A STUDY OF LOVE IN NICHOLAS SPARKS'S THE BEST OF ME

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A STUDY OF LOVE IN NICHOLAS SPARKS'S *THE BEST OF ME*

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ABSTRACT: The title of the study is "A Study of Love in Nicholas Sparks's *The Best of Me*." The aim of this study is to discover the types of love in the main character and to find out how love is portrayed in the novel. The study adopts the theory of new criticism by Abrams (1999), character by Stanton (1965), methods of characterization by Murphy (1972), types of love by Lewis (1960/1988) and styles of love by Lee (1973). The research methods qualitative research using intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The data are taken from *The Best of Me* novel that is written by Nicholas Sparks. The study found that the characteristics of the main character which is: Dawson is brave, generous, hard worker, diligent, Independent, good looking, and handsome. The kinds of love that the writer finds in Dawson character is agape or charity love. After doing the analysis, the thesis writer concludes that love happens between friends and couple is known as agape or mostly associated with interpersonal love.

Keywords: *character, love, agape*

ABSTRAK: Judul dari penelitian ini adalah *A Study of Love in Nicholas Sparks's The Best of Me*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tipe-tipe cinta dalam karakter utama dan mencari tahu bagaimana cinta digambarkan dalam novel tersebut. Penelitian ini memakai teori kritik sastra dari Abrams (1999), teori karakter dari Stanton (1965), metode karakterisasi dari Murp (1972), teori tipe-tipe cinta dari Lewis (1960/1988) dan teori gaya cinta dari Lee (1973). Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dan data diambil menggunakan pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik. Penelitian ini mengambil data dari novel *The Best of Me* yang ditulis oleh Nicholas Sparks. Penelitian ini menemukan karakteristik dari pemain utama yaitu: Dawson adalah berani, murah hati, pekerja keras, rajin, mandiri, berpenampilan menarik, dan ganteng. Jenis-jenis cinta yang penulis temukan dalam karakter Dawson adalah cinta agape atau charity. Setelah melakukan analisis, penulis menyimpulkan bahwa cinta yang terjadi antara teman dan pasangan dikenal sebagai agape atau sebagian besar berhubungan dengan cinta interpersonal.

Kata Kunci: karakter, cinta, agape

INTRODUCTION

Everyone in the world has love. Love is an invisible thing. It is something that cannot be touched and can only be felt. Love is a universal feeling or emotion and every human on this earth should love someone. Therefore, nobody can deny the existence of love in this world. Sometimes he/she needs to describe a love that he/she has for someone in words. Love is also symbolized as a heart. Young people also celebrate love day as a Valentine's day February 14. In Greek mythology love is also illustrated as "Cupid", an angel of love. Cupid can make man love woman or woman love man with his love.

According to Catron, love is the most powerful emotion a human being can experience *(2014)*. Love also can make a marvel such as when someone feels sad, love can make them to feel better than before, when someone in a bad condition and give up in life, love can make them to have spirit of life again.

The reason why the writer chooses this topic and this novel because the writer finds the kind of love inside Dawson's character. It makes the writer interested to analyses the kind of love that Dawson have. Dawson's love is when he can spend all of his time with Amanda. But after he moved there are different situation, he cannot be Amanda's boy but Dawson want to give the best of me to Amanda's life. There are the reasons why writer wants to analyze the type of love that exist inside this story through Dawson's characters.

From the novel Nicholas Sparks's *The Best of Me*, the writer finds statement of the problems which are (1) What type of love does Dawson have? (2) How is Dawson's love portrayed in the novel? The objective of the study is to analyze the type of Dawson has and how it is portrayed in the novel.

REVIEW OF RILATED LITERATURE

Review of Previous Studies

Love is already analyzed before in some thesis, there are come from Lutfi Umaroh Zuhri entitled *Melanie Strider's Struggle for Love in Stephanie Meyer's "The Host"* and also from Nany Viristi Indriyati entitled *Isabella Swan's Ways to Find Her True Love in Stephanie Meyer's "Twilight"*. Her thesis talks about the struggle to get love. In the thesis entitled *Melanie Strider's Struggle for Love in*

Stephanie Meyer's "The Host", it illustrates the motive and the way of Melanie to fulfill her love. In *Isabella Swan's ways to Find Her True Love in Stephanie Meyer's "Twilight"*, it shows that Bella tries to get Edward's love as the representation of her ways to find her true love.

