to go to the West because various reasons. Many of them migrate from their homelands because of the civil war. They leave their homeland to seek for shelter. The war that took place at Middle East pushes many people to migrate to European countries. Although they were able to stay in a country, they receive a lot of restrictions from European. Due to the excessive number of migrants coming to Europe, many European give the rule for the refugees who burden them and a number of anti-immigrant right wing groups also emerged exploiting the huge crisis. The refugees have to leave the refugee camps in west to escape the restriction of anti-immigrant.

In order to survive in a new country, the refugees have to obey the regulation made by host country, even though the government has provided a place for migrants. The refugees still get bad treatment by native people. They get the rules that must leave the culture of their homeland. They are trying to choose their identity. According to Collins dictionary (2019),

identity is the characteristics they have that distinguish them from others. In the process of being at the crossroad of identity, the refugees have to choose between uses the culture of the society or use their homeland culture. They are faced with conditions where they must choose to blend in with the culture of the new area or must leave the area. They have to survive to getting their identities. They keep moving in one place to another place.

The issue of being at the crossroads of identity is reflected through the efforts made by the refugees in order to choose their identity. They try to adopt the culture of the society to survive in the new country. In some cases, one of them cannot fit in the new culture and back to their homeland culture. In other case one of them can fit in to the new culture although they are difficult to be able to become a Western. A lot of them move from the West because they cannot be able to become Western. In moving to other country, they prepare the plan in order to escape from Europe determining. They are out of all the rules that are not appropriate, discriminate and the oppression they got.

This study analyzes the issue of being at crossroads of identity which refers to the act of choosing the identity when leaving their homeland. They are faced with having to keep using their culture or having to use western culture. The ways of getting their identity is interesting. It is described in the novel *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. This novel shows the struggle of the refugees. The characters have their own ways to get their identities. They show how the refugees can feel the prosperity of their identities.

1.2 Being At the Crossroads of Identity

There are two keywords to form the terminology in this study. They are crossroads and identity. According to Merriam-Webster (2019) crossroads means a crucial point especially where a decision must be made. While in Collins dictionary (2019), identity is the characteristics they have that distinguish them from others. In this analysis, being at the crossroads of identity means the vacillation to make a decision that one has to do either to show his true identity or to appear with a new identity when living in a new country.

The issues of being at the crossroads of identity in this analysis refer to the efforts which are done by characters to choose their own identity in staying at the new place. In this novel, at the crossroads of identity is represented by two characters whose show how the people get the vacillation experience to make certain about their identity. When arrive in a new place, they have to become the native people. They must learn about the people lives of that country. They try to adapt the culture of the new place. They learn to socialize with the community.

1.3 A Brief Discussion of the Author's Biography

Mohsin Hamid (born 23 July 1971) is a Pakistani novelist, writer and brand consultant. Hamid spent part of his childhood in the United States, where he stayed from the age of 3 to 9 while his father, a university

professor, was enrolled in a PhD program at Stanford University. He then moved with his family back to Lahore, Pakistan, and attended the Lahore American School. At the age of 18, Hamid returned to the United States to continue his education. He graduated from Princeton University *summa cum laude* in 1993, having studied under the writers Joyce Carol Oates and Toni Morrison. Hamid wrote the first draft of his first novel for a fiction workshop taught by Morrison. He returned to Pakistan after college to continue working on it.

Hamid moved to London in the summer of 2001, initially intending to stay only one year. Although he frequently returned to Pakistan to write, he continued to live in London for eight years, becoming a dual citizen of the United Kingdom in 2006. Hamid's first novel, *Moth Smoke*, told the story of a marijuana-smoking ex-banker in post-nuclear-test Lahore who falls in love with his best friend's wife and becomes a heroin addict. It was published in 2000, and quickly became a cult hit in Pakistan and among Indians who speak English. It was also a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award given to the best first novel in the US, and was adapted for television in Pakistan and as an operetta in Italy. His second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, told the story of a Pakistani man who decides to leave his high-flying life in America after a failed love affair and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It was published in 2007 and became a million-copy international best seller, reaching No.4 on the New York Times Best Seller list. The novel was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, won several awards including

the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and the Asian American Literary Award, and was translated into over 25 languages. *The Guardian* selected it as one of the books that defined the decade. His third novel, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, was excerpted by *The New Yorker* in their 24 September 2012 issue and by *Granta* in their Spring 2013 issue, and was released in March 2013 by Riverhead Books.

