

**Research Article**

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**Imagining Home in Diaspora in Leila S. Chudori's *Pulang*  
(Home)**

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**Abstract**

Diaspora literature has been one of literary genres that is flourishing for the last few years in Indonesia. This paper aims at analyzing the concept of home in diaspora in Leila S. Chudori's *Pulang* (Home). The novel is about the experience of Indonesian exile in 1960s in French, in which he and his friends cannot return home due to the accusation of their involvement in Indonesian banned party. Through sociological approach, the concept of home by Mallet and Golob are used to explore this literary work. A close reading method and classification based on the topic are used in researching the novel. The result shows that although the main character experiences marginalization and estrangement, he still wants to return to Indonesia. The concept of home for the main character is not about the movement or created in the new land, but home is where one originates and that is a place to return.

**Keywords:** diaspora, home

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**1. Introduction**

Diaspora has become one of literary genres flourishing today as the impact of people's massive movement across geographical borders. Previously denoted as the exile of the Jews, today diaspora can be referred to "*migrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, and ethnic community*" (Tololian in Clifford 303).<sup>[1]</sup>

Leila S. Chudori's *Pulang* (Home) is one of the Indonesian renowned novels receiving 2013 Khatulistiwa Literary Award, depicting about the diasporic life experienced by the main character, an Indonesian exile who was stranded in French due to the 1966 Indonesian riot. During his 'travelling', Dimas Suryo, the main character, and his exile comrades should receive the reality that they have no access to return to Indonesia during the New Order regime as they are considered as part of the banned party in Indonesia. Married in French to a French woman, Vivienne Deveraux, Dimas Suryo, has a daughter named Lintang Utara, who finally finds the way to enter her father's homeland after the demise of Suharto in 1998. Taking the setting in Jakarta and Paris in 1950s, 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s, this novel questions the Dimas's quest for the term 'homeland' through flash-back plots and some points of views.

In diaspora, home is the main element that is unendlessly questioned. People travelling out of their land of origin may have their own definition of home. This paper is intended to analyze the concept of home in diaspora through the voice of the main character in Leila S. Chudori's *Pulang*.

## 2. Methods

The concept of home has been asserted in various definitions. Mallet (2004:63)<sup>[2]</sup> mentions that “home is place but it is also a space inhabited by family, people, things, and belongings...” while Rapport and Overing (2000:157)<sup>[3]</sup> state it is as “organization of space over time and the allocation of resources in space overtime.” Moreover, Mallet (2004) and Wright (1991) in Rapport and Overing (2000) explain that home contains the storage of memory and something longed for.

In terms of diaspora, Gollob (2013:156)<sup>[4]</sup> mentions that the traditional view of home which is fixed and based on territory has been superseded with the new concept that home is more flexible. Home “...concerned less with the routinisation of space and time and more with their fluidity and with individual’s continuous movement through them (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Rapport and Overing 2003; Ahmed 1999; Mallet 2004; Lukas and Purkayastha 2007 in Golob 2013). Mallet (2004), at the end of her works also defines home in various way so that one can have different meanings of home.

The writer focuses the meaning of home in symbolic definition in terms of longing and memory. Through the method of close-reading and sociological approach, this paper is aimed in analyzing the concept of home in diaspora encompasses in the main character. Some data are put into some categories and then analyzed based on the topics discussed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Constructing Belongingness and Estrangement

One of definitions of home proposed by Mallet (2004:84) is that home can be “*a dwelling place or a lived space of interaction between people, places, things or perhaps both.*” In the novel, it is told that Dimas experiences the situation of home both in Indonesia and French. In Indonesia, Dimas interact with his family, comrades, and friends, while in French he encounters situation of intermingling which he has to mention as family. His exile friends are family, beside his wife and daughter.

*Restoran Tanah Air* is the temporary home for Dimas Suryo and his exile comrades. Not only due to the menu that may invoke the feeling of being at home, but the restaurant also provides the past atmosphere that provokes the Indonesian feeling. The restaurant is the place that unites Dimas and other exile friends as it is built based on the same feeling of being expelled, and established based on the same idealistic idea beside the economic reason.

Here, I sit with them: Risjaf, my best friend who is the most handsome, manly, wavy haired, kind hearted; Nugroho Dewantoro, a happy and perseverance man from Yogyakarta with his Clark Gable’s moustache; Tjai Sin Soe (sometimes known as Tjahjadi Sukarna) who is attached to his calculator in his hand, closer than his own soul, who is more action and more thinking (Chudori, 2013:50).<sup>[5]</sup>

Just like the definition of home, in the restaurant kitchen, there is a domestic division of working. The practices prove that the members perceive their own tasks, where the task is divided based on their capability. The organization of working is managed.

Almost midnight, when the guests go home, Tjai is busy counting the incoming cash with calculator and gives the tips; Mas Nug checks whether the frozen food have been put in the freezer; Risjaf ensures that all the tables and desks have been cleared and changes the posters when the programs end; while Bahrum and Yazir cleans up the plates, glasses, bowls, spoons, forks, and knives (Chudori, 2013:50).

