

Representation of Middle Eastern Countries in Geni Jora's Novel: An Analysis of Travel Literature According to Carl Thompson Theory¹

Awla Akbar Ilma¹ | Fadlil Munawwar Manshur² | Sudibyo³

awlaakbar24@gmail.com¹

¹²³ Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the representation of society and culture in Middle Eastern countries, including Morocco, Syria, and Jordan in the novel Geni Jora. The theory used is the theory of travel literature with the concept of representation of others according to Carl Thompson. Travel literature is a report about the world that is written based on the author's subjectivity and has a role in shaping the reader's knowledge. The results of the analysis show that the novel Geni Jora uses exploratory journey narratives and presents critical and courageous subjects. Morocco is described as a tolerant Islamic country because it succeeded in combining European modernity with past Islamic religiosity and Jewish culture. While Syria is described as a modern country, it is less religious and too Westernized. Likewise, Jordan is described as an Islamic country, but too westernized and inconsistent with Islamic ethics. The novel represents a contemporary travel literary genre that presents alternative and realistic narratives about the condition of the Middle East as a complex and diverse region. The novel also represents the contemporary travel genre which has not succeeded in narrating cosmopolitanism by still presenting competitive narratives and travel subjects that are superior when interacting with the characters encountered.

Keywords: *Geni Jora, Middle Eastern, Cosmopolitanism, Competition, travel writing.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan representasi masyarakat dan budaya di negara-negara Timur Tengah antara lain Maroko, Suriah, dan Yordania dalam narasi Geni Jora. Teori yang digunakan ialah sastra perjalanan dengan konsep representasi liyan Carl Thompson. Sastra perjalanan merupakan laporan tentang dunia yang ditulis berdasarkan subjektivitas pengarang dan memiliki peran dalam membentuk pengetahuan pembaca. Hasil analisis menunjukkan novel gubahan Abidah El Khalieqy tersebut menggunakan narasi perjalanan eksplorasi dan menghadirkan subjek kritis dan berani. Maroko digambarkan sebagai negara Islam yang toleran sebab berhasil memadukan modernitas Eropa dengan religiusitas Islam masa lalu, serta kebudayaan masyarakat Yahudi. Sementara Suriah digambarkan sebagai negara modern namun kurang religius dan terlalu kebarat-baratan. Demikian pula Yordania digambarkan sebagai negara Islam, namun terlalu kebarat-baratan dan tidak konsisten memegang etika Islam. Novel mewakili genre sastra perjalanan kontemporer yang menghadirkan narasi alternatif dan realistik tentang kondisi Timur Tengah sebagai kawasan yang kompleks dan beragam. Geni Jora juga mewakili genre perjalanan kontemporer yang belum berhasil menarasikan kosmopolitanisme dengan masih menghadirkan narasi persaingan dan subjek perjalanan yang superior ketika berinteraksi dengan tokoh-tokoh yang ditemui.

Kata Kunci: Geni Jora, Timur Tengah, kosmopolitanisme, persaingan, sastra perjalanan



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INTRODUCTION

The views of the Indonesian people towards countries in the Middle East region are quite complex. In general, the Middle East region is understood by the people of Indonesia as the center of the Islamic religion. Therefore, Middle Eastern Islam is a reference, model, and role model for Indonesian people's lives (Bubalo & Fealy, 2007; Madjid, 2013; Shah, 2001). While some experts explain that Indonesian Islam also has unique characteristics and spirit according to the context and character of the people (Azzumardi Azra, 2002; Luthfi, 2016; Van Bruinessen, 1994). Therefore, comparisons and differences between Islam in Indonesia and the Middle East are considered irrelevant. On the other hand, there is an extreme view that explains that as the center of Islam, the Middle East is synonymous with crime, poverty, war, and the greed of society (Indriana, 2017; Ruslin, 2013; Sahide, 2015). Such a view emphasizes the paradoxical condition of the Middle East as the center of the Islamic religion, but at the same time does not apply the spirit of Islamic values.

