

Analyzing The Protagonist Character of Elliot Anderson As Seen In The Film “Black Or White” By Mike Binder

^a Hellaisna Nur’Aini Garwan, ^b Endah Mitsalina, ^c Rakhmat Haryadi

^{a,b,c} English Education Department, Universitas Ma’arif Nahdlatul Ulama Kebumen,
Indonesia

Email of corresponding author (hella.garwan@gmail.com)

Abstract

‘Black or White’ described of complains, blames, jealousy, selfishness, and understanding about the family love from Elliot Anderson’s character. This research is aimed to know the character of Elliot Anderson as main character by analyzing the evidence from the dialogues and his actions in the film. To know about the character of Elliot Anderson, the writer used the descriptive qualitative method in this paper. The writer employs himself to collect the data by reading script, watching the film and marking them. The writer used the film of Black or White by Mike Binder released in 2014 by Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). The writer focused on the dialogues of the film, and then followed by analyzing the character through conscientiousness and neuroticism of personality. In this analysis, the writer finds out that final result about the protagonist character of Elliot Anderson. Elliot Anderson is a recently widower and visible wealthy grandfather. The writer found Conscientiousness of Elliot Anderson characteristic is ambitious and neuroticism Elliot is irritable or anger, complaining person, blaming person, selfish, and jealous. It’s all happened when on one particularly bad day, in which he loses his wife, he wishes people would recognize how hard he is trying and how good his heart is and just leaving him alone in his big house with its big swimming pool and his Mexican maid to raise his young granddaughter Eloise.

Keyword: Black or White Film, Elliot Anderson, Protagonist Character

INTRODUCTION

According to Wellek and Waeren (1976: 94), Literature is a product of author’s imagination. Learning literature can help us understand better life especially environment, culture, and value because literature represents the life, which may occur in social reality. There are many literature products that people can enjoy such as songs, novels, poems, and films. Stamp & Raengo (2004: 81) categorized film as a literary work because film is a creativity of a work of art. A film is also called a movie or motion picture. Moreover, Trianto (2013: 13) defines film as a result of a creative, process of the film maker that combines various elements such as ideas, values ideas, value systems, and ways of life, norms, human behaviors, and technology.

There are many things that people can analyze from a film by using theory such as feminist, post-colonial, and semiotic, but the researcher chooses deconstruction theory. The researcher chooses deconstruction theory because it implicitly helps audiences

know the meaning of the literary work.

There are many kinds of film genre. By the end of the silent era, many of the main genres were established: the melodrama, the western, the horror film, comedies, and action-adventure films. From all genres of film, the researcher tempted to analyze drama film especially tragedy drama entitled “Black or White by Mike Binder”.

In this thesis, the researcher is interested in discussing the main character of this film. The researcher chose film “Black or White” because this is one of the most popular drama film. The theme of film is race custody story that produced by Kevin Costner. It is very interesting and also there are many unusual words that relates with each character.

Kevin Costner is the producer of this film also plays as the main character. However, he does not take side to the white race of the custody battle between black or white race. In this film, the protagonist character is different because he does not only act as the protagonist but also acts in a bad dialogue seemed an antagonist. Elliott Anderson has some bad experiences and it becomes a behavior since he was left by his wife because of an accident.

It is interesting to know how Elliott is in that film and his character development that viewed from the film. Therefore, the researcher took the film to be analyzed. This film described of complains, blames, jealousy, selfishness, and understanding about the family love.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in choose film “Black or White” by Mike Binder as the object of the study. The most interesting aspect of this film is to get the custody by Elliott Anderson to fight for the right of race society from the dangerously Reggie black father and devotion for human understanding set against a background of custody which continues today.

That is why the researcher is interested in analyzing the film by using the theory of deconstruction and takes the title for his study: “Analyzing The Protagonist Character Of Elliott Anderson As Seen In The Film “Black Or White” By Mike Binder”.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher took descriptive qualitative method. According to Singh and Bajpai (2008: 203) descriptive method describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trend that are developing. According to Moleong in Safitri and Marlinton (2018: 51), Descriptive qualitative method contains sentences or description of the objects and does not display the detail arithmetic calculation and statistic. According to Manuel and Medici in Ariola (2006: 45), Descriptive method is fact-finding with adequate interpretation. It is something more and beyond just data-gathering.

