

SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S NOVEL *LIGHT IN AUGUST*

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Abstract : This study aims to analyze the social conflict in William Faulkner's novel. It is done to reveal the types of conflicts found in the novel and causes of conflict in this novel. In conducting this research, the research used qualitative methods. This research is classified as library research because the data collection is done by reading novels and reading several books and other references related to the topic. The data were analyzed based on the type of conflict and its causes and then presented descriptively. In other words, the researcher analyzed the data according to the topic and then present the result in a narrative. In analyzing the data, the researcher used a mimetic approach. The results of the research show that there are two categories of social conflict in the novel, namely: conflict between individuals and individuals and conflict between individuals and group.

Keywords : *Social conflict, Light in August*

1. INTRODUCTION

Maru (2014:2) stated: "A literary text provides learners with real world experiences, relationships between society and people where the target language is spoken, even if they are fictions." Sabudu (2014:1) stated that: "Literature is the reflection of human life better in the society or in their private life, every phenomenon that found in the society usually reflects in the literary works such as poem, novel, drama or short story. It can be implaid that literature is human reflection of experience which was shows by using written form of language."

Fisher et all (2001:4) stated that: "conflict is a relationship between two or more parties over (individuals or groups) who have, or who feel they have, which is not the target. Conflict always happens in every kind of life that hard to prevent. It could be cultural, conflict, social conflict and the like. It should be noted that social conflict cannot be separated from social life because there will always be differences in interests between individuals and groups. Conflict in society cannot be eliminated, but they can be managed so that they do not escalate and become open conflicts."

In *Light in August*, set in the Yoknapatawpha District, Faulkner focuses primarily on poor white South

people, both from the upper and lower classes, who are struggling to survive the postwar economic collapse in the South. The characters in *Light in August* mostly from the lower classes, with the exception of Reverend Joanna Burden were united by poverty and Puritan values which caused them to regard unmarried mothers like Lena Grove with disgust. Faulkner pointed out the limitations and aggression of their Puritanical spirit.

This novel needs to be researched because it will help us have a better understanding of life, environment, race, gender, and culture. Apart from that, this also helps us know more about humans community problems and difficulties. This novel tells of several social conflicts of human life like Joe Christmas and Lena Grove are both orphans, strangers in town.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Since the data in this study is in form of word, the researcher used qualitative research. As Bogdan & Biklen (1992:30) stated that: *“Qualitative research is descriptive, the data collected are in form of words and pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation.”*

Data Collection

In collecting the data, the writers use two kinds of sources. As stated that: *“Two kinds of evidence are relevant for essays about literature: evidence for primary sources are the works of literature themselves and secondary sources*

consist of facts or opinion outside the work itself” (Griffith 32). In concluding this research, there are two kinds of data collection, first Primary source from the novel *Light in August* by William Faulkner. The novel was published in 1932. It consists of 21 chapters and 480 pages. And Secondary source from Books, Articles, Internet and other source.

Data Analysis

In analysis the data, the researcher used mimetic approach. *“Mimetic orientation is the explanation of art essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe but it not merely an imitation but the writer’s imagination. The aspects of the universe means the whole aspects of human’s life just like social, culture, religious, history and forth”* (Abram, 1979 : 8). The definition implies mimetic approach used in order to reveal the social condition of South America that reflected in the novel.

3. ANALYSIS

Conflict Between Individual

“Conflict between individuals is a conflict that occurs because of differences in personality between one individual and another” (Robert Park, 1931: 95). All conflicts are coming from the interaction, however, in this part will be served only the conflict between individual and individual. While the other conflicts such as conflict between individual and group or conflict between group and group will be explained in the next sub chapter. Characters found in the novel *Light in August* by William Faulkner who experienced the conflict

between individuals are Lucas and Lena Grove, Joe Christmas and Joana Burden.

First Lucas Burch and Lena Grove. The form of individual conflicts is Irresponsibility. Lena comes from a poor background due to the death of her parents. *"I have to get to Jefferson and leave Lena as soon as possible.."* (20)

Since conflict but the conflict can been seen true Lucas behavior they are behaviors. Lucas escape from His irresponsibility to Lena. Lucas change his name to avoid being coat by Lena.

