

DEATH DRIVE: A NEGATIVE IMPACT OF RACIAL ABUSE IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED

(Dorongan Kematian: Sebuah Dampak Negatif dari Penyiksaan Rasial di dalam novel *Beloved*, Karya Toni Morrison)

Dhini Lela Setyoningsih, Imam Basuki, Eko Suwargono.
Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Jember (UNEJ)
Jln. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121
E-mail: imabas88@gmail.com

Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to find out the relation between fear and anxiety in the production of death drive. Death drive, in this matter, is suffered by the main character of *Beloved*, Sethe. She is a black slave women that has to suffer most brutality, violence and inhuman treatment toward the domination of white people. Those conditions, later, give effects on her fear and anxiety over her living in plantation. Death drive, therefore, becomes the problem in this study, since its emergence is always triggered by the uncompensated of the id. The balance of the three components; id, ego and superego, thus, could only accommodate one interest, that is death drive. This drive, however, is produced by the trauma of the horror in the past which results in continuous redemption for Sethe. Fear and anxiety, in this way, become the factors for the drive to happen, as racialism plays so strong in Sethe's social environment. This research uses Sigmund Freud's psychological theory of death drive to analyse the data which depicts racial abuse, fear, anxiety and death drive in *Beloved*. The data analysis, in short, can be formulated with a character analysis through a qualitative methodology which means the data are in texts form. The result of this thesis shows that there is correlation between the death drive and the action of Sethe in the murder of her own baby. Death drive in id energy could manifest into a beyond logic and inhuman action such as Sethe kills her baby. It is because id energy in human psyche only has temporal satisfactory state that can continue in many alternative behaviours.

Key words: *Death Drive, Id, Anxiety and Fear.*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari tesis ini adalah untuk menemukan hubungan antara ketakutan dan kecemasan didalam produksi dorongan kematian. Dorongan kematian, didalam masalah ini, dialami oleh karakter utama di novel *Beloved*, Sethe. Dia adalah seorang wanita budak berkulit hitam yang harus mengalami perlakuan tidak manusiawi, kekerasan, dan kebrutalan melalui dominasi orang kulit putih. Sehingga dorongan kematian menjadi masalah di kajian ini, karena kemunculannya selalu memicu id yang tidak tergantikan. Jadi keseimbangan dari tiga komponen; id, ego, dan superego hanya dapat menampung satu ketertarikan, yaitu dorongan kematian. Namun, dorongan ini diproduksi oleh trauma pada kengerian masa lalu yang menghasilkan penebusan dosa yang berkelanjutan oleh Sethe. Ketakutan dan kecemasan dalam hal ini menjadi faktor-faktor dorongan terjadi karena rasisme berfungsi begitu kuat di lingkungan sosial Sethe. Peneliti menggunakan teori psikologi Sigmund Freud dorongan kematian untuk menganalisa data yang menggambarkan penyiksaan ras, ketakutan, kecemasan dan dorongan kematian didalam novel *Beloved*. Analisa data, singkatnya, dapat diformulasikan dengan sebuah analisa karakter melalui sebuah metodologi kualitatif yang mengartikan data didalam bentuk teks. Hasil dari tesis ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan antara dorongan kematian dan aksi Sethe dalam pembunuhan bayinya. Dorongan kematian di energi id dapat memunculkan ke dalam sebuah aksi yang tidak manusiawi dan diluar logika seperti Sethe membunuh bayinya. Hal ini dikarenakan energi id di fisik manusia hanya sebatas keadaan pemuasan sementara yang dapat berkelanjutan di banyak perilaku alternatif.

Kata Kunci: *Dorongan kematian, Id, rasa cemas dan rasa takut.*

Introduction

Beloved is an autobiographical novel that explains a young woman slave who is rejected by the segregated society because of the different race. It is one of the great novels by Toni Morrison that is concerned about death drive. Morrison, in the novel, depicts the condition of African American slaves where their right is under pressure

of slave masters. She, in her writing, depicts that discrimination and inhuman treatment of white people makes psychological impact towards the black society life.