This research used the descriptive qualitative research because this research used non numeral data that has purpose to describe and analyze the types and meaning of characterizations in film *Black or White*. Specific design this research is content analysis. According to Ariola (2006: 68) content analysis focuses on analyzing and evaluating in narrative form the content of documents, periodicals, reports, letters, biographies, journal, book, and other instructional material. The purpose is explaining the status a phenomenon at particular time, to give additional knowledge and information, and explain very clearly.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

This part presented the result of data analysis of characters deconstruction in “*Black or White*” film based on Deconstruction Theory. In order to deconstruct the main character, the researcher was firstly to find out the opposition and the privilege of the character, and then overturn it to get the new concept of meaning that often ignored in a text.

Black or White is the story of a grandfather (Kevin Costner) who is suddenly left to care for his beloved granddaughter. When her paternal grandmother (Octavia Spencer) seeks custody with the help of her brother (Anthony Mackie), the little girl is torn between two families who love her deeply. With the best intentions at heart, both families fight for what they feel is right and are soon forced to confront their true feelings about race, forgiveness, and understanding.

Based on the theory of Derrida, the researcher found the deconstruction of the main character that was formulated as follows:

a. Elliot is a care grandfather

As a grandfather, he does really care about Eloise’s feature. Elliott asks about a place or home where Eloise wants probably live. Elliott asks his granddaughter to choose where she wants to live with. However, Eloise does not really care about, because she feels already comfortable to live with her grandfather in Elliott’s home.

In another scene, Elliott tries to make sure that his granddaughter is alright. Elliott talks about Eloise’ condition after having a therapy. Elliott worries about his granddaughter, he worries about what is in Eloise’s mind. Elliot knows well that his granddaughter misses his father so much.

Elliott also shows that he cares about his granddaughter to her black father, Reggie. Elliott tells Reggie that his daughter really wants to meet him. Elliot suggests Reggie to cheer his daughter up and ask him to visit Eloise at night. Because Eloise has a lot of pain, she still feels sad of her grandmother’s passing.

Elliott wants to make his granddaughter happy by asking Reggie to come and meet Eloise in his house. Elliott even gives a check which should be used by Reggie to finish

his problem. Unfortunately, Reggie does not come or meet Eloise. Actually, Elliott has a positive intention to help Reggie.

b. Elliot is an assertive man

There is a scene where Elliot got angry at Rick for the second times. Elliot was angry with Rick's advices. Some of Rick's advices are not agreed by Elliott. Elliott told Rick that he will not give the custody to Rowena. Elliott is totally strong with his decision that he will always save and care about his granddaughter. No matter what the races are.

c. Elliot is temperament

There is a scene showed Elliot refuses Rick's advice, he thinks that he does not need to call Grandma Wee Wee (Rowena) to inform about his wife's dead. He is absolutely strong with his thought. They do not have any relationship. Elliott speaks to Rick with alcohol on his hand. He is little bit angry with Rick's advice that suggest him to call Rowena.

In other scene between Elliott and his granddaughter is not good. On that scene, Elliott is really mad with his granddaughter. Eloise was watching cartoon too many times. In other side, she needs to study and does her homework. So, Eloise was being sad at that time.

There is also a scene where Rowena and Elliot have an argument about the custody of Eloise. Rowena and Elliott is having a deal about the custody, both have a strong reason why they want to have a custody of Eloise. Rowena says that Eloise still needs a love from her Black Grandma because Eloise has no complete family if she lives with her grandfather. Another side, Elliott says that this is not about the black people or race, he prefers to think about Eloise growth. So, Elliott will get ready about Rowena's statement or dealing about a custody battle later. In this conversation, Elliott defenced his arguments to survive his lovely granddaughter.

d. Elliot is not racist

Elliott is a neutral and sensitive man. He does not argue about black or white skin colour. He only cares and focuses on Eloise's life. He will defence his arguments in the custody battle. He will not let the young drunk father take Eloise from him not because of his race. Elliot and his friends are preparing the arguments for winning the custody battle.

