

THE REJECTION OF ORIENTALISM IN THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF JUDY BLUME'S SELECTED NOVELS: *TALES OF FOURTH GRADE NOTHING, FUDGE-A-MANIA, AND DOUBLE FUDGE*

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Abstract

This research is an Orientalism study of children's literature that aims at revealing the aspects of Orientalism in children's literature represented by adults' attitude and its rejection through the depiction of children's character in the selected novels. This research applied descriptive qualitative method to analyse the phenomenon under study in a textual form. The primary instrument of this research was the researcher and the secondary instrument as the textbooks. The data were collected by selecting the direct or indirect speech of the characters containing Orientalism aspects and its rejection while reading the books. For the data analysis, the research findings were classified based on the theories used in the research and analysed according to each aspect. The result of this research obtained from the qualitative investigation is stated as follows. Four aspects of Orientalism are found in the utterances of the character as inferiority, femaleness, adult-centered and silencing. While the depiction of the character representing the rejection of those aspects. Furthermore, all four aspects are identified in the storybooks as adults' attitude in seeing and treating children based on adults' perspective and describe children as incapable and inexperienced in everything that require adults' help and guidance.

Keywords: Rejection of Orientalism, children, character, Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing, Fudge-a-Mania, Double Fudge

INTRODUCTION

Children's character is like clay that easily to be shaped into any kind of forms. Adults often assume that children are weak, innocent and dependent since they are physically small and inexperienced. Since there are many possibilities of negative traits might appear and affect children's growth, adults have to aware of their responsibility to help children to shape their character for future. Adults' role is important on how they treat children since the beginning of their development. One of many ways to shape children's character is using literature. Adults have responsibilities not only to guide children to select literary

texts properly for them, but also to create and hold control to evaluate children's literature.

In children's literature, the element of character holds significant influence for the young readers. The reason is that children pay most attention to and it also a place where children can identify themselves. Besides, children expect stories that provide character who deals with various challenges besides the childhood matter. Unlike adults, children are more sensitive to personality matter and able to recognize various natures of people by giving different respond when people are around them.

Sarumpaet (in Fahmawati, 2008:6), mentions *colonization* in children's literature is adults' attitude in defining children as what they supposed to be and do, and as a group of people who need to observe and describe. The statement is in line with Nodelman's view of adults' colonial attitude toward children, while Said's *Orientalism* (1979) views Western's attitude toward the *Orient*, as the oppressed. Thus, Nodelman classifies the adults' attitude into four aspects as inferiority, femaleness, adult-centered, and silencing. Therefore, the rejection of Orientalism in children's literature is necessary to do since the method of didacticism and censorship turns children into the object of form; force them to accept such preaching; and prevents them to discover the stories.

Judy Blume, the award winning American author, agrees to reject Orientalism in children's literature by depicting sensitive issues that mostly avoided by adults. Her literary works such as *Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing* (1972), *Fudge-a-Mania* (1990), and *Double Fudge* (2002) are one of the best books that represent Blume's objection of Orientalism practice in children's storybooks. To sum up, there are to objectives of the research. The first is to describe the aspects of Orientalism rejected by the character that can be found in Blume's *Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, *Fudge-a-Mania*, and *Double Fudge*. Furthermore, the second objective is identifying the rejection of the aspects of

Orientalism depiction of the character that is represented by the child main character, to reject the aspects of Orientalism. Finally, the researcher expects that the research help the readers to understand more about children's character and help them to pursuit storybooks that provide the pleasure and understanding process when they read it. It also hoped that the research able to enrich the readers' knowledge especially about Orientalism in children's literature that rejected by Judy Blume in order to bring back the main purposes in reading children storybooks.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research is purposely to identify the process and the meaning behind the social phenomena that embodied in the texts (Bungin, in Fahmawati, 2008:37). The researcher applied descriptive qualitative research design as the type of study to describe all the phenomena related rejection of Orientalism aspects by the depiction of character that found in Blume's *Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, *Fudge-a-Mania*, and *Double Fudge*.

The main instrument of the research was the researcher herself and the secondary instrument is the text of the storybooks itself since the research employed qualitative research. The researcher using the technique of critical content analysis by focus on the significant words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs as the object of the

research are taken from the texts. The purpose is to reveal the particular message or hidden meaning by making valid inferences through the objects of the research in order to get better understanding of the content and the meaning of the texts as a unity.