Lena Grove, a young woman from Alabama, traveling to Jefferson, Mississippi. She is pregnant, and she has come to Mississippi to find her baby's father. Lena sits beside the road, amazed at how far she has traveled.

"Then it will be as if I were riding for a half mile before I even got into the wagon, before the wagon even got to where I was waiting, and that when the wagon is empty of me again it will go on for a half a mile with me still in it..." (8)

At times, Lena walks, but she often travels in carriages with strangers. The baby's father, a man named Lucas Burch, promised before leaving Lena in Alabama that he would find a job, build a house, and call her. Most of the foreigners Lena met suspected that Lucas Burch had no intention of marrying her; in fact, they believed he had fled to Mississippi to escape responsibility for Lena and her unborn baby. Joe Brown is actually immoral, drunk, gambler, and he doesn't seem to have a sense of ethics or responsibility to anyone. He got Lena pregnant and left her, unemployed after being laid off from her job.

"The Great Depression is largely synonymous with the birth of modern macroeconomics, and continues to haunt the next generation of economists. With regard to the labor force and labor market, this clearly includes wage rigidity, high unemployment rates, and long-term unemployment. Traditionally, aggregate time series has provided labor market econometric value in the 1930s, however, this has shifted attention over time and towards microeconomic evidence" (Robert Margo, p. 41). This shift in entry was motivated by two factors. First, disaggregated data provide more degrees of freedom than decades or more annual observations related to depression, and thus can help differentiate macroeconomic explanations. Second, disaggregation has exposed the economic aspects of frontal attacks against conventional wisdom."

Second, Joe Christmas and Joana Burden The form of individual conflicts between Joe and Joana is murder. Joana is a white person who comes from a fanatical family in liberating and helping negroes. His grandfather and half brother had been killed in an attempt to help the Negro race. Joanna herself was raised with the idea that

"the curse of the black race is the curse of God. But the curse of the white race is that black people will forever belong to the elect of God because He once cursed Him." (252)

Therefore, Joanna was born and raised with the idea that she should devote herself to raising negroes to a higher level. Until the appearance of Joe Christmas, Joanna had spent her life helping Negro colleges, advising young

Negroes, and contributing to various development funds. Because of this, Joanna should be someone who can accept Joe Christmas for who he is as part Negro and part white. They ended up engaging in sexual relations. Joanna and Joe's relationship shows that acts of sexual abuse lead to more forms of offenses. Not only are couples involved in relationships subject to racial / sexual scandals, these acts violate the norms of the community in which they live in Jefferson.

"For the last time. I don't ask it. Remember that. Kneel with me." Miss Burden attempts to have Christmas pray with her, but he refuses" (282)

The fact that Joanna and Joe's relationship ended up causing Joe to kill Joanna after he tried to force her to pray with him reaffirms the notion that acts of racial / gender violations lead to violations of other social norms and rules. It also seemed to confirm the racist view held at the time that black men were a threat of violence to white women. Joe didn't kill Joanna because she was black (indeed, it's never been confirmed that she even had black ancestry, and in most of the novels she lives as a white person). Instead, he killed her because of the trauma and hatred she caused from living in a strict and repressive society, which left her feeling frustrated, isolated, and resentful.

As we know, the social background in America has a history of racial oppression. Their culture forbids contact with blacks. Domination groups are detrimental to oppressed racial groups. *"This destruction has become a core part of American history. In the nineteenth*

and sixties, black people lived by a Jim Crow segment that was designed to justify white supremacy. Blacks were associated in the white mind with the primitive, the backward or the irredeemably pre modern. The heritage of slavery and beliefs about the savagery of African engendered a white supremacist myth that blacks were an inherently unprogressive race, incapable of joining the modern world as efficient and productive people" (Fredrickson, 2005:94).

Conflict between Individual and Group

"Conflict between individual and group is conflicts that occur because there are individuals who fail to adapt to the norms of the group where they work / live" (Talcot Parson, p.481).

In the novel *Light in August* by William Faulkner, there are some conflicts between individual versus group. Some characters who experience the conflicts are Joe Christmas, Joana Burden, and the society.