In the trial of custody the most emotional speeches showed by Elliot Anderson. He tells all the reasons and answers the questions from Jeremiah about dislike black people. But the truth is Elliot does not compare both races, according him the two races are not having a trouble. Elliot did not judge the black people, he just does not like the bad past of Reggie and his bad behavior. Reggie broke Elliot's feeling since he broke his life, such as Elliot's daughter and Eloise. Elliott acts wiser and older in these speeches.

e. Elliott is a wise man

The battle of custody in this part is the first custody battle that runs well for Elliott's side, he can control his emotional speech, not to be angry like Rowena did. The lawyer of Elliott tell The Judge about how and why the custody should be battled and he against the Rowena's lawyer very well. Rowena was in anger because she does not agree with Rick's statement which tell about his bad son "Reggie" the black father of Eloise.

f. Elliot is a forgiving man

After all the custody battle finished, the two families are in one purpose to care about Eloise. Elliott won the custody battle and both families live together happily, even with Reggie "the black father". Reggie had realized that he was in bad everyday life. The two sides custody battle agree to forgive each other. In the following, Elliott still tries to have a clean lifestyle. He decided to go away from Eloise for a couple week to get the better habit. So, this last part gives many good message for our life. No need to compare between black or white races.

2. Discussion

In this case, the common in which the researcher took was: The main character was considered more important than the minor or mayor characters. The minor character was generally flat, stereotypical and not of central importance to the plot. The researcher found that the minor or mayor characters also had important role as a main character in the movie, and also found a different character from Elliott Anderson as main character in the movie. Elliott Anderson is a grandfather but had a character as a grandmother.

Derrida (1981:42) in his book *Position* stated that there were two steps in deconstructing the text. First was locating an opposition and determine which side is privileged. The first step of deconstruction analysis was locating the opposition. It is obvious there was an opposition in the film. The researcher took Elliot Anderson as main character while Eloise, Rowena, Rick, Reggie, Jeremiah, and Duvan were minor and mayor characters. Elliott Anderson was the grandfather of Eloise, the granddaughter of her daughter. From the story, Elliott was very silly in losing his lovely wife, Carol. Since the accident of car crush, Eloise is getting used to care by Elliott Anderson, her granddaughter.

Grandmother argued that Elliot could not give his only love, affection, cares to his granddaughter Eloise. She needs more love, family, growth, knowledge, etc. The more Elliott cared about Eloise, the more Rowena refused that Elliott was not good enough for Eloise growth. Elliott keep his granddaughter for many reason, the father of Eloise is an alcohol addict, his family did not inform Elliott when his daughter was pregnant because of him. Reggie hided his bad past which really hurt Elliot's heart. So, the main character "Elliott Anderson" keep his right to keep his granddaughter in a custody battle with the black family which is still his siblings also.

After locating the opposition, the second step was to determine a privilege. From the

characters described, the researcher had to find out which characters were privileges. In findings 'a' showed that the main character has an important role to explain the plot in this film. Those dialogue described that the main character "Elliott" has a good character which is really care about his granddaughter "Eloise". Elliott shows his care such as Eloise's feature, her next living, an Elliot's health, a progress of Eloise study, and the happiness of her.

In findings 'b' showed that Elliott is an assertive man. It revealed from Elliot's actions. He is absolutely strong with his decisions. It is showed when Elliott ask Eloise to do the homework and when Elliott is very sure about his opinion than Rick's opinion. Elliott is also showing his assertive actions to his granddaughter, Eloise. He is also very angry because Eloise did not do her homework and watched cartoon too much.

