

The novel “my idiot brother” by Agnes Danovar (book review)

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Abstract – The purpose of this project is (1) to describe the intrinsic elements, (2) to describe the moral value, (3) to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the novel My Idiot Brother. The method used in the analysis is the document study method. The results of this project are several moral values that the readers can learn such as (1) honesty, (2) authentic values, (3) moral of responsibility, (4) moral of independence, (5) moral of courage, (6) realistic and critical. The novel also has the strength of presenting an interesting storyline in a relaxed style that is easy for the readers to understand. There are also some mistakes in typing this novel. The novel is interesting to read because it has a storyline that is easy to understand and there are many life lessons that the readers can take from each story presented.

Keywords: love and family; moral value; lesson of life

I. INTRODUCTION

Novel is an essay that contains stories that contain intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The novel is also interpreted as a prose essay that contains a series of stories of a person's life with other people around him by highlighting character or behavior. The novel *My Idiot Brother* was chosen in this project for several reasons: first, this novel is interesting to read because the storyline is easy to understand; second, this novel contains many moral values that can motivate readers to be able to appreciate other people's shortcomings; third, this novel tells about family life (siblings) that are not far from human life and have unique characterizations compared to novels in general.

The writer's name is Agnes Davonar. The writer's real name is Agnes Li, a woman who was born in Jakarta, October 8, 1986 and Teddy Li, the younger brother who was born in Jakarta, August 7, 1989 is the child of the late couple Ng Bui Cui and Bong Nien Chin. The point of the explosion of Agnes Davonar's fame (the names that both of them carried) occurred when they wrote the online novel "Kisah Lirik Terakhir" which was based on a song lyric, which tells the story of Gaby the songwriter who committed suicide. They gained even more fame and popularity when they published their second novel entitled "Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan" which was based on the true story of a woman suffering from soft tissue cancer in 2008. Their second novel succeeded in becoming a best-seller novel in Indonesia, and was translated into Chinese, and also marketed and run in Taiwan. Not stopping at their second work which was successfully filmed, they also continued to work to produce several novels and biographies. Here are their works: *Misteri Kematian Gaby dan Lagunya Jauh*, *Surat Kecil Untuk Tuhan*, *Biografi Denny Sumargo*, *Ayah Mengapa Aku Berbeda? (Moon edition)*, *Ayah Mengapa Aku Berbeda? (Venus edition)*, *Kumpulan Cerpen Love n' Life Chocolatos*, *Biografi Oei Hui Lan*, *Anak Orang Terkaya di Indonesia*, *F.R.I.E.N.D.S*, *My Last Love*, *My Blackberry Girlfriend*, *My Idiot Brother*, *Biografi Nina Wang: Perempuan Terkaya di Hongkong*, *Bidadari Terakhir*.

Long story short in this novel, there is a family life that is so dynamic, all of Angel's behaviour and actions are never able to accept the condition of her brother who has mental retardation. Angel thinks her brother is just a figure that burdens her and embarrasses her in front of her friends. Hendra is Angel's older brother who is mentally retarded. Angel, who never behaved well, did not make Hendra angry with his beloved sister. Hendra always treated his younger sibling sweetly even though he often received bad treatment from his younger sibling, both physically and psychologically. As time went by, Angel finally realized that her brother really loved her and was willing to do anything for her. Angel realized the mistake she had made for her brother, but what she realized was too late because her brother had died forever. The characters in this novel describe in detail what moral values are contained in each course of the story. Based on this, the purpose to be achieved include: 1) Knowing the intrinsic elements contained in the novel *My Idiot Brother*, 2) Knowing the moral value contained in the novel *My Idiot Brother*, 3) Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of *My Idiot Brother* book.

Although some book reviews found and they are published in the journal, but until the end of December 2022, the reviewers had not found any reviews on this book published in DOAJ indexed journals. The example of book reviews show

us that the format of the book reviews are relatively free since there is no a kind of fixed format to follow. Let us take the examples in Nurrahma (2022), Ambarrini, (2021), Frahm-Arp (2022), Rejmánek (2023), Newman (2022), Șerban (2022), Spătaru-Iacob (2022), Voina (2022), Nicolae (2022), Cozma (2022), Ghisbain & Michez (2022). Some book reviews found were also limited to discussing this novel in general (Alkhanza, tt; Ertanto, 2018; Ernawati, 2021). Therefore, this book review is finally here in order to fill some of the gaps and opportunities that are still quite open.