Hamid has also written on politics, art, literature, travel, and other topics, most recently on Pakistan's internal division and extremism in an op-ed for the *New York Times*. His journalism, essays, and stories have appeared in *TIME*, *The Guardian*, *Dawn*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The International Herald Tribune*, the *Paris Review*, and other publications. In 2013 he was named one of the world's 100 Leading Global Thinkers by *Foreign Policy* magazine.

Hamid's most recent novel, *Exit West*, is about a young couple, Nadia and Saeed, and their relationship in a time where the world is taken by storm by migrants. It was shortlisted for the 2017 Man Booker prize.

1.4 Exit West

Exit West (2017), a novel by Mohsin Hamid reflects the issue of being at the crossroads of identity. Being at the crossroads of identity in this novel refers to the immigrants who get vacillation to appear their identity when they are staying in the new place. It is represented by the two main

characters. The first character named Saeed. The first character cannot blend with the society. He still uses his culture despite trying the culture of west. The second character named Nadia. The second character assimilates to the new culture. This novel shows how refugees get the identity when they are in a new area. Both characters are leaving their homeland to seek the shelter. They both come from the same country which has civil war. Although they come to the refugee camp, they never get the shelter. They have to keep the rules of the Western. They have to use foreign language to escape the oppression of anti-migrant. The both characters keep moving to seek shelter. They both are trying to adopt the culture of society. Even though they can escape from the West, they have to blend with the society in their new area. They have different way to determine their identity, such as to imitate and to assimilate the new culture. The first character is imitating the new culture whereas the second character is assimilating to the new culture.

The first character's ways to get identity can be seen through failed to adapt with the West culture and imitate the people who adapt his homeland culture. He cannot adjust his self to the West culture. He chooses to back to his homeland culture because failed to attune to the West culture. He backs to his homeland culture as his identity. He married a religious woman who came from descendants of his homeland.

Unlike the first character, the second character ways to show her identity can be seen through her adopt to the West culture. She changes her lifestyle when she was at university. She assimilates to the West culture. She is being

exploited by the nativist. She becomes a mimicry to the Western culture. She never becomes a Western people.

1.5 Problem of study

The issue of crossroads of identity emerged as an important issue in the novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid. Thus, there are some research questions to analyze the topic; at the crossroads of identity are formulated as follow:

1. How far does the novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid expose the issue of being at the crossroads of identity?
2. To what extend do the characters, setting and plot (conflict) in the novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid contribute in revealing the issue of being at the crossroads of identity?

1.6 Purpose of study

There are some purposes used to analyze the issue of at the crossroads of identity which are formulated as follow:

1. This study is aimed to find out how far the novel *Exit West* (2017) exposed the issue of being at the crossroads of identity.
2. This study is aimed to find out how far the characters, setting, and plot (conflict) in this novel reveals the issue of being at the crossroads identity.

1.7 Previous study

The analysis of *Exit West* (2017) that focused on analyzing about being at the crossroad of identity, in the same novel has not been found yet. However, there are some studies that give contribution and inspiration in analysing this novel. The first, *An Analysis in the Light of Global Migration Crisis* by Muhammed Salahudheen VP that focuses on this focuses on showing how the adverse effects are received by immigrants and current refugee crisis. The second, the work by Alassane Abdoulaye DIA entitled *Diversity Vs Difference: A Critical Analysis of Hybridity and Cultural Identity Crisis in the Novels of Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Chinua Achebe*. It focuses on the hybridization experience of Africans.

The first analysis by Muhammed Salahudheen VP (2017) is a journal entitled *an Analysis in The Light of Global Migration Crisis in Exit West* novel. The analysis is about how the psychological impact faced by refugees as they travel from their homeland. This article analyzed the novel by using Derrida's deconstruction to assert the migrants have good influence of many states. The research is using the character and conflict to find the influence of migrant and refugee. The result of this study is how migrants had a crucial role in the economic growth of many states and in the cultural exchange as well.

The second, Alassane Abdoulaye DIA (2014) is a journal entitled *Diversity Vs Difference: A Critical Analysis of Hybridity and Cultural*

Identity Crisis in the Novels of Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Chinua Achebe.