The black character in the novel that is mostly depicted as a victim of racial abuse is Sethe, an African American woman slave. She is one of the Negroes who becomes an immigrant. Sethe is brought to plantation by her mother when she is at thirteen years old. The events of plantation,

during that time, are depicted as the unconscious emotional and psychic consequences of slavery, since the rights of black people are ignored. Sethe, in this case, has to suffer most brutality, violence and inhuman treatment at plantation.

The unforgettable event for Sethe is when the schoolteacher pumps her breast milk when she is at six months pregnancy of her last children. The horror of this cruel action is always at Sethe's mind. It, later, gives effects on her fear and anxiety over her living in plantation.

Sethe, to save her baby from the cruel of slavery, decides to kill her last two-year-old baby with a handsaw when two other children Howard and Buglar run away. Sethe believes that death is a wise alternative than she has to see her baby live in the horror of slavery.

Research Methodology

The type of research in this study is library research. Blaxter et al (1997:151) describe that library research aims at producing a critical of an existing area of research writing. The materials that are used in this thesis are some books, journals, and dictionaries which are relevant to the topic of discussion. The data, in addition, are also taken from internet resources to support the analysis of this thesis.

The type of data in this study is qualitative data. As stated by McMillan (1992:2), qualitative data, based on a research, focus on the understanding of meaning through verbal narratives and descriptions rather than through numbers. Descriptive method is also used to analyse the data of this thesis. Descriptive method can be considered as the procedure to solve problems of the research by using current facts and phenomena, and this method describes the facts and explains the phenomena (McMillan, 1992: 12).

The thesis is composed in some ways. First, the writer collects, classifies, and verifies the data from the novel as the main resource. Second, library research will be applied by gathering the information and fact of the data from several books. The writer classifies the data collected. There are opinion, argument, fact, dialogues and the statement which represent the death drive. It goes from the very first repression from being slave and after being slave.

The novel is analysed to show the death drive within the novel. Sethe here is an example of slavery, racism, and abusive system. Death drive addresses parts of the destructive scenes in the novel.

Result

The result of this thesis indicates that there is connection between the balance of fear and anxiety as the trigger to the murder of the baby. This happens due to the id is restricted by the superego signed by the absolute power of racialism. The ego, thus, could only consolidate to the death drive as the constitution of the id. The idea of murder, nevertheless, brings no a stable happiness but to haunt the main character darkest past, hence the death drive continues to follow and emerge in many alternatives behaviors. The death drive, eventually, reappears in many forms as the superego remains in power.

Discussion

Beloved is opened with a description of the house at 124 Bluestone Road, where Paul D comes to find Sethe. It describes the dark memories of the past where they work at plantation as slaves. Sethe tells to Paul D how hard to live in slavery is.

"I can't live no more. I can't no more."

"Can't what? What can't you?"

"I can't live here. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I can't live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Boys don't like me. Boys don't either"

(Morisson, 1987:17).

It, from the notion, is clear that *eros* has disappeared as the life drive which helps to support the continuity of life. The brutality and dehumanization, however, appear as the only existence as the leading point to death drive. Here, a tendency to feel superior to other people have become the the motive of suffered blacks from the whites. It is not easy to create a sense of community on a good feeling. It is even more difficult when everyone has their own physical and psychological wounds-to heal. Happiness, thus, can never be achieved. The *eros* and *thanatos* never finds its balance. To be more sure in highlighting the two drives, Freud proposes the position of the drives as it is recited in the quotation below.

We retained this name after we had been obliged by the findings of psychoanalysis to connect them less closely with reproduction. With the hypothesis of narcissistic libido and the extension of the concept of libido to the individual cells, the sexual instinct was transformed for us into Eros, which seeks to force together and hold together the portions of living substance. What are commonly called the sexual instincts are looked upon by us as the part of Eros (Freud, 1961:53).