II. METHOD

The method used in the analysis of *My Idiot Brother* is the document study method. On the other hand, Sugiyono (2014) states that documents are records of events that have passed in the form of writing, drawings, or monumental works of a person. Document studies methods, in the past, were rarely considered in qualitative research methodology. Nowadays, document study is an important and inseparable part of qualitative research methodology. This is due to a new awareness and understanding that is developing among researchers, that so much data is stored in the form of documents and artifacts. This makes extracting data sources through document studies a complement to the qualitative research process. Guba as quoted by Bungin (2010) states that the level of credibility of qualitative research results is more or less determined by the use and use of existing documents.

Document study is a data collection technique by collecting and analyzing documents, both written documents, drawings, works, and electronics. The documents obtained were then analyzed, compared and integrated (synthesis) to form a systematic, integrated and complete study. Documentary studies is not simply collecting and recording a series of documents or reporting them in the form of citations. The reported findings are the result of an analysis of these documents. The use of current documentation study by researchers (especially social scientists in qualitative research) needs to be considered and optimized. It turns out that many sources are preserved in various materials and types of documentaries. Because the information and type contained in this documentary material are so rich, exploration of data sources using documentation methods has a significant impact on the quality (reliability) of research results.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Book title	: <i>My Idiot Brother</i>
Writer's name	: Agnes Davonar
Publication year	: 2011
Publisher	: Inandra Published
Chapter	: 14 Chapter
Number of pages	: 267 pages

3.1 Intrinsic elements

Novel *My Idiot Brother* has important elements as a builder of literary works called intrinsic elements. One of the most important intrinsic elements is the theme. The theme of the novel *My Idiot Brother* is about teenage life. Overall, this novel uses a forward plot, telling the sacrifice of an older brother who really loves his younger

sibling. Regarding point of view, this novel uses the first-person point of view as the actor who tells his life story using a language style that is quite simple, easy to understand or easy to understand. There are quite a lot of setting of place, setting of time, and setting of atmosphere in this novel. The backgrounds of the places used are schools, rooms, kitchens, supermarkets, houses, fields, classrooms, offices or teacher's room pickets, toilets, food stalls, malls, balconies, shops, living rooms, canteens, motorbike parking lots, Mutiara Dua Complex, street food stalls, terrace, doll shop, Green Cafe, motorcycle accessories shop, middle of the road, hospital, emergency room, Sulawesi Ocean, doctor's office. While the time settings used are morning, afternoon, four o'clock in the afternoon, break time, one hour, 16.35 WIB, five o'clock in the afternoon, four days, noon. Then, the setting for the atmosphere contained in this novel is a tense, sad, happy, and gloomy atmosphere.

Stories from novels *My Idiot Brother* has a very deep message. The takeaway message is, everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. The privilege that a person has, especially our brothers and sisters, is a gift from God, so we must protect and continue to love it so that people who have these privileges can live their lives as they should like ordinary people and always be happy. We also have to accept whatever our brother's condition is sincerely with all the shortcomings he has, without having to hide it. Do not let regrets arrive when we lose the figure.

3.2 Moral Values

In the review of the novel *My Idiot Brother*, reviewers used the theory of moral values where attitudes and actions related to moral values (Suseno, 2002) are as follows.

- (1) *Honesty*: Honesty is the most important asset in social life. Being honest with others means being open and fair. Being open doesn't mean that you have to answer all other people's questions completely, or that other people have the right to know all their feelings and thoughts. The moral value of honesty contained in the novel *My Idiot Brother* can be seen in the following excerpt.

"Aku membuka kaleng itu dan tiba-tiba melihat banyak sekali uang receh yang telah dikumpulkan oleh kakakku".

("I opened the can and suddenly saw a lot of nickels that my brother had collected.)

"Buset, duitnya banyak banget! Ini duit simpanan loe, buat apa?".

("OMG, there is so much money! This is your deposit, what do you make?"

"Untuk kado hadiah ulang tahun adik nanti... ambil saja kalau adik mau" (*My Idiot Brother*, 2011: 109)

("For my sister's birthday gift later... just take it if you want" (*My Idiot Brother*, 2011: 109).

Based on the quote above, you can see the moral value of honesty in Angel's brother (Hendra). Hendra honestly admits that he collected the money given by his mother to buy Angel's birthday present.