This study aims to explain the image of the Middle East in a travel novel entitled *Geni Jora* by Abidah El Khalieqy which was published in (2009). Novel *Geni Jora* was one of the top winners in the *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (Jakarta Arts Council) novel contest. This novel is part of the revival of Islamic literature after the New Order regime so that it depicts the Middle East today in the post-reform era which is synonymous with globalization and contemporary culture. The world of the Middle East will be viewed in a more complex and different way from the depiction of the Middle East in literary works of trips to the Middle East in the past such as the seminal novels by Hamka *Di Bawah Lindungan Kabah* (1938) and *Orang Jawa Naik Haji* (1983) by Danarto. Meanwhile, compared to the novels *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2004) and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (2009) which focus on the destination countries for Egypt, *Geni Jora's* novel presents a number of Middle Eastern countries as travel destinations so that they can become samples of how the Middle East as a region is described.

Several studies with the object of study *Geni Jora* have been carried out by many researchers, including Nugraha (2019) with a focus on studies on the resistance of female leaders to gender ideology, Ana Fitria (2011) with a focus on studies on *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) life and social aspects, and Sugiarti (2014) with a focus on the choice of diction in the novel as a form of aesthetic elements. The results of research on the novel *Geni Jora* are generally dominated by gender studies, the sociology of literature in Islamic boarding schools' life, and language style. This research is different from existing studies with a focus on the representation of Middle Eastern countries in the novel *Geni Jora*.

The character Jora in the novel *Geni Jora* is narrated as an Indonesian woman who is visiting the city of Damascus in Syria for undergraduate study. In the process of studying, she visited

Morocco to attend a world women's conference. Before returning to Syria, he had visited Jordan to trace the traces of Islam and the lives of the prophets. What is the picture of the people, region and culture of the three countries? What is the position of the main character in the novel *Geni Jora* in his interaction with the people of the three countries? To answer this question, the theory of travel literature according to Carl Thompson in the book *Travel Writing* (2011) is used. Research using travel literature theory according to Carl Thompson has been previously conducted, including by Hidayah et al. (2022) with the object of study being the novels *Helen* and *Sukanta's* travels during the Dutch colonial period. Then research by Kurniawati & Atikurrahman (2021) with a focus on the journeys of Third World figures to the First World. Unlike previous research, this study focuses on the travels of Indonesian figures to Middle Eastern countries.

According to Thompson, travel literature contains issues regarding the construction of knowledge through the concept of depicting the world, self and society encountered. Thompson (2011) defines the travel novel as "...negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space." With this understanding, the travel novel is a work that narrates a meeting between the self and another self. The main character actively take position in front of the people they meet and evaluate and construct certain images of the places they visit.

The narrative strategy used in travel novels is to use empirical facts and fictional narratives. With such a composition, the information contained in travel literature is authoritative, reliable, and at the same time entertaining to the reader. Subtly literary works produce certain imagination and knowledge to the reader (Cocking, 2009; Hentsch, 1992). Words in travel literature actively construct certain images about the places and characters of the people visited (Fussell, 1982; Pratt, 2007; Thompson, 2011). The narrative technique commonly used is using the first person pronoun so that the author's personal experiences can be conveyed freely. Therefore, personal impressions and subjective views tend to dominate the substance of travel literature.

In representing others, travel figures character themselves according to Thompson (2011) tend to be positioned as superior. While the people and culture visited are rated as lower. This assessment is subjective due to the influence of hatred, fear, envy, spontaneous, not understood, or the desire to dominate. Travel often represents the world and its inhabitants with prejudices, fantasies and assumptions like an orientalist. Travel figures characters often discuss power and conquest of the destination country based on personal ego.

Geni Jora as a travel novel of Indonesia to Middle Eastern countries is assumed to still place the subject as superior, but not absolute and comprehensive. The factor of Indonesia's closeness to the Middle East as a fellow Eastern region and the influence of Muslim brotherhood influences the characteristics of subjectivity and self-superiority of travel figures. Moreover, Abidah El Khalieqy has a pesantren background and Islamic ideology. Therefore, this research will provide

a number of descriptions of how self-subjectivity views the other in a fluid and fluid way. Not only in a limited and rigid form of colonial self-superiority which consistently undermines (othering) for the purpose of ruling or strengthening power (Thompson, 2011).

