

**THE PSYCHOPATHIC BEHAVIOR OF THE ANTAGONIST
IN THE NOVEL *THE CUCKOO'S CALLING*
BY ROBERT GALBRAITH**

**Hamzah Rabbani
Agnes Setyowati H.
Shita Dewi Ratih P.**

Abstract

This research discusses the psychopathic behaviour of the antagonist, John Bristow, in the novel *The Cuckoo's Calling* by Robert Galbraith. This research aims at identifying the characteristics and causes of psychopathic behavior of the antagonist and the impact on others and himself. The research was conducted using descriptive analysis method and psychoanalysis approach. John, who has hurt others without remorse, is not afraid of repeating his crime. He is able to deceive and manipulate others, not to mention coldhearted, and has a lack of empathy. Strong id and weak superego originating from John's lack of attention and affection from his parents and closest people are the causes of John's psychopathic behaviour. John's psychopathic behaviour in turn causes others to suffer and causes himself to lose his family.

Keywords : *The Cuckoo's Calling, Psychopathic Behaviour, Superego, Id, Family.*

INTRODUCTION

Parents who do not provide enough moral guidance can cause a child to have a lack of moral values. This will form a person to not have that moral aspect as they should, for moral has the function to direct one's nature and behavior to always be in accordance with the norms of society. Behaviors that lack moral values can lead to deviant traits and behaviors and one of the deviant behaviors in society is psychopathic behavior.

Psychopathic behavior can be described as someone who has sadistic behavior and is accompanied by the ability to deceive others. The story of a psychopath is told through various kinds of media. Psychopathic characters also appear in novels. One of the novels that gave rise to psychopathic characters is a detective-themed novel entitled *The Cuckoo's Calling* by Robert Galbraith.

The antagonist in the novel *The Cuckoo's Calling* is John Bristow. The character, John Bristow, is an adopted child. When he was little, John killed his adoptive

brother named Charlie. John also has a half sister named Lula Landry, who works as a famous model. John Bristow was the one who killed Lula, whose death was declared an act of suicide. John managed to trick all parties so that no one suspected that John was Lula's murderer. John Bristow asked for help from a private detective named Cormoran Strike, to investigate Lula's death and find Lula's murderer. John tried to become the heir to Lula's inheritance by directing Strike to find and make Lula's brother a suspect. He also killed Rachel Onifade, Lula's friend who was the only witness to the existence of Lula's will for his siblings. The plan and actions of John Bristow were revealed by detective Cormoran Strike at the end of the story.

Aggressive actions were not shown through the character of John Bristow before the climax of the story, his cruel behavior was revealed at the end of the story instead. In all his actions in committing a crime, John Bristow demonstrated the ability to deceive and manipulate others. John's behavior shows a tendency towards the behavior of a psychopath.

In his daily life, John is a lawyer who has sufficient financial ability. In his family, John is a child who always cares for and shows his love for his mother, and also shows a good relationship with his sister. Regardless of his normal life, John Bristow is labeled as a psychopath. The characteristics of psychopathic behavior of the antagonist, the causes and the impact of the psychopathic behavior of the character are considered the elements that are interesting to discuss.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intrinsic element

Intrinsic elements in the novel are aspects or elements of the novel that are in the novel itself and not from outside. In general, there are three elements forming a novel in an analysis of fictional narratives: plot, character and characterization, and background (Wellek & Warren, 1956: 261).

1. Plot

The plot, is the sequence of events that make up a story (Perrine, 1974: 43).

In general, the plot can be divided into five parts, namely the situation, the stage of conflict generation (generating circumstances), the stage of increasing conflict (rising action), the climax stage (climax), and the stage of completion (denouement) (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 209-210).

There are elements of surprise in the plot. The suspense element is part of a story that makes the reader wonder about what will happen next. Surprise elements are events that were previously unexpected by the reader, because they are different from what the reader expects (Perrine, 1974: 45-47).

2. Characters and Characterizations

Characters are people in narrative fiction who have a certain moral quality and tendency (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 490).

