

Cultural Issue of Frances Hodgson Burnett Novel *The Secret Garden*

Aprilia Rosmarie

Master Degree in Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University

Jl. Prof. H. Soedarto S.H., Semarang

Email: rose15494@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Reading activity is a fascinating activity. It would trigger and enhance the readers' critical thinking. Reading activity could be for academic or non-academic purpose. In literature reading, the readers may use any textbook or fictions book. Literature and culture has their connectivity between them. This study aimed to determine the cultural issue of 'The Secret Garden' novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. In analysing the data, the writer used qualitative method. After doing the novel analysis, the researcher could conclude the cultural issues in this novel. The research results of the cultural issues were bullying and racism. Bullying and racism appeared and happened since a long time. Both of them would give any bad impacts to the victim. Doing sarcasm, hatred, revenge, bullying, and racism are disgraceful behaviour.*

Keywords: *cultural issue, novel analysis, literature, bullying, racism*

Abstrak: Kegiatan membaca adalah sesuatu hal yang menyenangkan. Kegiatan ini dapat memacu dan meningkatkan cara berpikir kritis pembaca. Para pembaca literatur bisa menggunakan buku pelajaran atau buku fiksi. Literatur dan budaya memiliki hubungan satu sama lain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan isu budaya yang terdapat pada novel 'The Secret Garden' yang ditulis oleh Frances Hodgson Burnett. Penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk menganalisis data. Setelah melakukan analisis, penulis mengambil kesimpulan bahwa isu budaya yang terdapat dalam novel ini adalah intimidasi dan rasis. Intimidasi dan rasis telah muncul dan berlangsung sejak lama. Kedua hal ini dapat memberikan efek negatif kepada korban. Melakukan sarkasme, kebencian, balas dendam, intimidasi dan rasis adalah perbuatan tercela.

Kata kunci: isu budaya, analisis novel, literature, intimidasi, rasis

1. INTRODUCTION

Living in digital era, many language aspects may appear in visual and auditory media and can't be separated with the written word to acquire the information. One skill that needed to acquire the information is by reading. Reading is one of the four English skills that important in academic and non-academic life. In academic life, reading activity could help the students to build their positive character, trigger them to think critically and have a broad-minded. Critical thinking has an essential role. The word of 'critical', 'criticism' and 'critic' originate from the ancient Greek word *kritikos*, meaning able to judge, discern or decide (Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013, p.7).

Literature and culture has their connectivity between them. During years and from the oldest of time, literature represented culture. Culture definition by Banks & Banks (2004, p.8) is "the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them." Another definition by Brown (2007), he mentioned that culture is the way of people think, feel, and connect to each other.

Meanwhile the definition of literature defined by Eyong et. al (2011), they said that literature represented on people creativity and imagination poured in magazine, books, journals, newspaper, cartoons, television show, and movie. Popular literature is one of the popular culture' product to entertain readers (Emsita, 2013). It can be through book, journals,

magazine, newspaper, cartoon, and etc. Since the products of popular literature are easy to be understood and many people love it, their interest in reading popular literature is increasing. Popular literature has many genres such as Adventure, romance, mystery, melodrama, fantasy, and alien beings or states.

In this study, the researcher would like to analyze the Secret Garden Novel, the timeless best-selling novel. It was written by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Frances Hodgson Burnett was a British-born American novelist and playwright. She wrote many novels, and well-known as the novelist for children, one of the famous novels is the Secret Garden. This novel was published in 1911 consisted of three hundred and seventy five pages and divided into twenty seven chapters. And it is considered as a classic of English children literature.

Since the Education department urged the students to have personal reading, they included in national curriculum 2013. The goal of Curriculum 2013 is encouraging the students to be creative, have critical thinking skills, and be innovative (Ramadhan & Ramdani, 2015). Indonesia government craves for all English teachers to construct the interactive classroom because of the demand for English proficiency at schools. One way to stimulate or create an interactive classroom by reading literature. Devilito et al (2016) stated that literature is the foundation or basic and the result of creativity. Further, he said that it is a media to express their language. Shomoossi (2004, p. 98) added that, "The interactive classroom is the result of mutual interaction between teachers and students, students and students, group discussion, and any other classroom participation". The benefit of having the critical thinking skills, it can help the students to analyze, evaluate, and construct their thinking. Moreover, Critical Thinking has an essential role in the class because this is the important ability which can contribute to the development of human being.