- (2) *Authentic Value*: Underlying this dishonesty is the fear of being abandoned by their environment. The authentic value contained in Agnes Davonar novel *My Idiot Brother* such as:

"Seburuk apapun kakakmu, dia tetaplah kakakmu. Kalau sudah begini takdir kamu, kamu tidak akan pernah bisa mengubah apapun Angel. Kenapa kamu harus malu" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 59).

"No matter how bad your brother is, he is still your brother. If this is your destiny, you can never change anything Angel. Why should you be embarrassed?" (My Idiot Brother, 2014: 59).

From the quote above, we can see that the mom is trying to convince Angel to stop shaming her brother's mental illness. Her mom is telling Angel to accept her condition and no longer have to feel ashamed in front of her friends. Her mommy also wants Angel to be ready to confess her brother in front of her friends. Having an older brother with an intellectual disability is already God's destiny, and Angel's hatred of her older brother won't change that.

(3) *Moral of responsibility*: The moral of responsibility is being willing to do what needs to be done to the best of one's ability. Willingness to take responsibility includes the willingness to demand and give accountability for one's actions in order to carry out one's tasks and obligations. The moral value of responsibility in Agnes Vomar's novel *My Idiot Brother* can be seen in the following excerpt.

"Iya... tapi Adik temenin kakak dulu." "Syaratnya cuman temenin loe? Kemana?" "Ke minimarket. Beli coklat..."

"Yes... but you accompany me first." "The condition is just to accompany you?? Where to?" "To the mini market. Buy some chocolate..."

"Cuma gitu aja? Gampang banget. Yuk Capcus!"

"Is that all? It's so easy. Come on!"

"Aku menarik tangan kakakku dan kami pun berangkat ke minimarket dekat rumah. Kakakku membeli kue coklat kesukaannya. Aku tertawa gembira dalam hati karena akhirnya bisa mendapatkan uang untuk membelikan kado untuk Aji. Setelah pulang dan memakan kue coklat itu, aku mengingatkan sekali lagi pada kakaku tentang uangnya" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 110).

"I pulled my brother's hand and we went to the minimarket near the house. My brother bought her favourite chocolate cake. I laughed happily inside because I was finally able to get money to buy a present for Aji. After coming home and eating the chocolate cake, I reminded my brother once again about the money" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 110).

From the above quote, we can see that Angel took responsibility for what she could do. Angel is responsible for her statement by carrying out her mission to accompany him to buy a chocolate cake at a minimarket near their house. After completing the task, Angel earns his brother's bail in return.

(4) *Moral of independence*: The moral of independence is to have its own stance and act according to conscience, not to follow the various moral views in the circle. Moral independence can also be interpreted as the inner strength to take a moral stand and to act according to the will of those around him. The moral value of independence in the novel *My Idiot Brother* by Agnes Davonar can be seen in the excerpt below.

"Untungnya kakakku tidak begitu banyak merepotkan seperti anak bayi. Ia bisa melakukan apa saja. Ia tidak pernah tersesat bila pergi membeli makanan di warung tetangga atau minimarket terdekat. Ia bisa makan sendiri walau terkadang berantakan seperti seekor kucing yang sedang makan lahap. Dan yang terpenting, aku tak perlu membantu dia untuk membersihkan diri setelah usai buang air besar" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 16).

"Fortunately, my brother is not as troublesome as a baby. He can do anything. He never gets lost when he goes to buy food at a neighbour's stall or the nearest convenience store. He can eat alone even though sometimes it's messy like a cat eating hard. And most importantly, I don't have to help him clean up after defecation" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 16).

From the above description, we can see that, despite being mentally retarded, Hendra is able to do everything on his own without the help of his parents or his younger sister. He can take care of his own needs like going, eating, and cleaning without the help of others.