The method used in this research is descriptive analysis based on textual data. Searching and collecting textual data is done by observing and noting (Sudaryanto, 1993). The textual units collected refer to concepts in Carl Thompson's theory, including: representing the other and self-description. Meanwhile, in the analysis phase, a comparison method is used by comparing textual data to determine existing relations, whether demeaning, demeaning, equivalent or unequal.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Thompson (2011) divides the types of travel into two, namely touristic and exploratory. Touristic trips are planned and organized so as to offer comfort during the trip. In contrast, exploratory travel contains a high degree of uncertainty, but provides many experiences through a number of challenges, discomfort, suffering, and the struggle to be happy.

Geni Jora's novel is a complex journey story that alternates between exploratory and touristic journeys. Jora's trip to Syria and Morocco was a learning experience. The learning journey is neither entirely comfortable nor entirely risky. Although the learning journey is planned and mapped out, it also invites challenges. Both the atmosphere and culture in Syria and Morocco are shown to cause culture shock in Jora's character, forcing him to adapt as best he can. He is also shown interacting with many men who behave badly, raising the possibility of bullying. Nonetheless, Jora is shown to be successful in adapting to and combating potential mistreatment by male characters.

A trip to Jordan at a glance can be categorized as a tourist trip, but when read in detail there are also explorations that are carried out when visiting tourist attractions. Jora's character is shown not to have fun or to spend free time, but instead to explore the culture, habits, religiosity, and characteristics of Jordanian society. Thus, Geni Jora's novel is a travel novel that is mapped and planned, while still providing narratives of exploration and challenges. Geni Jora's novel combines an exploratory and touristic journey.

Such a complex type of journey occurs because the traveler in Geni Jora's novel is different from the typical adventurous type. Jora's character as the main character and narrator is a self-explorer who is thirsty for knowledge, knowledge, and religion. In every trip and meeting with various types of people, a critical and inquisitive attitude stands out which makes him constantly be an exploratory self. He is also interested in the idea of gender equality and makes it a capital in the journey. He is a brave figure and critical of various forms of activity that lead to patriarchal domination. In his study and travel trips, he always refuses to be restrained and limited either by

patriarchal ideology or by established values. With such adventurous traits and character types, the Middle Eastern countries visited are viewed and assessed in a complex manner. The Middle East is not just a backward region as portrayed by European orientalists, and at the same time they do not regard the Middle East as a region that is wholly holy and wholly ideal. The Middle East is a large and complex region, made up of many countries, with different cultures and characteristics of society.

The Representation of Morocco, Syria, and Jordan State

Morocco is narrated and concluded by the character Jora as a tolerant Islamic state. Such an image is shown through the metaphor of Morocco as Muhammad's westernmost land. As the westernmost region, Morocco is narrated that it has succeeded in acculturating Islamic values and European culture and caring for both so that it becomes a developed country. In addition, Morocco is also described as successful in accommodating the nuances of the hills and the atmosphere of the desert with urban modernity influenced by French culture. The Sahara desert is metaphorized as *the legendary landscape of Allah's garden that is preserved*, while urban Europe is metaphorized as a symbol of progress. The beautiful Moroccan mountains are likened to a painting by a French painter entitled *eugene de la qua*. This situation shows that the character Jora admires and appreciates Morocco as a developed country and has managed to combine two different situations into a distinctive beauty.

Morocco is also emphasized as a country that takes historical buildings seriously and combines them with modern European-style architecture. Morocco has been dubbed the world's best preserved old city numerous times (Khalieqy, 2002). Tangier and New Town are described as cities that combine the feel of an old town with the modern feel of Europe.

New Town, sebuah kota bernuansa Perancis modern, yang memiliki jalan-jalan lebar yang terbentang dengan pola bagaikan bintang-bintang berserakan. Dengan hanya beberapa menit di sini, seseorang dapat melintasi abad.

New Town, a city with modern French nuances, which has wide streets that stretch out with patterns like scattered stars. With only a few minutes here, one could accross centuries.