Based on the function of appearance of characters, characters can be distinguished

into protagonists and antagonists. Protagonists are characters who are admired by readers who uphold ideal norms and values in general, so that they are usually able to attract readers' sympathy. While the antagonists are characters who are the cause of conflict, figures who oppose the protagonist, directly or indirectly, physically or mentally (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 490-491).

Characterization is a way of presenting the characters in the story and there are two ways of presenting the characters, namely direct presentation and indirect presentation. In direct presentation, the author describes directly about the character, or uses another character to explain the character. In indirect presentation, the character is described through his actions, thoughts, or words (Perrine, 1974: 68).

3. Background

Background is the aspect of place, time, and socio-cultural conditions in a story (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 482).

Settings as the place of the story are the location of events that occur in the story. Settings can be places with certain names, abbreviations, or a location without a clear name (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 483).

Settings as the time of the story is a form that explains "when" events in a story occur. The shape of the time of the story can be factual time. It can also be described in a situation related to a particular history (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 483).

The socio-cultural setting is a form that describes the social life of a community in a place such as life habits, customs, traditions, beliefs, life views, ways of thinking and behaving, and others. The socio-cultural setting of the place, time setting and background are interrelated background elements. All of these elements influence each other (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 322-325)

4. Symbol

Symbols in literature are things that have more meaning than their true meaning. The symbols

in the story have many possible forms. The form of a symbol can be an object, a person, a situation, an action, and also various other forms. The symbol forms have real meaning as an object, but in the story, it can also have and represent another meaning (Perrine, 1974: 211).

5. Irony

Irony is a state of conflict between two things, where in the conflict there is an impression of mutual ridicule between one thing and another (Perrine, 1974: 215).

There are three types of irony: (1) *Verbal Irony*, is an irony where what is said is different from what is intended, such as subtle satire. (2) *Dramatic Irony*, is a situation where the reader is smarter than the character, because what actually happens is unknown to the character, while the reader knows it. What the character knows is different from what the reader knows. (3) *Irony of Situation*, is a condition where what happens is not in accordance with what is expected or appropriate to occur (Perrine, 1974: 215-217).

6. Themes

The theme is a basic idea or idea that sustains a literary work as a semantic structure, in the form of abstract and appears repeatedly through motives and is generally implicitly shown (Nurgiyantoro, 2013: 115).

Psychopath

Psychopathic is an image of an individual who shows the following signs: not having fear (*fearlessness*), lack of empathy, lack of guilt and remorse, no feeling (*coldheartedness*), able to deceive others (*the use of deceit*) and manipulative (Wade et al., 2014: 271).

Some psychopaths are able to be manipulative and intimidating, but still attractive. Some psychopaths are able to play a role to trick others (Skeem, Polaschek, Patrick & Lilienfeld, 2011: 96).

Lack of empathy, lack of guilt, and ability to cheat and manipulate are some indicators of psychopathic behavior in the

Hare Psychopathy Checklist (Brazil & Forth, 2016: 3).

Social predators who are attractive, manipulative, cruel, have no empathy, do whatever they like, and violate social norms without guilt are definitions of psychopaths used in research in searching for "successful psychopaths" (Mullins-Sweatt, Glover, Derefinco, Miller & Widiger, 2010: 555).

A psychopath can be formed, because genetic traits tend to interact with environmental influences (Wade et al., 2014: 272).

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis stresses itself on unconscious motivation and internal conflicts (Wade et al., 2014: 204).

According to Sigmund Freud, there are elements that are not realized in a person. These elements, for example, are elements of motivation, passion, feelings of guilt that are buried, desires that are not revealed, and conflicts between desires and obligations that are not realized. These elements are forces that are more instrumental in forming a personality compared to the elements that are realized (Wade et al., 2014: 205).

In this psychoanalytic theory proposed by Freud, a person's personality is formed by three things, namely the id, ego, and superego.

Id, is a psychological motivation to avoid pain that has existed since humans were born. Id has two competing instincts: instincts for life or sexual instincts and death instincts or aggressive traits (Wade et al., 2014: 205).

Ego is the second personality system that appears after the id. Ego is the mediator between the need for impingement and fulfillment of social demands in the community. Ego represents good reason and good judgment (Wade et al., 2014: 205).