The source of the death and life drive, in addition, lies in the process of pleasure. The pleasure in human is integrated through a life instinct (*eros*) and a death instinct, called *thanatos*. This death instinct compels human to engage in risky and destructive behaviours that could lead to death. It is an instinct for personal death. Behaviours such as thrill seeking, aggression, and risk taking can be considered actions from *thanatos*. This certainly involves another, since instincts do not act themselves. There is larger constitution that motivates them called id. To talk about id is also to talk about other position of the ego and superego. Personality, according to psychoanalytic theory of personality, is composed of three elements. These are three elements of personality known as the id, the ego and the superego.

“Thus he now renamed “the Unconscious” as the id, and “the Preconscious” as the ego. Further, he had become increasingly aware of situations when conflicts between the instinctual drives and external reality are further complicated by moral demands. For example, sometimes one abstains from seeking a desired object, or feels guilty at the very thought of doing so, simply out of a feeling that it would be wrong. Freud reasoned that the source of this moral force in the psyche was acquired rather than innate, since very young children and some psychopathic adults lack it....Accordingly, Freud postulated the superego as a separate entity in his new conception of the psyche, the result of a childhood identification with the same-sexed parent in the Oedipal relationship (Freud,1910:10).”

Freud says that the id is derived from pleasure principle and does not care about reality or social regulations when satisfying its impulses (Peck & Whitlow, 1975:25). Id, hence, is the combination of the death drive and life drive, but in Sethe's case the life drive plays a small role in her life. Her life drive is interrupted because the superego does not agree to do so. Freud's description of this life drive or instinct is important as it help human to survive. The constitution of id, ego, and superego, however, never work together, because the ego unable to consolidate the other instinct.

Those three components do not work to complete the need of the instincts because the superego never permits Sethe. Superego as the moral code which sees racialism as the solid truth that denies Sethe's happiness to struggle over the domination. The superego, in this rate of life, rules over the other two components. Her psyche was dominated by the superego. As explained by Peck and Whitlow (1975:25), the superego represents the standards and ethical values learned through contact with society in general, and with the parents in particular. The superego, in other words, controls appropriate behaviour to the rules of society. The superego, for example, dictates Sethe's not to disobey her master rule. Her life revolves under white domination and leaves her race as the subordinates. Id, in this way, never succeeds to appear as the superego becomes stronger. The sequence of scenes here is depicting the superego which rules the black society.

A prime example of life instinct is freedom but brutality and dehumanization get in the way.

"Hungry, nigger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Here you go."

Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot in his head as the price, maybe, of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus. Paul D did not know that then. He was looking at his palsied hands, smelling the guard,

listening to his soft grunts so like the doves', as he stood before the man kneeling in mist on his right. Convinced he was next, Paul D retched--vomiting up nothing at all. An observing guard smashed his shoulder with the rifle and the engaged one decided to skip the new man for the time being lest his pants and shoes got soiled by nigger puke. (Morisson, 1987:218).

The quotation above, in addition, makes Garner as a sympathetic character. The gunshot to the black is the message that the black has no power over the white. A perfect example of superego happens in Sethe's life. More evidences of brutality and dehumanization of the superego is given below.

A year of yearning, when rape seemed the solitary gift of life. The restraint they had exercised possible only because they were Sweet Home men--the ones Mr. Garner bragged about while other farmers shook their heads in warning at the phrase.

"Y'all got boys," he told them. "Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stropin boys. Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought em that away, raised em that away. Men every one." (Morisson, 1987:30).

Id never manifested successfully to appear as the death and life drive because the superego never approve to do so. Life drive is small and the death is even smaller, but anger is getting bigger. Helplessness becomes the only resolution. The id is dead and the ego fails before the superego, where its function is to restrict happiness for Sethe as the black woman. Hence, there are two basic instinct or drive fail to manifest the *eros* and *thnatos*. The superego becomes stronger and it becomes a great benefit for the whites to control the black.

Loaves and fishes were His powers--they did not belong to an ex slave who had probably never carried one hundred pounds to the scale, or picked okra with a baby on her back. Who had never been lashed by a ten-year-old white boy as God knows they had. Who had not even escaped slavery--had, in fact, been bought out of it by a doting son and driven to the Ohio River in a wagon--free papers folded between her breasts (driven by the very man who had been her master, who also paid her resettlement fee--name of Garner), and rented a house with two floors and a well from the Bodwins the white brother and sister who gave Stamp Paid, Ella and John clothes,

goods and gear for runaways because they hated slavery worse than they hated slaves. (Morisson, 1987:269).