(page 14-15)

The sentence *across the centuries* in the quote above has the context that walking in the city of New Town will feel Morocco with classic to modern French nuances. Islamic influence is also shown to be strong in architectural styles, forms of buildings, to the sound of the call to prayer. Such a narrative strengthens the Moroccan state as a hybrid space that accommodates a variety of different cultural forms. Jora's character is shown many times admiring and judging Morocco as an ideal country.

Meanwhile, Damascus, Syria's capital, is narrated as a city of education by the character Jora. There are many large universities in this city, including El Sulaimaniyeh University in Taqiyeh, where Jora studied. Students at this university have been shown to come from various countries and to be serious about learning. Various discussion activities are held on a regular basis. This university is marketed as having extensive Islamic scientific authority. Furthermore, Damascus is thought to have developed into a modern city with far-reaching European influences. Shopping malls are shown to dominate all areas, and people are shown to live in European style.

The billboards along the road were shown to be monopolized by photos of foreign artists such as Rasheed Thaha, an artist of Moroccan, French, and Arabic descent, Kazee Al Saher, an artist of Iraqi descent, Majida Al-Roumi, Fairuz, Wardah, Mayada El-Hennawi, and others. Damascus residents are shown to be oriented toward the modern lifestyle exemplified by these billboard artists. Jora, the main character, expresses regret about the situation. Islamic elements and the influence of university authorities appear to be ignored by Damascus residents in general. As a result, local culture and Islamic elements are increasingly being pushed by European modernity and capitalism.

Jora, the main character, assessed Jordan on the way there as an Islamic country rich in tourist attractions, both natural and Islamic historical. Jora's character is shown admiring the site of Prophet Sulaiman's royal heritage and the settlement where Prophet Saleh's descendants lived in *Made-in Shaleh*, Carved Mountain Village. This visit made Jora feel more religious and connected to the Prophets. This tour is not a form of colonialism and self-superiority, but is a means for Jora to imagine Islam in the past and strengthen his faith. This tourist visit made Jora's character even more religious. Moreover, Jora has a santri background, so this orientation is an added value in the formation of his identity.

Jora also was visiting the Robh El-Khali Desert. Jora views the Robh El-Khali desert mythologically as a heap of the city's past. Residents are shown to be treacherous in order for Allah to punish them. Jora, the main character, then understands the betrayal story as a way to remember God's greatness. Jordan is emphasized as an Islamic city that demonstrates Allah's greatness. As a result, his faith grew even stronger.

Jora's final destination in Jordan is the Dead Sea. This visit shows that Jordan is a country with beautiful natural scenery. Both domestic and foreign tourists can float while enjoying the freshness of the sea. Jora's character seems to visualize the beauty of the Dead Sea with a metaphor here, you can suddenly feel the majesty of *Khidir* without being a Prophet (El Khalieqy, 2009). That is, tourists can float in the sea like the Prophet Khidir. This metaphor explains that Jordan is a country with a beautiful marine environment combined with Islamic nuances. Islam

and natural conditions are two compositions that combine to create the beauty of Jordan. The water looks clear, the sea fish are clearly visible and they are not afraid of tourists.

The Image of Moroccan, Syrian and Jordanian Peoples

Explicitly, Moroccan society is narrated as a tolerant society. Communities from all walks of life, both Western and Eastern, black and white, African, French, Jewish and indigenous people are shown to live in togetherness. Each other is shown holding hands, playing football together, even trading together.

Di sini kutemukan orang Afrika bergandeng tangan dengan orang Prancis. Orang Prancis main football bersama orang Arab dan orang Yahudi menjual taring macam pada orang Herber. Sementara orang Herber berdesak-desakan menggotong permadani Tazenakht dengan permata asli dan berlian untuk ditawarkan kepada orang Afrika. Berduyun-duyun manusia dari berbagai ras yang berkulit hitam, berkulit cokelat, dan berkulit putih, meramaikan kehidupan dan membentuk kehidupan Maroko.

Here I found the Africans arm in arm with the French. The French play football with the Arabs and the Jews sell canines of sorts to the Herberians. Meanwhile the Herberians were jostling to carry Tazenakht rugs with real gems and diamonds to offer to the Africans. Crowds of people of various races, black, brown and white, liven up life and shape Moroccan life.