Superego is a form of conscience that represents morality. The superego provides

pleasure and happiness when something good is done, and gives a bad feeling when an action violates social rules (Wade et al., 2014: 205). The superego is formed by planting ideal values and attitudes based on parental authority (Donnet, 2005: 1690).

The values given by parents when childhood will be embedded as an authority in the subconscious. Furthermore, the views and qualities obtained from the closest people will affect the personality in a person (Roth, 2001: 44-45).

According to psychoanalysis, problems arise from the desires of the subconscious as well as unresolved childhood conflicts (Heller, 2005: 184).

The function of memory and the subconscious cannot be separated. Both of them run parallel in our lives (Mancia, 2006: 106).

The conflict between the impulse of the subconscious which forces to appear on the surface with self-effort in suppressing it, can cause mental disorders and give birth to aggressive behavior (Carter, 2006: 71).

ANALYSIS

The plot of the story in *The Cuckoo's Calling* novel strengthens the psychopathic character of John, namely the ability to pretend. The plot of *The Cuckoo's Calling* story consists of exposition, prefix conflict, increased conflict, climax, and settlement. In all the parts before the climax, John is told as a character who helps the protagonist to solve the murder case of his sister. At the climax, John was revealed as the real killer. The plot has a surprise element that reinforces the picture of the ability of the antagonist as a character who is able to hide his true nature.

Conflict between characters is evidence of John's ability to trick others. John showed his determination to solve the case of Lula's death. Alison, the secretary at the place where John worked, believed in John's ambitions and had time to oppose John. Strike, the detective John rents, initially refuses to help John investigate

the case of Lula's death. John showed his anger at Strike, showing that he meant it: "*All I want, Strike, "said Bristow hoarsely, the color high in his thin face," is justice.*" (Galbraith, 2013: 50)

Characterization shows John's ability to trick others. One of John's main motives for killing Lula was to obtain his inheritance. There is nothing to show that John will experience financial difficulties until he has to steal money from his company. John is described as someone who looks luxurious and gives the impression of someone who has a lot of money:

"... but his dark gray suit was beautifully tailored, and the shining ice-blue tie, the watch and the shoes all looked expensive. The snowy smoothness of the stranger's shirt made Strike doubly conscious of the thousands or so creases in his own clothes." (Galbraith, 2013: 25-26)

The actions taken by the antagonist show no remorse after committing a crime, as well as fear of committing a crime. After killing Rochelle, John hides Rochelle's cellphone in Lady Yvette's safe. John changed the safe password to 030483. The number John pairs is the date John Bristow killed Charlie. The date of Charlie's death that John uses as a safe code to hide evidence of his other murder being the link between his crimes. The death of Charlie and Lula is based on the same motive: making him the only child who is most loved. The distance between Charlie's murder and the murder of Lula is far away. Using the date of Charlie's death shows that John still has a sense of envy that he has long felt. This shows the nature of John who has no regrets in killing Charlie and Lula. And his actions after committing his first murder did not prevent him from carrying out the second murder, but made it easier to repeat the crime. It shows that he is not afraid of committing a crime, which is a characteristic of psychopathic behavior.

"... He reset the code from the safe so that he could get in but him: 030483. Easter Sunday, nineteen eighty-three: the day he killed my mate Charlie." (Galbraith, 2013: 570)

The irony of the situation in the story shows the nature of the antagonist who has no sense of empathy and feelings. The irony was raised through John's actions to kill Lula. As an older brother, John is expected to love and protect his sister. John is also expected to be able to maintain his mother's health. Lula's death made her mother's condition worse. This situation proves that John has no empathy and is more selfish. The act of killing his own sister also shows one characteristic of psychopathic behavior, which is lacking the sense of feeling.

John has the ability to manipulate others, which is one of the psychopathic behaviors. John made Alison believe that she was sad after Lula's death. This made Alison accept John's request to lie about his presence on the day of Lula's death to make an alibi for John. John asked Alison to say that he actually visited his office the morning after his visit to Lula's apartment.

