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Building Altruism Through Novels

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Abstract

Many human values can be found in the literary works, including novel. These values represent human behaviors, one of which is altruism. Altruism is a type of social behavior which is described as behavior motivated by concern for others or by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social reward, or the desire to avoid punishment or sanctions (Swank, Jacqueline M., et.al., 2016 cited in Christensen, 2018). Altruism is not easy to find in real life, but not in the literary works. This study aims to find out how altruism is represented in the novel through the behavior of the characters by using text analysis with narrative inquiry as the methodology. The novels analyzed in this study are three novels which are taken randomly (purposive random). The result shows that altruism in the novels appear both in negative or positive impacts for the doers or the characters. Altruism found in the novel is expected to be able to build altruism attitude toward the readers, in this case, students of literature class.

Key Words: altruism, novel, representation

Abstrak

Banyak nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dapat ditemukan dalam karya sastra, termasuk novel. Nilai-nilai ini mewakili perilaku manusia, salah satunya adalah altruisme. Altruisme adalah jenis perilaku sosial yang digambarkan sebagai perilaku yang dimotivasi oleh kepedulian terhadap orang lain atau oleh nilai-nilai yang diinternalisasi, tujuan, dan penghargaan diri daripada dengan harapan imbalan nyata atau sosial, atau keinginan untuk menghindari hukuman atau sanksi (Swank, Jacqueline M., et.al., 2016 dikutip dalam Christensen, 2018). Altruisme tidak mudah ditemukan dalam kehidupan nyata, tetapi tidak dalam karya sastra. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana altruisme diwakili dalam novel melalui perilaku karakter dengan menggunakan analisis teks dengan penyelidikan naratif sebagai metodologi. Novel-novel yang dianalisis dalam penelitian ini adalah tiga novel yang diambil secara acak (purposive random). Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa altruisme dalam novel muncul baik dalam dampak negatif atau positif bagi pelaku atau karakter. Altruisme yang ditemukan dalam novel diharapkan mampu membangun sikap altruisme terhadap pembaca, dalam hal ini siswa kelas sastra.

Kata Kunci: altruisme, novel, representasi

INTRODUCTION

Anupama, et.al. (2017) stated that “human values play a crucial role in the society, for they are said to be the foundation of human beings for a head leading a better desirable life. Importance of human values is seen right from preschool stage that lays the Information of foundation on human values and end in the period to adolescence.” Therefore, human values become an important topic to discuss in many fields of study, including literary studies, especially literary works or in this case, novel.

In this study, the discussion of human value relates to social value by exploring human behavior, behavior showing selflessness that is called as altruism. Concerning altruism in novels, Christensen (2018) stated that finding altruism in real life is not easy, but it is possible in works of literature. Swank, Jacqueline M., Jonathan H. Ohrt, and E. H. M. Robinson (2016) cited in Christensen (2018) added that “altruism is described as ...behavior motivated by concern for others or by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards, or the desire to avoid punishment or sanctions”. This behavior can be found in the characters of the novels that are represented in the narratives of the novels. Thus, this study investigated altruism by exploring the values in the characters’ personality of the three selected novels.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive interpretative analytical study with narrative inquiry. The data is taken from three novels that are selected randomly (purposive random) as the source of the data. They are *The Bluest Eye* (hereinafter, TBE) written by Toni Morrison, *The Great Gatsby* (hereinafter, TGG) by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *David Copperfield* (hereinafter, DC) by Charles Dickens. Besides, a psychoanalytical feminism and sociological approaches are also used to support the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, this study focuses on altruism as social behavior. The behavior related to altruism can be divided into two categories:

- behavior motivated by concern for others
- behavior motivated by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards or by the desire to avoid punishment or sanctions

However, the social behavior that appears in human beings are built by the individual behavior from the internalized values they got. Therefore, the discussion of this paper begins with the discussion on individual behavior related to individual morality and then, altruism that represented by the behavior of the characters in TBE, TGG and DC.

Individual Behavior

There are three individual moral behaviors discussed in TBE. They are honesty, sincerity and humility as part of integrity. Petrick & Quin (cited in Iyus, 2012: 159) stated that integrity capacities provide places for honesty, sincerity and humility on character development to consider a balanced judgment as moral decision. Morrison represented honesty in TBE by showing the importance of honesty in making happiness for the characters in the form of family interaction, friendship or social relation within the unlucky condition they got. As we can see even though they lived in a very apprehensive period, they still can hold the good side of humanity.

Meanwhile, sincerity which means keeping action free from expecting any rewards in return are found in the action or response of each character toward the event or specific situation such as protecting each other, helping others in need. They are ready to let everything out to help her friend out, even the only money for reaching their hope is being sacrificed. Then, humility which concerns with a person who considered himself to not to over proud than others and does not have arrogant attitude because they are conscious of their bad qualities is indicated by some of the characteristic of a humble person. In this novel, because of the great depression, people start to forget about humanity, they love to seek the social class to reach. The characters that are mostly poor realize their condition, but they still keep this behavior.