(page 12-13)

Such a description shows that Moroccan society is assessed by Jora as a tolerant country, accepting various forms of differences. In addition, as a country with a majority Muslim population, Morocco does not hate or expel the Jewish community at all. King Mohammad V even guaranteed security, pampered and gave special treatment to ethnic Jews. The world community is narrated by the novel dubbing Morocco as the paradise of the Jews. The city of Cassabalanca, which is located on the north coast of Morocco, is shown to accept the Jewish community well. About 20,000 Jews are indicated to have lived in this city. They were also allowed to build civilization by establishing synagogues and schools. It is proven that there were two synagogues, the existence of schools in the Talmud and Taurah, as well as eight educational institutions.

Maroko merupakan satu-satunya negeri muslim di dunia ini yang kaya akan sejarah dan budaya komunitas Yahudi.

Morocco is the only Muslim country in the world with a rich history and culture of the Jewish community.

(page 40)

Interestingly, the Jewish community is also trying to adapt to Moroccan Muslim society. In their daily lives the emphasis is on conversing in Arabic, listening to Arabic music, consuming Arabic food, and even listening to the voices of Umi Kulthum, Mohammad Abdul Wahab or Sayed Darwis in the Synagogue. As a result, the term Judaism-Islam emerged to refer to the uniqueness of the Jewish community in Morocco. This atmosphere of Judeo-Islamic acculturation was also discovered by Jora when he visited the cities of El Jadida, Essaouira and Agadir. In these coastal cities, the cultural traces of the Jewish merchants are shown to feel strong and blend with Moroccan culture. Jora's character is shown to admire such cultural multiculturalism.

In addition to Jews, the Moroccan Muslim community is shown to be tolerant of Christians. The novel narrates the city of Cassabalanca, which is inhabited by Christians, Americans, Europeans, and a variety of other ethnicities in addition to Jews. This situation has a positive impact on the character Jora because, in addition to the unique and rich culture, the people are becoming more advanced and intellectual, and the world's great thinkers are being born.

Cassabalanca. Sebuah kota yang menggabungkan Hollywood dengan kitab injil, kata Michael Wolfe. Pencakar langit yang menjulang, masjid Hassan II yang menakjubkan dengan nuansa Islam tradisional yang khas, arena olah raga George Raft, restoran-restoran italia yang mewah milik para yahudi, merupakan beberapa hal yang mewarnai kota paling sibuk di seantero jagat ini. Di bumi ini lahir bintang cemerlang, Thahar bin Jelloun, Rasheed Thaha, penyanyi ideolu, Fatima Mernissi, guru intelektual para perempuan terpelajar yang mencintai kesetaraan dan keadilan, yang konsen terhadap kondisi para perempuan.

Cassabalanca. Michael Wolfe describes it as a city that combines Hollywood and the Bible. Soaring skyscrapers, the stunning Hassan II mosque with a distinct traditional Islamic feel, the George Raft sports arena, and fine Italian restaurants owned by Jews are just a few of the highlights of the universe's busiest city. Brilliant stars, Thahar bin Jelloun, Rasheed Thaha, ideal singers, Fatima Mernissi, intellectual teachers of educated women who love equality and justice, who are concerned about the condition of women, were born on this planet.

(page 70)

Cassabalanca is a hybrid city that brings together Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities, as evidenced by the quote above. Jora's character is shown to appreciate Morocco as a country that values cultural diversity. Within this diversity, the values of equality and justice, including gender equality between men and women, are constantly pursued. Jora's figure emphasizes how Moroccan society openly accepts women's existence and self-actualization and promotes the concept of gender equality. Morocco is also trusted by the international community

to host world-class women's conferences. Women thinkers from all over the world were seen attending and appreciating the conference.