This study is different from the above studies, the writer explains about the theory of characterization and also uses psychological approach to know about psychology of the main character in the novel

New Criticism

Criticism or more specifically literary criticism is a term for concerned defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating work of literature. According to dictionary, new criticism is an approach to the critical study of literature that concentrates on textual explication and rejects historical and biographical study as irrelevant to an understanding of the total formal organization of a work. According to (Abrams, 1999: 81), the new criticism differs from one another in many ways: (1)The principles of the new criticism are basically verbal. (2) The distinctive procedure of a New Critic is explication, or close reading: the detailed analysis of the complex interrelations and *ambiguities* (multiple meanings) of the verbal and figurative components within a work. (3) The distinction between literary *genres*, although acknowledged, does not play an essential role in the New Criticism. The essential components of any work of literature, whether lyric, narrative, or dramatic, are conceived to be words, images, and symbols rather than character, thought, and plot.

The criticism only focuses on intrinsic element of a literary work, such as characters, plot, setting, conflicts, and etc. The extrinsic element of a literary work is not matter considered in description the literary work. The description of a literary work through new criticism is not affected by the political condition in the time the literary works written, the background of the author, the city of the literary works published, and etc. It only focuses on the draft of the literary work because new criticism assumes that the draft of the literary work is an independent object.

Theory of Character

Character is one of the most important elements in a literary work (Stanton, 1965:17). It will help the readers to know the character. Character is a person who

does the action in a story. According to Abrams, a character is an individual who exists in a dramatic or narrative work and he or she has moral dispositional qualities that can be seen from his or her dialogue and action (Abrams, 1999:32). Dialogue and action have important roles in understanding the characters (Abrams, 1999:33). There are two kinds of character in the fictional story according to Milligan (Milligan, 1983:155). They are called major character and minor character.

Methods of Characterization

Rohr Berger and Woods (1971:231) state that characterization is an author's creative process in creating a character. This process consists of describing the character's physical appearance, style, manner, thought, action and other's opinion about him or her. According to Murphy (Murphy, 1972:160 - 173), there are nine ways of the author to make his or her characters understandable, which are as follows:

1. Personal description
2. Character seen by the other characters.
3. Speech.
4. Past life.
5. Conversation of other characters.
6. Reaction.
7. Direct comment of the author.
8. Thoughts.
9. Mannerism.

Theory of Love

C. S. Lewis (1960/1988) devoted an entire book to a discussion the types of love. Drawing on earlier distinctions made by Greek philosophers, he proposed four main varieties.

1. Storge love or affection
2. Philias love or Friendship
3. Eros love
4. Charity love

According to John Lee (1973, Colours of Love) Love has six styles, which are:

1. Eros (Passionate)
2. Ludus (or game-playing)
3. Storge (Friendship)
4. Mania (possessive love)
6. Pragma (Logical love)
7. Agape (Selfless love)

RESEARCH METHOD

Literary Approach

In the book *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren classify two types of approaches, namely intrinsic and extrinsic approach. Intrinsic approach is based on the approach of the text itself, while extrinsic approach is the approach that is

out of the text, such as history, environment, economy, social and political. In analyzing this thesis, the writer will use the intrinsic and extrinsic approach to analyze the elements of a literary work as described Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1977: 159) who stated that study of literature departed from a reasonable interpretation and literary analysis itself.

Research Design

Descriptive qualitative research will be used in this study. According to Cresswell (2003:182), one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it is fundamentally interpretive. It means that the data of the research contains the quotation from the data of character and types of love, it means that the data of the research contains the quotation from Nicholas Sparks's *The Best of Me* by to illustrate and sustain the presentation.

Data Source

The source of the data is the novel *The Best of Me* written by Nicholas Sparks. It is published first in 2011 by Grand Central Group. It includes 318 pages. the novel tells about main characters Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier with their kind of love. The writer analyzes the types of love in Dawson's love throughout the characteristic.

Data Collection Procedure

To collect the valid data, the writer uses note technique. First the writer read novel by Nicholas Sparks, *The Best of Me*. Second, the writer watched movie *The Best of Me*, Third the writer identifies and notes the data that relates to Amanda and Dawson's character and Love. The last procedure, the writer analyses the data.

Data Analysis Procedure

In the data analysis procedure, the thesis writer identified the types of love and analyzed the characteristic based on the theory.

ANALYSIS

Dawson Cole's Life

In the novel, Dawson Cole is depicted as a good looking man at his age. He is 42 years old already, from the description of the author it can be concluded that Dawson is a handsome man. He is already a good looking man in his teenage year. The statement below shows that Dawson a handsome guy.