Fitzgerald represents the moral individual behavior by showing the two sides of the behaviors in TGG. The dual side behaviors in TGG are (dis)honesty, (in)sincerity, and (un)fairness. Besides those behaviors, another individual behavior, self-control, is also found in TGG. Dishonesty, insincerity and unfairness in TGG show that the lack of honesty, sincerity and fairness relates to self-control and influences the social behavior of the characters. However, the lack of moral values in the individual behavior are also caused by the social and cultural aspects. The sociocultural contexts lead to the social class and social struggle that happened in the 1920s. The way the characters represents the social class is based on those behaviors and actions, for instance: the way they dress, do the hobby, choose the residence, and earn money. The characters in TGG prefer to compare their class with other character's class implicitly. As the result, it creates the lack of morality in order to satisfy themselves.

In DC, the third novel, there are three dominant moral individual behaviors: (dis)honesty, courage and self-motivation. Similar to TBE and TGG, the behaviors in DC conducted by the characters also reflect the social cultural situation happened in 1800s, the era of London's Industrial Revolution. Dicken describes how the changing from agricultural to industrial era make many people lose their integrity. However, Dickens also shows morality is still needed in building individual behavior which will give an impact on the social behavior.

Altruism as a social behavior

Altruism is analyzed through the narrative of TBE. In TBE, the novel presents a behavior motivated by concern for others or the desire to avoid punishment or sanctions. This behavior of act of altruism is shown by the major and the minor characters (Claudia, Claudia's mother, Frieda, Blue Jack, Mrs. Breedlove and Pecola) by keeping the pain, keeping the truth, giving up the bicycle, sharing the melon, keeping life's burden, and letting the life away that show protecting and caring other people without a doubt which means sacrificing.

Behavior motivated by concern for others also dominates in the second novel, TGG. Gatsby and Nick show this behavior. When Gatsby took the blame for the accident done by Daisy, it indicates the behavior; while Nick sacrificed his relationship to Tom, Daisy's husband by helping Gatsby and Daisy meeting.

DC, the last novel, presents behavior motivated by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards. This is shown by Mr. Pegotty who didn't let his financial issue to be a reason to do no good to other people and by Miss Betsy who took care of others.

As mentioned previously, the altruistic acts done by the characters also reflect the social cultural context in the novel. In TBE, the setting of time in the novel is 1940s when, due to the effect of the Great Depression in America, African-American should encounter daily obstacles which racially biased social codes. The implementation of Jim Crow Law which makes the African- American inferior in almost all aspects of life is also described in TBE. The obstacles faced by the characters lead them do the altruistic acts as mentioned previously.

Besides the setting of time, psychoanalytic feminism which is inspired by Freud's thought about determinism, especially those that relate to the sexuality stages referring to gender inequality, also influences the aforementioned altruistic acts. The inequality in TBE shows how society views masculinity better than femininity. In the inferiority, the women characters in TBE presents the altruistic acts although they provide negative or positive impacts for the doers or the characters.

Meanwhile, TGG presents the Great Expression (1920s). This era that is also called as Jazz Era is an era of frivolous spending and consumption. It is shown by the mass production of cars that was being introduced. In short, showing social status in a person such as having a flashy new car plays an important role in *The Great Gatsby* (Holweg, 2011). To obtain the social status, people would do anything including doing something illegal as Gatsby did. In TGG, it can be said that the altruistic acts done by the characters refers to more personal interest than social interest showing both positive and negative impacts for the doers.

Victorian Era (the 1800s) is found in DC. The novel tells the story around the time of London's Industrial Revolution. Like every industrial revolution in other countries, most people suffered. Overall wages of people were drastically dropped, making them unable to have a normal nucleus family. With the shortage of money, even kids sometimes can't rely on their parents for foods. That is the reason of many kids work in factories and industries. This condition prevented kids to get good health and education. Similar to TGG, the altruistic acts in DC also refer to more personal interest in order to save their own condition. As a result, the doers get positive and negative impacts from the acts.

COCLUSION

The three novels show that altruistic acts done by the characters built from the moral individual behavior they have. From the narratives of the narrators who depict the acts, it can be said that the result of the study shows that altruism occurred in the novels mostly refers to empathy-altruism, altruistic behavior, which is mainly performed as an attempt to reduce the other person's suffering (cited in Bierhoff and Rohmann, 2004, p. 351). Altruism referring to the behavior motivated by concern for others that dominantly found in the novels proved it. Although the selfless behaviors they did give either positive or negative impact on the doers, the doers accept it sincerely. In addition, the social-cultural context of each novel affects the altruistic acts. The difference among them is TBE which is categorized as a contemporary novel presents social interest in the altruistic acts; while TGG and DC as classical novels indicate more individual interest. Finally, it can be concluded reading novels may build the readers' insight on altruism as a social behavior.

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