"Ia mencoba mengingat dimana tempat yang aku katakan dalam pikirannya. Dalam benaknya terlintas kata-kataku tadi sebelum berangkat bahwa aku akan berpesta di Cafe Hijau. Ia pun langsung berjalan keluar rumah tanpa sepengetahuan Ibu. Ia berjalan sambil mengingat lokasi menuju Cafe Hijau yang memang merupakan tempat yang sering ia kunjungi bersama ibu ketika hendak menjemputku di sekolah. Dengan bersusah payah dan beberapa kali memutar jalan, akhirnya ia menemukan Cafe Hijau karena logo cafe itu berbentuk daun hijau yang menyala-nyala oleh lampu hingga ia bisa langsung mengingatnya" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 120).
"He tried to remember where I said it was in his mind. In his mind came my words just now before leaving that I was going to party at the Green Cafe. He immediately walked out of the house without Mom's knowledge. He walked while remembering the location to the Green Cafe which was indeed a place he often visited with his mother when he was about to pick me up at school. With great difficulty and several twists of the road, he finally found the Green Cafe because the café's logo was in the form of a green leaf that was blazing by the lights so that he could immediately remember it"
(My Idiot Brother, 2011: 120).

From the above quote, we can see that Hendra was able to find the Green Cafe, which became the birthday spot for Angel's friend. Without anyone's help, the mentally handicapped Hendra kept going in the wrong direction, but he was able to find the location of Green Café.

(5) *Moral of Courage*: Moral of courage is being able to show oneself in determination to maintain an attitude that has been believed to be a duty and obligation to be carried out. People who have confidence do not back down from duties and responsibilities, although it can threaten the safety of life. The moral value of courage in the novel *My Idiot Brother* by Agnes Davonar can be seen in the excerpt below.

"Kenyataan? Ibu bilang kenyataan? Angel sudah cukup menderita menerima kenyataan kalau punya kakak cacat. Tolong jangan tambah penderitaan Angel juga di sekolah karena jadi bahan ejekan teman-teman! Kataku sambil menangis" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 59).
"Reality? Mom said the truth? Angel has suffered enough to accept the fact that he has a disabled brother. Please don't add Angel's plight is also at school for being the subject of ridicule from friends! I said in tears" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 59).

The quote above shows Angel summoning up the courage to tell her mother how heartbroken she is. Angel wanted her mother to understand. Angel wants her mother to stop exacerbating her suffering by having her brother pick her up from school. Angel was pretty depressed all along that her friends were mocking her brother's condition. Her friends always likened Angel to her brother.
(6) *Realistic and Critical*: Realistic and critical is being able to think and put ourselves as well as possible in any situation and condition, and also to care for your environment as a human being. Realistic and critical moral values in the novel *My Idiot Brother* by Agnes Davonar can be seen in the excerpt below.

"Ibu bisa bedakan mana telur yang bagus dan mana yang jelek, karena ibu sering membeli telur. Telur yang bagus lebih terang warnanya daripada telur yang jelek. Sama seperti kakakmu. Walaupun ia kamu bilang bodoh tapi ia tidak akan sulit mengenali kamu walau ada orang yang

banyak berpakaian sama denganmu karena ia adalah kakakmu. Setiap hari denganmu, mengerti?" (My Idiot Brother, 2011: 58).

"I can distinguish which eggs are good and which are bad, because I often buy eggs. A good egg is lighter in color than an ugly egg. Just like your brother. Even though he said you were stupid but he wouldn't have a hard time recognizing you even though there are people who dress the same as you because he's your brother. Every day with you, understand?" (*My Idiot Brother*, 2011: 58).

Based on the above quote, mom tried to be wise with Angel's remarks. Mom tries to give a proper parable to Angel who often assumes that her brother is stupid and can't use his wits to think. The mother's detailed explanation influenced Angel and finally accepted what the mother said.

3.3. Strength and Weakness

The strength: The author of the novel is able to present an interesting storyline in a relaxed style that is easy for many people to understand. The story that is raised also touches the hearts of the readers so that they can imagine the atmosphere in the novel. The message of the novel is very good to be exemplified in everyday life.

The weakness: In the novel there are still some mistakes in typing. Then, the image in the lower corner of each page is a little disturbing because the colour is almost the same as the colour of the text and the size is quite large.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the description, it could be concluded that Dora the Explorer was designed to make a show that would teach children problem-solving skills and make viewers active participants in the events. Besides the interactive element of the series, its further characteristic feature is bilingualism, which is present in every episode. The bilingual element is present in the show because educators believe that introducing a second language to children before the age of 6 or 7 is crucial in assisting them to achieve fluency in the second language. The effect has been proven by research conducted by Länkinen (2013), through a study which aimed at analyzing the impact of watching certain educational programs Dora the Explorer (which is in Finnish called as Seikkailija Dora. As the result, it is found that children who watch Dora the Explorer as a supplement to their learning, have a wider range of vocabulary compared to those who did not watch the TV show.

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