> He was forty-two years old and hadn't been on a date since he was a teenager. (Sparks, 2011:6)

In the background of his family Dawson Cole portrayed as a person who from criminal family, when he was three years old Dawson's mom had run away.

Dawson's mom leaves him when he was three years old. He is grown up with his father and other Cole members of his family.

> As far as he knew, every Cole in the family tree going back as far as his great-grandfather had spent time in prison... (Sparks, 2011:9)

He was born into a criminal family. It regarded as the most vicious and revengeful. But Dawson is not like them.

Dawson tries to stay with the boundaries of the law, but everyone could not believe that Cole could be honest or law abiding. For this reason, Dawson lived an isolated life in his hometown. But he kept his head down and did his best to maintain as low a profile as he could.

The Characteristics of Dawson Cole

(1) Physical Appearance

It is aimed to make the reader easier to differentiate each of the character.

1. Handsome

Dawson Cole is a handsome man, it is described through Amanda's character in the novel. She give reprenstation about Dawson that stated if Dawson Cole is a handsome. She said that Dawson more handsome when he grew older.

> He was tall and lean, with dark hair that fell over darker eyes, and she'd known even then that we would become only more handsome as he grew older (Sparks, 2011:34)

2. Good looking

Dawson Cole is a good looking man. It shows when Amanda meet him for the first time since twenty-five ago in Tuck's house.

> His sand-colored shirt was tucked casually into faded jeans, outlining his still-angular hips and wide shoulders. (Sparks, 2011:45)

The statement above shows that Dawson is a good looking man when he wear casual brown shirt into faded jeans, Amanda stated that Dawson more handsome than what she thinks.

(2) Characteristic/trait

Through Dawson's speech and behaviour, the reader can estimate how Dawson's personality and characteristic is.

1. Brave

According to the speech when Dawson want to get blows from his father, it can be conclude that Dawson is brave man.

> A month after he turned sixteen, his father came at him with a belt after a night of drinking, and Dawson reared up and ripped it from his father's grasp. He told his father that if he ever touched him again, he'd kill him. (Sparks, 2011:12)

It is described that the time for Dawson be strong enough to fight back, he would no longer be afraid of his father. As the blows rained down on him, he tried to imagine the courage his mom had shown by cutting all ties to the family.

2. Generous

Dawson is a generous man it shows when he visited Marilyn Bonner's house to apologize almost six months later, when he have an accident to make Dr. Bonner death. When Dawson get out of prison many things had become desperate for the Bonner family.

> She warned him never to come back. Dawson left, but later that night he returned to the farmhouse and studied the decaying structure, he walked th rows of peach and apple trees. The following week, after receiving his paycheck from Tuck, he went to the bank and had a cashier's check sent to Marilyn Bonner for almost the entire amount, along with everything he'd saved since he'd gotten out of prison, with no note attached. (Sparks, 2011:73)

From the statement above it shows Dawson is classified as a man that come from low class family but he willing to help Bonner family with these effort. Dawson is visited Marilyn Bonner's house to apologize, he also willing to help in the night to fix the Bonner's house and sent his check to Marilyn Bonner anonymously.

3. Hardworker

Dawson Cole is a types of man who always works hard every day. He tries to do the best for his job. His reason why he always does this job battery because he wants to make change for Bonner's family with what he does. It is described when he still works in prison:

> the morning had been routine. He'd been monitoring the pumping stations when one of the oil storage tanks suddenly exploded. (Sparks, 2011:2)

The other sentence that shows Dawson is hard worker when he meet Amanda for the first time since they broke up and talk about what they have been doing.

"What do you do in Louisiana?" she asked

"I'm a derrick hand on an oil rig, which basically means that I assist the driller." (Sparks, 2011:55)

Dawson is very enthusiastic tell about what he does at work on an oil rig. From the statement above it can be concluded that Dawson is hard worker.

4. Diligent

Through this reaction the readers can understand the mental and moral qualities of the person.

He found a job as a mechanic, and in the evenings he took classes in welding at the community college. (Sparks, 2011:40)

Dawson is diligent person when his release from the prison, he gets back to Oriental for a while. He wants to change his destiny with take class in welding at the community college. From the statement above, it can be concluded that Dawson is diligent person.

5. Independent

...he scrubbed the kitchen and bathroom floors with disinfectant. (Sparks, 2011:5)

His daily activities when he does not go to work shows that he is an independent man. he scrubbed the kitchen and bathroom floors. He ate, slept, ran and sometimes he went fishing alone. From the statement above, it can be concluded that Dawson is independent man.