"...You played the devastated bereaved brother in front of her, and then asked her out to dinner, and the poor bitch was so delighted to have a chance to look like a desirable female in front of Tony that she agreed. A couple of dates later, you persuaded her to say she saw you at the office on the morning before Lula died. She thought you were just overanxious and paranoid, didn't she? She believed that you already had a cast-iron alibi from her adored Tony, later in the day. She didn't think it mattered if she told a little white lie to calm you down." (Galbraith,2013:551-552)

The psychopathic behavior of John is caused by the strong motivation of the id and the weakness of the superego within. This situation is triggered by a lack of love given by parents and their closest people.

John did not get enough love from his parents. John has been adopted since childhood and his relationship with his biological parents is not told. Lady Yvette, John's adoptive mother, paid more attention to Charlie and Lula. The background location shows the difference. When Strike visits Lady Yvette's room, she discovers that Lady Yvette only put up photos

of Charlie and Lula in her room: *"Your mother hasn't even got a picture of you by her deathbed. Just Charlie and Lula. Just the two she loved."* (Galbraith,2013:554)

Lady Yvette was obsessed with Lula, showing a different attitude. Lady Yvette was devastated by Charlie's death. For Lady Yvette, Lula is a remedy for losing Charlie. Lady Yvette did not appreciate John's existence enough to be able to replace Charlie. Therefore Lady Yvette was possessive of Lula. This situation instilled jealousy in John, which became the power of the subconscious as a driver of the id in him. The encouragement of the ID is in the form of aggressive behavior towards Lula.

"... Those Bristows fucked her up good. They only use Yvette, who is the scariest bitch in the world."

"In what way?"

"Possessive. Morbid. Don't want to let Cuckoo, she was sighted out of case she died, like the kid she'd been bought to replace." (Galbraith, 2013: 328)

The setting of the place and the forces of the unconscious drive John's psychopathic behavior. Before killing Lula, John waited in the flat where Lula lived. While waiting, John is surrounded by luxury. This strengthened John's jealousy from childhood. John always feels jealous of Lula for getting more attention and affection from Lady Yvette, John's adoptive mother. Jealousy that John felt was a conflict that had not been resolved since childhood. Jealousy is embedded in John's subconscious. The luxury that John saw while hiding pushed John's subconscious and made him act aggressively. This was revealed by Strike at the climax and could not be denied by John.

"I expect the idea of the murder started to germinate then, all those hours you were alone, in all that luxury. Did you start to imagine how wonderful it would be if Lula, who you were sure was intestate, died? You must've known your sick mother would be a much softer touch, especially once you were

her only remaining child..." (Galbraith,2013:553)

John does not have a close relationship with other family members. Tony, John's uncle, tried to keep his distance and relationship with John. Tony had witnessed John's actions while injuring Charlie in childhood. Tony was involved in a fight with Lady Yvette for revealing this. Tony, who already knew John's behavior, chose to keep his distance from John. Lula, John's sister, prefers to give her wealth to her siblings, even though Lula has been living with John since childhood. This shows the lack of closeness and distrust between Lula and John.

" John and I have a perfectly amicable working relationship. "

"Working relationship?"

"Yes, Mr.Strike: we work together. Do we live in each other's pockets outside the office? No ... " (Galbraith, 2013: 253)

The lack of love and attention given by parents and the closest person makes the superego aspect of John weak. These weaknesses make the ID out of control and determine John's psychopathic behavior.

Psychopathic behavior has an impact on others in the form of death and suffering. John made his brother die. Lula and Charlie's death made her mother's condition worse.

John's psychopathic behavior also had an impact on himself, namely in the form of losing family members. The death of his brother made John lose people nearby. Lula's death did not get her mother closer and watched John. His mother was getting sicker and couldn't show more affection for John. This was a setback and a loss for John.

Conclusion

The plot of the story, the conflict between characters, characterizations, setting of place, actions of the antagonist, and the irony of the situation shows the characteristics of psychopathic behavior of the antagonist.

The plot of *The Cuckoo's Calling* has a surprise element. The antagonist's character is first shown in the climax section. The leap of the story from a slow plot to the climax is so fast that it reinforces the impression of a psychopath on the antagonist.