Fatima Mernissi a theorist as well as a gender activist was born in Morocco and her ideas are idealized by almost all women in the world. Fatima Mernissi is also admired by Jora for defending women's rights without abandoning Islamic values and laws. Many Moroccan women both in villages and cities are inspired and have the awareness to move forward. They are shown trying to access higher education, reach out to technology, and live in freedom. While men allow and encourage such progress. The character of Nadia Masid is an example of the ideal Moroccan woman. She was an educated, clever, and beautiful woman, but her tone was firm and bold. Such a character is in contrast to the stereotype of women in general who are beautiful but weak and become objects of male oppression.

Nadia Masid, seperti Nishwa atau Qadisha, adalah generasi masa kini yang telah menikmati kemajuan teknologi. Menyenyam pendidikan hingga perguruan tinggi dan pergi ke luar negeri dalam konferensi-konferensi. Ia bukan lagi perempuan dengan tangan belepotan tepung meramu tajin dan kuskus. Bukan pula perempuan dengan jellaba berkibar-kibar menyunggi sekeranjang pakaian kotor pergi ke arah Sungai Onila. Nadia Masid adalah prototipe perempuan terpelajar yang membawa kecenderungan khas para perempuan kelahiran Maroko Selatan.

Nadia Masid, like Nishwa or Qadisha, is a contemporary generation who has enjoyed technological advances. Education up to university and go abroad in conferences. She is no longer a woman with flour-stained hands concocting starch and couscous. Neither was a woman with a fluttering jellaba carrying a basket of dirty clothes going towards the Onila River. Nadia Masid is the prototype of an educated woman who carries the typical tendencies of women born in South Morocco.

(page 26)

If Moroccan society is described as progressive, the image of the people of Damascus in the novel is exactly the opposite. The people of Damascus are described as Muslim people who are mostly educated, but do not fully have the awareness to progress and develop. Damascus men are shown even though they are Muslims, but every night they consume khamr and do bad things. Meanwhile, even though women are educated, they do not adhere to the rules of the Islamic religion and still only emphasize physical beauty. The women of Damascus are stressed that they are still trapped by a patriarchal system that positions itself as the object of male joy and lacks the spirit of gender equality.

Kulihat, semua laki-laki di negeri ini minum khamar setiap hari, setiap saat. Dan lihat para perempuannya, bahkan kaum terpelajarnya pergi kuliah tanpa beha, persis Germaine Greer, sang dewi revolusi seks dari benua kanguru.

I see, all the men in this country drink *khamr* every day, all the time. And look at the women, even the educated people go to college without a bra, just like *Germaine Greer*, the goddess of sex revolution from the kangaroo continent.

(page 148)

This Novel considers that the people of Damascus have not been able to live in a balanced way. Western influence is considered to be too dominant and not accompanied by an acculturation process, thus diluting the spirit of locality and eroding Islamic culture. This condition was also assessed by Jora when he visited Jordan. Jordanian society is shown as an Islamic society with beautiful natural scenery, but it has not fully implemented Islamic law. This is indicated by the presence of tourists who open their genitals. According to Jora, the local community did not protest, but instead allowed it and considered it normal.

In view of this situation, Jora's character, who has a *santri* (students in pesantren) background, seems to recite Surah An-Nas Verse 5 *yu waswisu fi shudur annas minkum*, which means that whispers into the human heart. This means that the opening of (*aurat*) the private parts of human has the potential to invite crimes. The novel implicitly regrets this condition. The potential for crime actually arises in the country of Jordan which is predominantly Muslim with a large history of Islamic civilization. The novel kind of gives advice to Jordanian people to have the courage to create rules that are in accordance with Islamic culture for tourists.

Based on the discussion above, it can be seen that Morocco, Syria and Jordan are represented as world Islamic centers, but have different levels of Islam. Morocco is described as the most ideal country because it is able to acculturate a variety of different cultures and people. Morocco has also succeeded in becoming an ideal space for women to actualize achieving gender equality. While Syria and Jordan are described as countries with Islamic culture, they have not been able to create balance and acculturation of various cultures. Western values are considered to dominate and pollute the Islamic atmosphere in Syria and Jordan. The novel emphasizes that Islamic countries in the Middle East have different regional conditions and characteristics of society. There are countries that are able to maintain Islam and accomodates the changes, but there are also countries that fail to maintain Islamic characteristics and are increasingly being eroded by Western culture.