The researcher also takes data sources related to the information about children including their characters, self-development and the social environment around them. Besides, the researcher takes various sources from books, articles, journals, and websites related to Blume's biography, and Orientalism and the study of children's literature as the relevant theories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research results in finding four aspects of Orientalism as rejected by the character as inferiority, femaleness, adult-centered and silencing aspects. In the research, the aspect of inferiority sees children as lack in physical ability to say difficult word they do not get used to say; powerless to doing things they want since adults has authority over them as: incapable to aware and acknowledge other's attitude; incapable to do anything they want since adults apply rules for them to follow; being treated as primitive and uncivilized; inferior to adults" intimidated physical appearances. On the contrary, Blume rejects the inferiority aspects by depicting children as capable to thing on their own; capable to find answer of his curiosity by

themselves; and capable to acknowledge and sensing other's attitude.

Here, several findings found in the research. First, it is one of the example of inferiority aspect of Orientalism that rejected by the character. In this case, Peter wondering about her mother's decision that never let him to wear new shoes right after they purchased it. However, her mother never explains her reason to him that makes him hesitate to asking for the reason again.

"I have never been allowed to wear new shoes home from the store. Don't ask me why. But my mother always has the new pair wrapped up and I can't wear them until the next day."
(*Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, 1972:63)

It explains that Peter's mom shows her superiority to forbid her son, as inferior, to do things he wants to do. Peter's hesitation shows his inferiority as powerless children to ask anything to adults freely. It reflects to he superiority upon children that adults can do anything they want. In contrast, his mom's decide to remain silent to ignore Peter's question since children considered as ignorant and being uninformed to adult's desire. Their inability to sense and acknowledge other's attitude caused adults to treat them as inferior, thus his mom ignore his curiosity.

In the contrast, since the inferiority aspects depict children as incapable to do things without other's help, Blume tries to reject it by depicting the character of Peter as independent to do things like finding the answer of his curiosity by himself. In the following scene, Peter curious about the taste of rose petal in the dining room. He tries to eat it instead of asking his mother to explain how the it tasted.

“I wondered how they tasted. Maybe they're delicious and I don't know it because I've never tasted one, I thought. I decided to find out. I picked off one petal from a pink rose. I put it in my mouth and tried to chew it up. But I couldn't do it. It tasted awful. I spit it out in the garbage. Well, at least now I knew I wasn't missing anything great!” (*Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, 1972:12)

Since inferiority aspects depicts children character as incapable to do things by themselves, Blume depicts the character of Peter as children who capable to find the answer of his curiosity about the taste of rose petal by himself.

Second, in the aspects of femaleness of Orientalism, Nodelman (1992:30) says that in possessing femaleness, children's literature suggests something traditionally feminine about childhood and something traditionally masculine about adulthood. The assumption leads children as the object to be gazed at by defining how charming they are in their passive willingness, and how cute they are in their endearing effort to put on a good show for those who observe them, and in this case,

it refers to adults. They might treat children by describing their true happiness is to please adults, to obey their will, to do what they want and to not trying to gaze back that caused them angry. The following is the example of adults' attitude in seeing children from the aspect of femaleness. In this case, Sheila, Peter's schoolmate, convinces Peter's mom that asked her to see Fudge when they were in the city playground. Sheila convinces her that she will take a good care of Fudge when his mom left them. However, she caught off the guard that Fudge fell to the ground and lost his front teeth. Sheila feels sorry that she cannot keep her words to take care him carefully.

“Oh, Mrs. Hatcher! How awful. I'm sorry...I'm really very sorry,” Sheila cried. „What will happen to him?” „He'll be all right, Sheila,” my mother said. “I'm sure it was an accident. Nobody's blaming you.” (*Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, 1972:38)

Sheila blames herself who caused Fudge losing his teeth. She feels guilty that fails to keep her promise to Peter's mom. This scene shows Sheila's responsibility is to take cares of Fudge and she should be more careful to guard him. It reflects to children who describe as the object of adults to do and be what they want. Besides, Sheila shows her regret because she fails to keep her promise that caused her afraid if Peter's mom would angry with her.

Third, the adult-centered aspect of Orientalism refers to adults' attitude in

providing children with values and images of themselves that they approve and comfortable with. Adults utilize the values and images of children as adult-centered purpose for their own benefits to make them easily handle and to control children. Therefore, in many children's storybooks the character of children depicts as obedient, smart, polite, trustful, and more in need of adult's guidance in order to make children follow and behave that way. The following is the example of adult-centered in Orientalism in the books.

In this scene, Mr. and Mrs. Yarby, the customer of where Peter's dad work at, come to visit them. However, Peter's parents worried that Fudge may cause problems for them. Therefore, in the middle of dinner, they decide to tell him directly how Fudge should behave when the guests come.