The antagonist conflict with others shows the ability to pretend. Strike, Alison, and Tony show opposing attitudes regarding to the investigation of Lula's killer. Contradictions with other figures show the trust of others towards the determination of the antagonist in seeking the truth.

The physical depiction of an antagonist shows the ability to deceive others. The antagonist has an appearance as someone who is and removes the suspicion of the motive for killing because of money.

The antagonist is able to deceive and manipulate others by making others believe in him and follow what he wants. John is able to make the people around him believe him and follow his wishes, as he did when making Alison lie to create an alibi for him.

The antagonist does not fear to commit a crime, which is indicated by his second kill in order to reach his goal.

The antagonist does not show any signs of remorse after committing murder and this also shows that there is no sense of feeling in his nature. The antagonist uses the date of his first murder as a safekeeping code belonging to his murder victim.

The fact that John is Lula's killer creates the irony of situation. The irony shows the antagonist's lack of empathy towards his mother who is increasingly suffering from Lula's loss. It also shows the absence of an antagonist's feelings towards his younger brother.

The characteristics of the antagonist's psychopathic behavior are able to hurt others without having a sense of guilt, not afraid of repeating their crimes, able to deceive and manipulate others, have no feelings, and have no empathy.

Psychopathic behavior is strongly influenced by the subconscious forces. The relationship between the antagonist and the parents and the people closest to him weakens the superego and strengthens the impulse in him.

The lack of love given by the family makes the superego a weak antagonist. The weakness of the superego is caused by a lack of value and authority as a moral guide from parents and the people closest to it. The antagonist has been abandoned by his biological mother since childhood. His adoptive mother loves his other siblings more. His uncle prefers to limit his relationship with him.

The difference in the attitude of the parents of the antagonist with his other siblings makes the antagonist have jealousy. Jealousy is a conflict that has not been resolved since childhood. Jealousy becomes an embedded desire and continues to exist in the subconscious to form the psychopathic behavior of the antagonist.

The strong urge of the id from his subconscious makes the antagonist take aggressive actions and show the behavior of a psychopath.

Psychopathic behavior of the antagonists is caused by two main things. The first is the strength of jealousy that is embedded in the subconscious and creates impulse. The second is the weakness of the superego which gives moral value because of the lack of love given by parents and closest people.

The impact of the psychopathic behavior of the antagonist is suffering and death for others, and losing his family to himself.

Bibliography

- Brazil, Kristopher J. & Adelle E. Forth. 2016. *Hare Psychopathy Checklist*. Basel : Springer International Publishing AG.
- Carter, David. 2006. *Literary Theory*. Harpenden : Pocket Essentials.
- Donnet, Jean-Luc & Alain de Mijolla (Eds). 2005. *International Dictionary of*

Psychoanalysis. Farmington Hills : Thomson Gale.

Galbraith, Robert. 2013. *The Cuckoo's Calling*. New York : Mulholland Book.

Gross, Richard. 2010. *Psychology : The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. London : Hodder Education.

Heller, Sharon. 2005. *Freud A to Z*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Mancia, Mauro (Eds). 2006. *Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience*. Milan : Springer.

Mullins-Sweatt, Stephanie N., Natalie G. Glover, & Karen J. Derefinko, et al. 2010. *The Search for The Successful Psychopath*. Journal of Research in Personality, 44(2010), 554-558.

Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. 2013. *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta : Gadjah Mada University Press.

Perrine, Laurence. 1974. *Literature : Structure, Sound, and Sense*. New York City : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Roth, Priscilla. 2001. *Ideas in Psychoanalysis : The Superego*. Cambridge : Icon Books Ltd.

Skeem, Jennifer L., Polaschek, Devon L. L., Patrick, Christopher, & Scott O. Lilienfeld. 2011. *Psychopathic Personality : Bridging the Gap Between Scientific Evidence and Public Policy*. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 12(3),95-162.

Wade, Carole, Tavis, Carol, & Maryanne Gary. 2014. *Edisi Kesebelas Psikologi Jilid II*. Jakarta : Penerbit Erlangga.

Wellek, Rene & Austin Warren. 2016. *Teori Kesusastraan*. Jakarta : PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.