The question will be how these two different compromises the both ideas slavery as superego as it describes above. The id is the pleasure. It will be the leading points to consolidate the urges. There must be a way to consolidate the urges but if they are restricted, the manifestation becomes peculiar somehow.

The Garners, it seemed to her, ran a special kind of slavery, treating them like paid labor, listening to what they said, teaching what they wanted known. And he didn't stud his boys. Never brought them to her cabin with directions to "lay down with her," like they did in Carolina, or rented their sex out on other farms. It surprised and pleased her, but worried her too. Would he pick women for them or what did he think was going to happen when those boys ran smack into their nature? Some danger he was courting and he surely knew it. In fact, his order for them not to leave Sweet Home except in his company, was not so much because of the law, but the danger of men-bred slaves on the loose. (Morisson, 1987:274).

It, as the quotation above, clears that Sethe feels hard to live in Sweet Home. Her action to kill her own baby, moreover, seems to be right considering the baby she delivers will be other new born slave in the future. Knowing the environment she lives, is never safe for black people. There existence is even censored from the public.

the heart chambers as soon as you saw a Negro's face in a paper, since the face was not there because the person had a healthy baby, or outran a street mob. Nor was it there because the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated, since that could hardly qualify as news in a newspaper. It would have to be something out of the ordinary--something white people would find interesting, truly different, worth a few minutes of teeth sucking if not gasps. And it must have been hard to find news about Negroes worth the breath catch of a white citizen of Cincinnati. (Morisson, 1987:306).

It, thus, is interesting point to explore because oppression of superego could lead into something extraordinary for a mother could kill her own baby. The

character's behaviour in the story is a good subject of peculiar conduct due to the restricted id manifestation.

Conclusion

Sethe lives in the life where she has to occupy a big hole in slavery. The murder which she commits may be a pleasure for seconds, but later it gives strong destruction to her life in the day after. The sadistic act displays a great despair into her life. The life, before she escapes the slavery, was bad, but the remorse of killing her own baby brings more anxiety. Hence, once she drawn to her darkest past, she could not get back.

The analysis of this thesis, hence, has successfully proven that death drive in the story is peaked on the Sethe's conduct of killing her own baby, though she does it with love and great impact which comes later destroying her. The haunting memory of the past that she could not let go always chase her.

In conclusion, death drive (thanatos) as the basic study in the character has shown that id pleasure is not last permanently, in fact it is temporal. Sethe, as the main character, always seek a ways to please her self by consolidating the id. The result, however, continues to support death drive in many alternative behaviors, since the racialism which becomes the supreme power of the superego restrict alternate manifestation.

Acknowledgement

This thesis writing can only be finished with the great help and assistances from many helpful people. I, therefore, would like to convey my best appreciation to Dr. Hairus Salikin, M.Ed, as the Dean of Faculty of Letters and Dra. Supiastutik, M.Pd, as the Head of English Department who have given me a chance and permission to write this article; all of the lecturers of English Department who have taught me much precious knowledge during my study in Faculty of Letters; and all staffs in Faculty of Letters and Jember University.

References

- Blaxter, et al. 1997. *How to Research*. Open University: Philadelphia.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1961. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Canada: Penguin Books Canada. Ltd.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1910, *The Origin and The Development of Psychoanalysis*. American Journal of Psychology.
- Mc. Millan, H.J. 1992. *Educational Research*. New York: Harper Collins Inc.
- Morrison, Toni. 1987. *Beloved*. United States of America: International and Pan- American Copyright Conventions.

Peck & Whitlow. 1975. *Approaches to Personality Theory*.
London: Methuen & Co Ltd.

Pervin, Lawrence A. 1984. *Personality Theory and
Research 4th Edition*. USA: Jhon Willey & Son Knc.