In finding 'c', Elliott got angry with Rick for some reasons. Elliot was angry with Rick's advices. Some of Rick's advices are not agreed by Elliott. Elliott told Rick that he will not give the custody to Rowena. Elliott is totally strong with his decision that he will always save and care about his granddaughter "Eloise". Elliott begins to face the custody battle with Rowena. On these dialogues, Elliot defended his own speech that he will keep his granddaughter. Rowena is also sure about his speech that she will have a custody battle for their granddaughter, Eloise. From this case, the story of the film starts the conflict between black and white races. Both are very serious with their strong arguments to win the custody.

In finding 'd' described that the main character dislike to compare the black and white people. Elliott argues that all races are good. It depends on their habit, if their past were bad, he thinks that someone's everyday life is not even good. Elliot answered Jeremiah's question about dislike the black people: The action and interaction he's having with the person that he is interacting with. It means that all races are the same thing. No matter the skin color is, they are all the same. Elliot does not compare both races, according him the two races are not having a trouble. Elliot did not judge the black people, he just does not like the bad past of Reggie and his bad behavior.

In findings 'e' described about the debate of custody battle. From the Elliot's side, Rick Reynolds as the lawyer of Elliott told the judge about how Elliot get a custody battle and how Reggie has a bad habit in his past. Rowena argues that the problem is not from Eloise's father or his bad past. Reggie just need a clear life to control his drunk habit. In other way, Eloise does need her father for some love, cares, growth, etc. Besides that, Elliott did not tell the judge that Reggie was coming to his home and attacking him at night.

In findings 'f' described that Elliott accepts Reggie's bad past. Elliot forgives all his mistakes. Reggie believe in Elliott to give the custody and loving his daughter, Eloise. In the next day, both races live happily with clean life, no drunks or alcohol. For a couple weeks, Eloise will be cared by his grandmother and her black family. So, the final of the custody is forgiving and believe in each other. In the end, Eloise will have a

very happy life and full of loves between two families “black and white”.

In conclusion, the main character was having an important role in the film, another minor characters support the story of the film, they would not be the main character and if the minor character was missing, the story would not be complete. Deconstruction analysis found out the neglected term and the marginalized term that ignored by the audience, then bring it to the surface so the audience not only focus on the central meaning of a text like the main character in the film.

So every part of the text was important and deconstruction erased all the opposition such , main- minor character border and came up with the new concept that the characters consisted of main and minor character supports the main character in building the story, and then deconstruction found a different meaning from the text.

The novelty of this research among the others were the researcher analysis a different character from Elliott Anderson, Elliott was a sad grandfather and independent man. He brave against the custody with the black people. Not only that, Elliott became a father but also a mother for his granddaughter “Eloise” when he was in a serious trouble in his life. Elliott is a widowed grandfather, he has some negative habits such as drinking alcohol, selfish, emotional. But, he also has some good characters such as independent men, confidence, good responsibility, brave, and respect other races.

He shows us that between black and white races should not have a fight in their daily life, more over they live in one family relationship. It is not easy to respect each other, but in this film the main character “Elliott” teach us how to respect and appreciate other people even the others are hating him.

CONCLUSSION

After analyzing the data, the researcher concluded the result of the research that Deconstruction analysis in film “Black or White” created the main character. The main character in this movie was Elliott Anderson. He had a different character from other parents, Elliott was a sad and independent man. He battled a custody of his granddaughter with his black family. Elliott became a strong grandfather when he was in a bad life because losing his wife caused accident. Elliot proved that something should be done by a sincere intention to be able to love Eloise. Elliott was also different from another father and grandfather. Elliott had broken down the stigma of a white people who had some bad opinion from black people. Elliott assumed that he was different, Elliott was portrayed as a brave, gentle and never give up to get the custody of Eloise.

Besides that, the researcher concluded that the minor characters in this movie such us Rowena, Reggie, Jeremiah, and Rick had been important role in the movie because they formed a Elliott’s character be a brave and independent man. We can not ignore the characters although these characters did not always appear in the story. No matter how small the role of character in the story, they still an important took part in building the

story. If one of the characters removed, it will give new possibilities that would change the flow of the story.