Self Position in Novel

Jora's character is the subject of a journey with a background in students who are critical, courageous, and uphold equality. While at the Islamic boarding school, Jora was known as a woman who dared to express her opinion and express her wishes. He even dared to refuse requests for love by many men. Although he later decided to marry Zakky's character, this marriage was started with various conditions, especially mutual respect and refusing to be oppressed.

Jora's character thus places him as a superior self and is able to be on an equal footing with society and the men he meets on his trip to the Middle East. He is emphasized as an outstanding subject, active in various discussions and seminars. She is even placed as superior to the women of Damascus who are still shackled by patriarchal culture, weak, helpless, and the object of men's favourites. Nonetheless, Jora's subject was not a colonial subject whose superiority was exploited for the purpose of dominating. Jora's character is shown to still view the Middle East region as a space where he learns and makes him open and Islamic-minded.

When interacting with the people of Jordan, the character Jora is shown admiring the atmosphere of Islam and the natural beauty of Jordan, while deploring the people of Jordan who allow tourists to open their genitals. Meanwhile, when interacting with Moroccan society, Jora is shown as an equal self with fellow gender activists and women thinkers. Morocco is interpreted as an ideal space for self-actualization because it promotes gender equality without abandoning Islamic values. Even though Jora's character does not fall for the colonial self, he also cannot be categorized as a cosmopolitan self who recognizes, studies, and appreciates differences. Jora still places himself as superior and judges other based on his standard as shown when interacting with the people of Damascus and Jordan as explained above.

With the position and position of Jora's character, Geni Jora's novel is interpreted as conveying several discourses, including the equality of Indonesian Muslims with Middle Eastern Muslims. As for Indonesian Muslim women, it is emphasized that they are equal and even outperform Muslim communities in the Middle East. Indonesian Islam is emphasized not only as a minor fringe Islam, but also as an Islamic subject that deserves to be reckoned with. Indonesian Islam is also imaged and emphasized as an open Islam that is aware of the importance of cultural hybridity and multicultural attitudes, including towards European and Jewish cultures and provides space for the existence of women. Meanwhile, the Middle East region is understood in a complex way, not only as a religious area and center of Islamic knowledge, but also as a profane area, such as capitalist cities or tourist attractions that indulge in nakedness. Such a situation provides an alternative view of the Middle East region which has so far been seen as a religious center.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it is known that the novel *Geni Jora* is a travel novel that combines exploratory trips and tours to three Middle Eastern countries, namely Morocco, Jordan, and Syria. Although these three countries are described as Islamic countries where the majority are inhabited by people who are Muslim and live in Islamic culture, but the Islamic atmosphere of these three countries has differences. Damascus is described as a country that does not implement Islamic laws at least with free women, men who drink khamar, and European influences that are too dominant.

While Jordan is described as having a strong Islamic culture and history, it has failed to maintain Islamic values and is still influenced by European free culture. Morocco is shown to be the more ideal of the two. Morocco successfully blends classical and modern elements, as well as Islamic influences with Judaism, Christianity, and European modernity. Moroccan society is progressing by accepting and encouraging gender equality while remaining true to Islam's spirit.

In this trip to the three countries, Jora's character is positioned as a superior woman, but not trapped in a colonial self, as well as not a cosmopolitan self who consistently values differences. In front of the people of Damascus and Jordan, he is placed as superior because he has a character that adheres to Islamic principles and intellectual gender equality. Meanwhile, in front of Moroccan society, Jora is placed on an equal footing and continues to admire female figures and open Moroccan society. For Jora, Morocco is the most ideal country. Moroccan society represents the perfect self: religious, intellectual and equal.

The novel conveys an implicit reflection on the equality and superiority of Indonesian Muslim women in the Middle East. Aside from that, the Middle East is viewed as both the center of Islam and a profane region with the characteristics of a society that does not fully practice Islamic values. Aside from that, the novel portrays the West and Europe as un-Islamic and overly liberated. When a Middle Eastern country is influenced by Europe, it is more likely to become a declining country. Such narrations demonstrate that the novel continues to narrate self-deprecation or othering, albeit in subtle ways.

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