First, Gender Domination. *"Gender is a socially determined construct describing the characteristics, behaviors, and roles deemed appropriate and expected of men and women (and boys and girls) by a given society"* (Rolleri 2012, p. 3). These characteristics, behaviors, and roles are learned and reinforced through a socialization process that begins early in life and continues throughout the life cycle Girls and boys are taught and assigned different social characteristics, roles, behaviors, and activities within a particular socio-cultural context on the basis of their sex. Gender roles, like society and culture, are

changeable over time and vary within and across contexts. This means gender roles are not the same in all socio-cultural contexts, and within one socio-cultural context they will change and develop in relation to the changes experienced by that society. The terms “masculine,” “feminine,” and “transgender” refer to the gender of an individual”

Christmas exemplifies how the existence outside the categorization, which is considered by the community as male or female. (*“Perhaps he realized that he could not escape. Anyway, he stayed, watching the two creatures that struggled in the one body like two moon-gleamed shapes.”* (Faulkner : 90). He is considered an outcast by society. *“The people in this city are very smart. Being fooled for three years. Calling him a stranger for three years, when as soon as I watched him for three days, I knew he was no more a stranger than I was. I knew before he even told me himself.”* (98)

Like Joanna Burden, who is depicted as masculine, not male or female and rejected by her community. When Joanna begins to develop a relationship with Joe Christmas, it reveals that she also has the extraordinary ability to manifest masculine traits when they sleep together *“Oh my God ... I feel like a girl and he's a boy.”* (235). It is revealed that he also has the extraordinary ability to gggfact that burdens cannot be classified as male or female challenges society's dislike of gender instability. masculinity is the most decisive factor in the collective decision of the Jefferson community to reject it from society.

“In contrast to the social circumstances at that time female students at the University of Washington challenged gender stereotypes during depression in America. The Great Depression in America was a time of social upheaval where ideas were questioned and social roles were reexamined. The University of Washington campus is a place where women have begun to challenge their roles in academia as well as society at large. Female students are pushing boundaries when it comes to pursuing education and fueling demand for new academic programs. (Nicolette Flannery, p.105).

Women began participating in sports programs previously unavailable to them and urged resources to create more opportunities for female athletes. And finally, women across campus and across society are challenging gender norms in households, marriages, and life situations. The era of the Great Depression proved to be a time of increased student engagement and independence that will inspire the feminist movement for generations to come.”

Second, Racial Domination, According to (Wilson,1999, p. 14) *“At root, racism is “an ideology of racial domination” in which the presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups is used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social position of other racial groups. Through the process of racialization, perceived patterns of physical difference such as skin color or eye shape are used to differentiate groups of people, thereby constituting them as ‘races’;*

racialization becomes racism when it involves the hierarchical and socially consequential valuation of racial groups."

"In 1910-1940s, the African-Americans who lived in the United State had been through difficulties life, because the issues of discrimination, they cannot live in white community. He had some terrible treatment from them. Even though the citizenship was validated at that time, but in fact, they are still being the second-class citizens. As we know, Jim Crow Laws came and enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States. The laws were enforced until 1965." (Schmermund, p. 27).

Like the novel *Light in August* returns to concern for southerners and nationalities who classify humans according to race. Christmas exemplifies how an existence outside of categorization, which is neither black nor white, is perceived as a threat by society that can only be reconciled by violence.

"The road goes to Oklahoma and Missouri and as far south as Mexico and then back north to Chicago and Detroit and then back south again to Mississippi. Fifteen many years." (224)

It shows Joe Christmas's travels and reconnects how he feels like an outcast at not really getting along with the people he meets. Christmas wrestles with total mixed identity. He did not belong to the white community nor black society.

"Of course, it's bad for the kid to have to go to the nigger house, after this, after growing up with white people.

It's not his fault who he is. But it's also not our fault" (135).

This quote explains the fact that Joe is caught between two worlds, black and white, an idea that Joe will struggle with his whole life. Joe is invincible for race, as nutritionists say, but Joe doesn't see it that way.

"He was born and lived and died a stranger, and a stranger, a kind of legacy of amazement and anger ... they would never forgive him and let him die in peace and quiet." (89)

This quote means that Joe is really not answered by the social community and thinks Joe is a foreigner.

The Cause of Social Conflict

The cause of social conflict in novel *Light in August* are, first Historical Influence. "The novel is set in South America in the 1930s, during the Prohibition and Jim Crow's laws which legalized racial segregation in the South. Following the enactment of the Jim Crow law separating African-Americans and whites, people who were negatively affected by the law saw no progress in their quest for equality.