Thus, the purpose of this article was to investigate the cultural issue in this novel, The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The following research questions guided the inquiry:

RQ1. WHAT IS / ARE THE CULTURAL ISSUE OF THE SECRET GARDEN NOVEL WRITTEN BY FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT?

Therefore, it is beneficial to do this literary analysis, especially for every teachers who taught language, should be competent in appreciation literature. And this literary analysis would help the students to enrich their knowledge and think critically by reading literature. Furthermore, the researcher hopes by doing this study, it also can motivate all the teachers to encourage the students to being knowledgeable in reading skill.

This paper begins with a review of the relevant literature. Then, describe the study's method. The results of the study are then presented followed by discussion of the implications and future areas of study.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative method. Walia (2015) stated that in qualitative research mostly focused on words rather than numbers. And the researcher used descriptive qualitative. The novel that will be analysed is The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It was the timeless best-selling novel. This novel has three hundred and seventy five pages and divided into twenty seven chapters.

The procedure of analysis is the researcher read and comprehended the contents of the novel, continued in choosing data by finding the cultural issue through the characteristics of each characters or participants. Then, the researcher may conclude the issue or issues that reported in this novel by doing library research.

2. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Secret Garden novel was the best-selling novel. This novel has already been filmed in 1993 and it will launch on the next year 2020, the director by Marc Munden. At least, the researcher got nine characters, Mary Lennox as the main character, Mr and Mrs Lennox as their parents, her *ayah*, Basil and his sisters who always cheated and teased her when she stayed before she went to her uncle, the hunchback man Mr Archibald Craven and her cousin, Mester Colin. Another characters are Mrs Medlock, Martha, Dickon (main character) who always helped Mary constructed their 'secret garden'.

After reading and comprehending the content of this novel, the researcher concluded the cultural issues that found in this novel are bullying and racism. In *Cambridge Dictionary Online (2019)*, bully means "someone who hurts or frightens someone else, often over a period of time and often forcing them to do something that they do not want to do." Bullying appears in many communities since long time. Alison (2016) mentioned that bullying is a global problem that may give any impacts to emotional, social, and physical.

We started on the first proof on bullying section, in this story Mary Lennox as the main character was bullied from Basil and his siblings. It was written in this excerpt, on page 17, fifth paragraph:

#Excerpt 1:

He was always teasing his sisters. He danced round and round her and made faces and sang and laughed.

'Mistress Mary, quite contrary,

How does your garden grow?

With silver bells, and cockle shells,

And marigolds all in a row.'

Basil did a verbal bullying to Mary because of her appearance and attitude. Bauman & Del Rio (2006) said that teasing or naming or calling against an individual is called verbal bullying. This threats and uncomfortable social situations can irritate the victims mentally. Basil did not only doing verbally bullying but prejudicial bullying. The most reason why Basil teased Mary because of her bad appearance and attitude. The researcher detected many proofs that showed Mary was ugly inside and outside. It was represented on these excerpts:

#Excerpt 2:

"Everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because" -Chapter 1, paragraph 1, page 11-

Further, she detected another proof to convince that she was truly ugly:

#Excerpt 3:

"So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way,....." -Chapter 1, paragraph 1, page 11-

Based on these excerpts, it proved that Mary had a bad looking and that's why her parents did not want to take care and raise her. She was taken care by *ayah* and then being isolated in India. Then, another character, Mrs Crawford, detected and showed her empathy even though she was truly ugly, as written in this excerpt:

#Excerpt 4:

"She is such a plain child,' Mrs Crawford said pityingly afterward and Mary has the most unattractive ways I ever saw in a child."