The analysis is focused on identity crisis and cultural differences. This article analysis also shows how the Africans decided to accept or reject the global civilization. This article analyzed by using a comparative approach of hybridization experienced by Africans. The research uses the character to find the hybridization experience of Africans. The result of this article is how the Africans rejected the Western cultural influence on the intellectual to develop different strategies to survive culturally.

Unlike the previous study, this study focuses on the characters find out their identity in the new land. They have many cultural which include by the characters. The refugees try to blend with the Western cultures in revealing their identity. This analysis explores some fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting in revealing the meaning of the novel. Moreover, it aims to reveal the act of being at the crossroads of identity.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The analysis about the issue of being at the crossroads of the identity in this novel is related to the struggle of immigrant to attune their self to anti-migrant existence. The migrant is challenged to stable of the identity of migrant, the refugees, or the displaced indigenous people. It related to the idea of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha. According to Mary Klages book entitled *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed* (2006) state:

Hybridity or transnationalism is a challenge to that idea of a unified 'imaginary community'; hybridity brings up the idea that you might belong to many communities or culture at once, and transnationalism brings up the idea that identity may not be determined by national boundaries, either political or geographic. (p. 159)

The quotation above explains that the hybridity is the unification of many cultures to one of individual or groups society. In this novel, the characters explain the immigrant who get hybrid of culture. Hybridity is something that will be felt by immigrants. This will be a challenge that will be faced by migrants. Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable. According to Homi K. Bhabha in *the Location of Culture* state:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this third space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory. . . may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (p.38)

It is the 'in-between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important. Hybridity has frequently been used in post-colonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural 'exchange'. In hybridity, many colonized are at the mimicry stage because many are mimicking the style of the colonizer. Colonizer is considered a reference to the culture of reforming identity in a subversion strategy that changes the discriminated view of the colonizer. In results, the colonized try

to adapt the colonizer cultures. The colonized will face up the process of cultural adaptation of the colonizer.

In additions on process of adaptation, the immigrant will confront three phases of adaptation. There are adapt, adopt, and adept phases. The adopt phase is imitative phase because it uses the form as it stands, While the adept phase can be assumed as the discovery of free voice. In this analysis, the characters use the adapt phase. The adapt phase can be defined as the modification phase. Adapt phase modifies the original one to make it more suitable for new purpose. The consciousness and filter process exist in this phase.

The analysis of this novel is supported by text and context-based interpretation. Context based interpretation means that the analysis of this novel not only focused on the text itself, but also involved the phenomenon that really happens in the real world. Meanwhile, the text-based interpretation is done by exposing the fictional devices of the text itself. Guerin (2005:64) says that this approach focuses on the analysis and the interpretation of the text itself. It focuses on character, plot (conflict), and setting.

The character is a person that has its own life in literary works. The character has its own conflict and problem solving that will give the reader an idea for understanding the whole story. In this novel *Exit West (2017)* by

Mohsin Hamid, the characters reflect the Eastern immigrants with different culture between Western people.

The second fictional device is plot. Plot is sequence of events that make up a story. There is a conflict in plot. According to Guerin (2005:8), plot is conflict involving protagonist and antagonist. They are internal conflict which occurs within a character and external conflict which occurs between two or more characters and environment. In order to analyze this novel, the identification to plot and conflict give contribution to find character actions to getting out of the oppression. In this analysis the conflict happened through two characters to other characters.

Setting also gives contribution in order to reveal the meaning of this novel. According to Mario Klarer in his book entitled "*An Introduction to Literary Studies* (2004:33), the term "setting" denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text development. This means that setting is consist of environment, situation, atmosphere, time and place in which the story happens. It relates to the circumstances, location, and atmosphere of the characters in the story. The story takes place in Europe that there are many refugees. They leave their country, which is lurching toward a civil war, in search of a new life.

1.9 Methodology

The analysis of novel *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid is done by through text and context-based interpretation. It is done by analyzing fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting. These devices are related to each other. Characters and conflicts are used to reveal the way to escape the misery by analyzing character's reactions toward the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstance and atmosphere during migration. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. In addition, this analysis uses the idea of hybridity who claimed by Homi K. Bhabha. The hybridity lead the characters into mimickry.