"Racial segregation is not a new phenomenon, as illustrated by the fact that nearly four million black people were enslaved before the Civil War. The law authorized the separation of African-Americans from Whites in order to establish a system of white supremacy. Signs are used to indicate non-white people where they can legally walk, talk, drink, rest, or eat. For racially mixed venues, blacks should wait until all white customers have been served. Rules were

also enacted prohibiting African Americans from entering white shops. The separate facility extends from the white school only to the white cemetery only (Whitman James. 2017,p. 37).

After the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in America, racial discrimination was governed by the so-called Jim Crow law, which mandated strict racial segregation. Although many such laws were instituted soon after the fighting ended, they were only passed after the end of the Reconstruction period in 1877.

In the novel *Light in August*, Joe's exclusion from the community began as a result of a combination of races so that his grandfather took him to an orphanage. Joe, who was at Joe's orphanage, was a lonely child, and was shunned by other children who thought him strange and mixed blood and called him Negro. And she experienced violence by the orphanage because of her identity. He was unable to develop meaningful relationships with other children, and he felt the difference between being an alienated child. *"You little mouse! Spying on me! You little nigger bastard"* (122). He was a toothpaste expert from the nutritionist room and in response the nutritionist called him a derogatory term based on his race. This is the first incident in a series of events where Joe knows that white is good and black is bad.

Joe was also not accepted by the Jefferson community because of his black identity. The Jeffersonian managed to ignore the blacks living in their suburbs as long as they kept their distance from the white population. Especially when Joe was in a relationship with white Joanna,

it was a strict prohibition for society not to have any contact with black people. *"This is not my life. My place is not here."* (258). Christmas attributed his current actions to being in a relationship with Joanna Burden and feeling alienated by society.

The second is poverty factor. Poverty caused by the social situation in America at that time was experiencing the Great Depression which caused the economic crisis that began in 1929 immediately to hit almost every manufacturing country and all producers of food and raw materials so that the poverty rate grew rapidly.

"In 1931 that the world was in the midst of the greatest economic catastrophe, the most devastating effect of the Great Depression was human suffering. Within a short period of time, world output and living standards fell dramatically. As many as a quarter of the workforce in industrialized countries were unable to find jobs in the early 1930s. This trend was fueled by severe unemployment in the 1930s" (Oxford Review of Economic Policy, pp. 317)

One of the reasons for Lucas to leave Lena is because of the poverty factor that hit at that time. Lucas Burch fled to Jefferson, He ended up selling pirated whiskey with Joe Christmas to survive and he changed his name to Joe Brown.

"Yes, maam. Joe Brown, But I reckon that may be his right name. Because when you think of a bigmouthed fellow that's always laughing and talking loud. And so I reckon that is his right name, even if Joe Brown does seem a little kind of too quick

and too easy for a natural name, somehow” (54)

He changed his identity name to avoid being identified as the father of Lena's child. And when Lena finds Joe and their baby born she becomes fixated on getting the thousand dollars offered to find Joanna's killer she ends up running away again from Lena and her newborn baby. “*Brown indeed wins the fifth near some railroad tracks, just as a train and is never heard from again.*” (420). Brown escaped by jumping out of the window and into the train and he wouldn't come back again.

CONCLUSION

As the social conflict in novel *Light in August* by William Faulkner, there are two categories of social conflict. First is conflicts between individuals which is experienced by Lena Grove and Lucas Burch/Joe Brown, Joanna and Joe Christmas. the form of social conflict between individuals is irresponsible. Second is conflicts between individual and group which is experienced by Joe Christmas, Joanna Burden, and the society. The form of social conflict between individual and group are gender domination and racial domination. And the causes of social conflict are historical influence and poverty factor. So, based on result found in this novel there are some conflict in this novel.

SUGGESTION

There are some suggestions for the future researcher who analyze social conflicts; the first suggestion, the researcher expects that this skripsi can give contribution for the study about

social conflicts or other kinds of research; second, I hopes that this study can give stimulus for students who learn literature to make literary works analysis. Finally, the researcher suggest that the readers can study more about other literary works that written by William Faulkner or other writers.

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