-Chapter 2, paragraph 12, page 18-

Though Mrs Crawford showed her empathy to her, but it will not help because Mary had a bad temper and showed that she was a selfish girl. The author explained it clearly on this excerpt,

#Excerpt 5:

"....., by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish little pig as ever lived." -Chapter 1, paragraph 1, page 11-

Then, she added,

#Excerpt 6:

"She did not miss her at all, in fact, and she was a self-absorbed child she gave her entire thought to herself, as she had always done." -Chapter 2, paragraph 1, page 16-

The researcher argued that she got her retaliation because she did bad thing to others, physically bullying to others, especially to her ayah, who kept and raised her, as written in this excerpt,

#Excerpt 7:

"....., and Mary had always slapped her ayah in the face when she was angry." -Chapter 4, paragraph 4, page 28-

It was a rude attitude. She slapped her ayah in the face when she was angry. The researcher assumed that she was truly a hothead people. Another assumption showed that Mary grew into spoiled girl, everything that she needed should be fulfilled and no one could against her. It made her to be a selfish girl. She also uttered harsh words to other people who mocked at her. It showed on this excerpt,

#Excerpt 8:

"Pig! Pig! Daughter of Pigs!, she said because to call a native a pig is the worst insult of all. -Chapter 1, paragraph 5, page 12-

Calling someone a pig is the worst insult of all. And she kept grumbling and yelling that calling-name. If she could control her temper at least many people would honour and put their sympathy to her. But she kept having and showing this bad attitude to others even she moved to England. In England, she knew that her parents were passed away caused by cholera virus and her ayah ran out leaving her alone because of the cholera virus affected their castle, she was lived alone and alone. Then her uncle, Mr Craven told one of his servants to pick her up for protecting her and she moved to England.

When she arrived and lived in the Mr Craven' castle, she puzzled to herself about what kind of house that she would live in. Then, she asked to Mrs Medlock, one of his maiden, about Mr Craven' castle, then she said:

#Excerpt 9:

"The house is six hundred years old, and it's on the edge of the moor, and there's near a hundred rooms in it, though most of them shut up and locked. And there are pictures and fine old furniture and things that been there for ages, and there's a big park round it and gardens and trees with branches trailing to the ground-some of them." -Chapter 2, paragraph 31, page 21-

Mr Craven is really kind, he provided all things that Mary needed. Also, he commanded Mrs Medlock and Martha to be her nursemaid. Unluckily, Martha did not spoil her like what her previous ayah did. Martha asked Mary to dress herself, because in the previous, her ayah always dressed her. For the first time, when Martha saw Mary, she looked confused and thought that Mary was black people, it showed in this excerpt:

#Excerpt 10:

"I dare say its because there's such a lot o' blacks there instead o' respectable white people. When I heard you was comin' from India I thought you was a black too." – Chapter 4, paragraph 12, page 29-

Racism. Yes, racism is the second issue that represented in this novel. Racism itself means that prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism to other people because of they are different race or ethnicity, or having different belief (Newman, 2012). The racism issue not only happened in this era, but it started in the early stage, 19th and 20th century. Many racism or race cases happened such as aversive racism, color terminology, color blindness, cultural, economic, institutional, racial discrimination, and etc. The case that happened to Mary was called color terminology. It happened because of the different color, black versus white.

White people identically found in people who have fair or bright skin, for example American, Australian, Russian, meanwhile Africans or Asians belongs to the black people. That's why Martha thought that Mary had black skin because she heard that she came from India. India is in the South Asia. When Mary heard this, she got very furious. And as the result, she mocked her, did verbal bullying. It represented on this excerpt:

#Excerpt 11:

"Mary sat up in bed, furious. What! She said. What! You thought I was a native. You – you daughter of a pig." –Chapter 4, paragraph 13, page 29.-

She repeated calling someone with pig. It was really bad and impolite. Luckily, Martha did not do any revenge on her though she got angry at first but she could control her tempered. She said:

#Excerpt 12:

"Who are you callin' names? She said. You needn't be so vexed. That's not th' way for a young lady to talk. I've nothin' against th' blacks. When you read about 'em in tracts they're always ver religious. You always read as a black's a man an; a brother. I've never seen a black, an' I was fair pleased to think I was going' to see one close. When I come in to light your fire this mornin' I crep' up to your bed an' pulled th' cover back careful to look at you. An' there you was', disappointedly, 'no more black than me – for all you're so yeller." –Chapter 4, paragraph 14, page 29.-

Martha tried to calm Mary down but Mary kept crying and crying. She bent over her and tried to comfort her. Marta accent was in Yorkshire. So, that's why the grammar is quite different with the common English. Luckily, Mary could understand what she said and be calm down and control her anger. The researcher detected that Mary also did racism to the black people. The researcher suggested that she did not know that she actually did it. It showed in this excerpt:

#Excerpt 13:

"The native servants she had been used to in India were not in the least like this. They were obsequious and servile and did not presume to talk to their masters as if they were their equals. They made salaams and called them 'protector of the poor and names of that sort." –Chapter 4, paragraph 4, page 28.-

Mary judged the black people were poor and they were supposed to have that calling-name. As a good people we should respect and honour other people, because we are equal. There is no any difference each other. Black and yellow, red and white, or any skin colours, we have to love one to another. Luckily, the racism issue already decreased time by time meanwhile the bullying still increasing year by year.