Family Background

(1) Family Background of Amanda

Another main character in *The Best of Me* novel is Amanda Collier. Amanda is the popular Southern belle of the small town of Oriental, North Carolina. She is raised in an elite rich family.

People like Judge McCall and Sheriff Harris, Eugenia Wilcox, and the Collier and Bennett families. They were the one who'd always owned the land and farmed the corps (Sparks, 2011:8)

The statement above shows that Amanda come from a rich family, Collier's family occupied Oriental since the colonial era. It can be concluded that she come from an elite rich family.

Dawson Love's Life

(1) Dawson's Relationship with Amanda

The Best of Me tells the story of Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier. Dawson meet Amanda in high school, he always thought she was pretty, and she was rich. In the another day he has courage

to get closer with Amanda, he ask to buy her an ice cream.

Another point of view that shows his relationship with Amanda when her parents disapproval forces them apart, then Dawson decide to end up their relationship with Amanda.

Dawson cannot be part of Amanda, he wants Amanda to achieve her dreams and go to college and not go with him and escape everything. He has a dream for Amanda, maybe regrets for letting her go in a way.

Twenty years later,

He still considers Amanda to be his one and only true love, even though he did know that she is married and has children. When Amanda and Dawson find themselves back in their hometown after a friend's death, they are faced with their forbidden desire to rekindle their teenage love affair.

Another point of view that Dawson's relationship with Amanda is tragic moment, he saved Alan's life and also gives Jared's a new life, but Dawson's life could not be saved, he wants to give the best for him to make Amanda happy.

> she'd made some calls to confirm her suspicions. Dawson, she'd learned, had been taken off life support at Carolina East Regional Medical Center late Monday night. He'd been kept alive long after doctors knew he would never recover, because he was an organ donor. Dawson, she knew, had saved Alan's life but in the end, he'd saved Jared's as well. And for her that meant... everything. (Sparks, 2011:292)

From the statement above, it can be concluded that Dawson still loved her till his death. He gives Amanda happiness from what he could do best for her.

The Types of Dawson's Love

Love could make everyone willing to do something for everyone they loved. It happens when someone really love her boyfriend or his girlfriend, just like what happened in Dawson.

1. **Agape or Charity**

Agape is a selfless love, sacrificial and unconditional love. Agape is a combination of eros and storage, selfless love style that implies an obligation to love and care for other without any expectation of reciprocity or reward. Agape is mostly associated with interpersonal such as the one that happen between friends and couple. Dawson's love is classified as agape because the

author tells us about Dawson's selfless love, and how close they are in the beginning of the novel. Start from the closeness between Dawson with Amanda.

> It was one thing, after all, to know his feeling for Amanda hadn't changed; it was another thing entirely to face the future with the certainly that they never would. (Sparks, 2011:70)

He is lying to himself in thinking that he did move on as well, but he had not. He did love Amanda once and he did never stop loving her, but the situation is different since Amanda is married woman. It makes Dawson hard to face the reality that he never be together with her.

Dawson's agape is also exposed with Dr. David Bonner's family, Marilyn said thanks for Dawson's money to her family. Dawson tries to change the past by giving what he has to the Bonner's family. He is willing to do whatever he could make. He does not want to Bonner's family become poor because there is no father figure that provides for the future of their children. He has been able to make even the smallest positive in their lives, that is why Dawson sending them money all these years. From the statement below, it can be concluded that Dawson's love is agape exposed with Dr. Bonner's Family.

> "I just wanted..." "I know what you wanted," she interrupted. "But all the money in the world can't bring David back, or undo the loss I felt after he died. And it can't give my children the father they never knew." (Sparks, 2011:220)

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, there are three points to conclude the analysis.

Firstly, it describes the characteristic of Dawson Cole as presented by Nicholas Sparks in *The Best of Me*. Dawson Cole is described as generous, brave, diligent, independent, handsome and a hard worker. The ways the author portrays Dawson Cole through author's description, the speech, the thoughts, reaction, the description from different characters and conversation among the characters

Secondly, it is about the type of love in Dawson life. Dawson Cole shows the readers that he has Agape love or Charity love. Agape is a selfless love, sacrificial and unconditional love. Dawson is a types of selfless love because he willing to do whatever till he death to make Amanda happy. Dawson also want to give the best of him for Amanda.

Dawson agape is also expose with Dr. Bonner's family, he give an sacrificial to make their family life betterly.

This study hopefully contributes some insights of how love is exposed in a literary work. The writer hopes that this study can contribute useful insights for further literature research. Especially on understanding love in literary works.

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