REFERENCES

- Adhiguna. (2003). *The Analysis of the Main Character in Terence Ratti Gan's "The Winslow Boy" Based on the Physiology and Sociology*. Medan. Department of English Faculty of Cultural Studies: University of Sumatera Utara.
- Abram. (1981). *A Literature study about film*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Arsyad, Azhar. (2006). *A study media*. Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada.
- Baldick, Chris. (2001). *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bennet, A. and Royle, N. (2004). *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education.
- Boggs, Joseph. (1991). *The Art of watching Films 3th* California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Bordwell, David. (1993). *Film Art an Introduction 4th*. McGraw-Hill.
- Brikets, Sven P. (1993). *Literature the Evolving Canon (Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon a Division of Simon and Schuster)*. London: Harcot Bruce Javonovic.
- Brouwer. (1981). *Intrinsic Elements of Film*. United States: Harvard University Press.
- Costa, P. and McCrae, R. (1992). *From catalog to classification: Murray's needs and the five factor model: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- Dennis W, Petrie. (2000.). *The Art of watching Films*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1981). *Dissemination*. The Athlone Press. Translated by Barbara Johnson.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1997). *Of Grammatology*. John Hopkins. University Press: Baltimore. Translated by Spivak
- DiYanni, Robert. (2002). *Literature Approaches to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. New York: McGraw Hill Companies.
- Enwald, Marika.(2004). *Displacements of Deconstruction (The Deconstruction Of Metaphysics Of Presense, Meaning, Subject And Method)*. Finland: Bookshop Taju. University of Tampere. image/ plot structure. Pdf.
- Gill, Richard. (1995). *Mastering English Literature*. United Kingdom: Palgrave McMillan.

- Gerlach, Vernon S., and Donald. P. Ely. (1971). *Teaching and media: A systematic Approach. Second Edition*. Boston Ma: Allyn and Bacon. Pearson Education
- Gordon, Jane Bachman and Karen, Kuehner. (1999). *Fiction the Elements of the Short Story*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Ghofur. (2014). *Analisis Dekonstruksi Tokoh Takeshi Dan Mitsusaburo Dalam Novel Silent Cry Karya Kenzaburo Oe Perspektif Jacques Derrida*. A Journal
- Habib, MAR. (2005). *Modern Literary Criticism And Theory (A History)*. Blackwell Publishing
- Henderson, Gloria Mason. (2006). *Literature and Our Selves A Thematic Introduction for Readers and Writers*. New York: Longman.
- Jones, Edward. (1968). *Outline of literature: short story, story: novel and poem*. United States of America: The Macmillian Company.
- Joseph, M. Boggs. (1991) *The Art of watching Films third Edition*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Kenney, William. (1996). *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monarch Press.
- Kirzner, Laurie. (1991). *Literature, Reading, Reacting, Writing*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- Lawrence, Perrine. (1984). *Literature, Structure, Sound and Sense 5th*. London: Harvcourt Bruce Javanovic.
- Lombardi, Esther. 2011. http://cillasiclit.about.com/od/literaryterms/g/aa_whatisliter.htm access on 24/03/2021 at 12.00
- Norris, Cristoper. (1987). *Philosophy and Theory after Deconstruction*. New York & London: Methuen.
- Suardana. (2008). *A Phycological Analysis of the Main Character in "The Shaw Shank Redemption"*. Denpasar: Department of English. Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Udayana.
- Style, F. C Lucas. (1967). *Style How to develop Clarity, Character, Brevity, Simplicity, Variety*. New York: Collier Books.
- Trianto, Teguh. (2013). *Film as a learning media* Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.
- Pickering, James H. (1981). *Concise Companion to Literature*. New York: Mac Milan Publishig.
- Wellek, Rane and Audtin Waeren, (1976). *Theory of Literarure*. Third Edition, New York: A Harvest book, Brace and World.
- W. Petrie Dennis. (2002). *The Art of watching Film*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.