In the school context, bullying and racism always appear, started from children and their peers, even to teachers and peers. Amy Huneck, a bullying intervention expert said that 10-16

% of Indonesian students got bullying from their friends and also from their teachers. Amy Huneck did an investigation in 2006. And it doesn't happen in Education system in Indonesia but spread all over the world (Simbolon, 2012). It's really a big responsibility for all parents, teachers, or neighbour to educate their children about bullying and racism, so it may avoid a bad impact that will happen to the victims.

3. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result, the researcher drew the conclusion to answer the research question: the cultural issues that happened in this novel were bullying and racism. It was not happened in the fairy tale or novel, but also in daily life. It still happens until now. Sharaia et al (2015) said that bullying is deemed as a serious problem in academic settings in all parts in the world. It might happen at home, at school, at surroundings, and in many public places. It gave a bad impact for the children as the victims who were bullied. They would feel fear and weak at the same time and it could decrease their confidence.

Then, the researcher may suggest some suggestions for :

3.1. Teacher

- This literature analysis may help the teacher to enrich their knowledge about analysing the novel, not only intrinsic and extrinsic parts but it could be in cultural issues.
- This literature analysis may help the teacher as the guide line to do the same activity to spot the cultural issue in different novel and in different genre.

3.2. Future Researcher

The future researcher may apply this kind of research, about the cultural issue or maybe another issue that found in different novel and genre.

REFERENCES

- Alison, B. M. (2016). School Level Predictors of Bullying Among High School Students. *Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology*, 44, <http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.043>
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education (2nd ed)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Burnett, F. H. (1993). *The Secret Garden*. Wordsworth Editions Limited. 1
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching (5th ed.)*. White Plains, NY: Pearson.
- Butterworth, J & Thwaites, G. (2013). *Thinking Skills: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (2nd Edition)*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge Unity Press.
- Cambridge Dictionary Online. Retrieved Online. (2019) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bully?q=bullying> Accessed on 16 July 2019.
- Devilito, R., Nugraheni E.W., & Kundharu S. (2016). *Psychological analysis of novel kerumunan terakhir by okky madasari, the value of character education, and teaching material of indonesian college in university*. Proceeding The 2nd International Conference On Teacher Training and Education, 2 (1), pp. 677-684.
- Emsita, M. (2013). *Pragmatic analysis on best selling novel a walk to remember by Nicholas Sparks*. Lexicon, Journal of English Language and Literature, Vol 2, No. 1.

- Eyong, C. T., Mufwaya, M., & Foy, I. I. (2011). *Literature and Culture – The Sustainability Connection From An African Perspective*. Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems, Vol. 2
- Gordon, S. (2019). " 6 Types of Bullying Every Parent Should Know About". *Bullying*. <https://www.verywellfamily.com/types-of-bullying-parents-should-know-about-4153882> Accessed on 16 July 2019
- Newman, D. M. (2012). *Sociology: exploring the architecture of everyday life (9th ed.)*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Ramadhan, M. A., & Ramdani, S. D. (2015). *Vocational Ecuation Perspective on Curriculum 2013 and its Role in Indonesia Economic Development*. Retrieved August 23, 2019, from <https://eprints.uny.ac.id/24449/>
- Shafqat H. & Afroz J. (2015). *Bullying in Elementary Schools: Its Causes and Effects on Students*. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.6, No.19 pp , 43-56.
- Shahriar K, Zhicheng Phil Xu and Yu Zhang. (2015). *The impact of bullying on educational performance in Ghana: A Bias-reducing Matching Approach elected*.
- Shomoossi, N. (2004). The effect of teacher's questioning behavior on EFL classroom interaction: A classroom research study. *The Reading Matrix*, 4, 96-104.
- Walia, R. (2015). A Saga of Qualitative Research. *Social Crimonol*, 5(2), 124.