"While he was eating I heard my mother remind him, "Fudgie's going to be a good boy tonight. Very good for Daddy's friends." "Good," Fudge said. "Good boy." "That's right!" my mother told him." (*Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, 1972:12)

In this case, the attitude of Peter's parents to tell Fudge directly how he should behave as a good boy, shows that adults want children to own such character instead of letting them to be their selves naturally. Being good children with controlled manner become adult's purpose to create the adult-centered character in order to control them easily. Therefore, the aspects of adult-centered of Orientalism can be found in Peter's parent's attitude in telling him directly how he should

behave as a good boy for their own benefits.

In order to reject the adult-centered aspect of Orientalism, here, Blume depicts the character Peter who tries to reject being the object of adults' benefits. "I'm talking about spending three weeks in Maine next door to the Tubmans." "It won't be as bad as you think," Mom said. "You don't know how bad I think it will be!" (*Fudge-a-mania*, 1990:7)

The following scene shows Peter's objection to his mom's idea about spending the holiday with the Tubmans.

Instead of stating agreement with his mom's idea, Peter refuse it by saying that the idea may be caused problems to him. He strongly refuse the idea to spend the holiday with the Tubmans because he can not imagine how does it feel to live under the same roof with Sheila for three weeks. In this case, Blume depicts the character of Peter by taking the action of showing his objection to the idea of his parents to refer to his rejection of adults' will.

The last, the aspects of silencing in Orientalism is closely related to censorship as the action taken by adults to avoid sensitive issues from children such as money, divorce, or using rude utterances. Speaking of the truth, adults may concern to children's choice in selecting book for them to read. It may contain issues that adults considered as inappropriate issues and might give bad influence for them if they read it. Therefore, adults' pick light-weighted book that provides safer issues for them.

In this scene, Fudge, who obsessed

with money, asked to Mrs. Miller about how much money does she get. It surprised her that she wonders why Fudge could ask such sensitive matter to her.

How much do you make? "Excuse me?" Mrs. Miller said, as if she couldn't possibly have heard what she thought she heard. (*Double Fudge*, 2002:98)

It shows that Mrs. Miller representing adults feels uncomfortable when children bring up sensitive issues. Adults assume that money is considered as sensitive matter that should not be discussed with children. However, The risky issue of money is difficult to explain to children. If adults plan to discuss money with them, it requires complex explanation in order to prevent them from misunderstanding in seeing money. Therefore, the aspects of silencing of Orientalism can be found in adults' attitude to avoid discussing the topic of money with children.

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Similar with talking about sensitive issues, parents' divorce becomes a threat for adults to be discussed with children. Instead of avoiding such issues to talk with children, Blume depicts the character in the storybooks by showing the sincere reaction of the character.

Mom took Tootsie from Mr. Fargo, "Thanks for driving Jimmy all this way, Frank," she said. "I know what a long trip is." "Used to come up here in the old days," Mr. Fargo said, "with my ex-wife. You remember my ex-wife, don't you?" Uh..oh.. I thought. I hope he's not going to

start in on Mrs. Fargo. Because Jimmy really hates it when he does" (*Fudge-a-Mania*, 1990:87)

It shows how Peter reacts to Mr. Fargo who started to talk about his divorce. Peter cares about Jimmy who become the victim of the divorce that gives trauma for him. In this case, instead of covering the issue of divorce, Blume tries to present it as smooth as possible without affects them to think it as inappropriate issue.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it can be observed how the aspects of inferiority, femaleness, adult-centered, and silencing in Orientalism can be found and rejected in Blume" *Tales of Fourth Grade Nothing*, *Fudge-a-Mania*, and *Double Fudge* through the depiction of the character in the storybooks. In the research, the aspect of inferiority sees children as lack in physical ability to say difficult word they do not get used to say; powerless to doing things they want since adults has authority over them as: incapable to aware and acknowledge other"s attitude; incapable to do anything they want since adults apply rules for them to follow; being treated as primitive and uncivilized; inferior to adults" intimidated physical appearances. On the contrary, Blume rejects the inferiority aspects by depicting children as capable to thing on their own; capable to find answer of his curiosity by themselves; and capable to acknowledge and sensing other"s attitude.

The aspect of femaleness sees children as the object to please adults" willingness by regretting their mistakes if they cannot fulfill what adults want them to do. However, Blume tries reject is by depicting the character as capable to gazed back at adults by showing objection of adults" way of seeing them.

The aspect of adult-centered expecting children as what adult"s wanted them to be and do. In findings, children are expected to: being quick response to react problem and behave nicely and show good manner to others. In this case, Blume depicts the character of children as: showing refusal adults" idea of how they should be and do. The last, the aspect of silencing covers sensitive issues to talk with children since they considered it as inappropriate and sensitive matter. However, Blume reject it by uncovering the issues and bring it as a topic for children to shows children"s attitude reacting to the sensitive matter.

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