Home can also be related to the feeling of comfort, where the members feel an adequate relaxation when being at home (Mallet, 2004:84). The member will feel secure and strong in-group feeling even though sometimes there is uneasy feeling. Dimas and his exile comrades should accept the reality that the situation in Indonesia which had not changed a lot since the New Order regime still exists after the long time Dimas and friends leave Indonesia. The same feeling of being expelled, the needs of economy security lead into the sense of help, affection, belongingness, and collectivism. The tight in-group feeling builds them to help and treat each other, including raising *Restoran Tanah Air* as the asset of their life. The substitution of work responsibility runs during Dimas' absence due to his sickness is one example of this sense.

On the other hand, the sense of belongingness and affection is on the opposite of the reality where Dimas the friends are actually marginalized or estranged. Though they build those positive senses, the negative sense also rises as they do not have a good relation with Indonesian Embassy in Paris. Their background as exile, in which their visa to return to Indonesia is always refused, makes them to have a feeling of marginalization and estrangement.

### 3.2. Home as Place to Return

As expelled from his home country, Dimas Suryo calls himself as 'flaneur', a person wandering around without fixed destination. 'Flaneur' describes the condition of Dimas who perceives conviction that he should go around. Dimas explains that the word "flanerie" in 16th century shows that people's activities walking around during the summer. The meaning has wider connotation that people would go travelling to fulfill their curiosity to learn local environment and culture (Chudori, 2013: 277).

Dimas cites his interest on Charles Baudelaire that the hectic of journey is the home for flaneur, as fish and the water. A flaneur would build his house in the movement. He would feel leave the house, but he succeeded in building the house in the journey (277). This is also supported by Rapport and Overing (158) asserting that "...not only can one be at home in movement, but that movement can be one's very home."

However, Dimas negates that statements. Though he has been wandering for years and building his family out of his land of origin, he still has different opinion about home.

"Home is a place where your family is staying." I follow Dimas to the terrace. Trying to keep my opinion without insulting.

"Home is where I feel I can go home," answer Dimas. Cold. Flat. (Chudori 2013:206).

Dimas perceives opinion that the home for him is still Indonesia, despite the fact that he has been expelled and has been in the movement for years. "*French has never been a home for Dimas. I has already realized it since we met. There is something avoiding him to be happy. There is a blood flood in his homeland*" (203). Despite the fact of his displacement, home still means where one can return. Dimas mentions that he would rather to be buried in Karet, a funeral located in Jakarta, than that in French. For him, Karet, as the representation of Indonesia, is the most suitable place for return. "*I want to return to my home, Lintang. To a place which knows my aroma, body, and soul. I want to return to Karet*"(279-280).

Chudori through the character of Dimas finds their own definition about home. When the scholars put that home may be found in their movement during the diaspora, Dimas is still on his agreement that home is a place where he was born and raised, and where his most origin families live. "*Different from other seagulls, Dimas is the one who longs for return home; not to the family he creates in the new land*"(205).

Dimas attitude is somehow paradox when seeing Indonesia by describing Jakarta as, "...*I smell the ditch of Jakarta mixed with the aroma of clove and black coffee ...*"(11). Although he feels expelled, ignored, and somehow indignant, he still needs the ways to Indonesia. This is what is called as 'double

consciousness'. Vertovec (1997)<sup>[6]</sup> defines three meaning of diaspora, in which the second definition comes to the terms of past and present, old and new, here and there, which later leads into double consciousness. Diasporic people longing for the memory and belongings of the homeland will try to return to the homeland or recreating the past to the present. Dimas does the recreating the past to the present through his effort of opening and managing *Restoran Tanah Air*; on the other hand, he still longs for the return.

Mallet (2004:158) mentions that home may be associated with security and or oppression, tyranny, and persecution. Therefore, the meaning of home may not only associated with anything interesting, but also those that are connected with sadness. Even though Dimas experiences uneasy feeling due to the cruel persecution of his comrades in Indonesia, he still longs for Indonesia. His desire to return is due to his feeling of being part of Indonesia, being part of the persecuted comrades. He still feel that he belongs to them.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Home has various meaning for everyone based on his experience. For Dimas Suryo, the main character, even though home can be reproduced in the new country, he still insists that home is a place to return, namely the place for going home after the long journey. Dimas Suryo's journey, physically and mentally, results in the quest for home. Even though home in diasporic people is usually found in the new land or in the movement itself; however, Dimas Suryo still keeps in his mind that his home is in Indonesia. Karet, Jakarta, is the representation of home for mentally return, a place Dimas Suryo chooses for his funeral rather than Pere Lachaise, Paris. In line with Golob (2013:158) who mentions that homeland is "*idyllic country, a dream place and as a heaven on the earth,*" Dimas Suryo still idealizes his homeland despite the marginalization and estrangement that he encounters. However, at the ending, it is not known, whether finally Dimas returns to Karet or not.

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