

Interpreting Moral Values in the Short Story *Dancing in Paradise* by Agustrijanto

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Abstract- This research aims to interpret moral values related to *responsibility, conscience, and obligations* contained in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto. A qualitative approach is used to focus in-depth observation and analysis on the short story *Dancing in Paradise* by Agustrijanto. This research is based on the theory of Bertens (2004) with a qualitative descriptive research method with data in the form of quotes in short stories. The data collection technique uses the reading and recording technique (hermeneutics). The results of the study show that there are three moral values in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto, namely the first moral value related to responsibility consisting of hard work, never giving up, education, the second moral value of conscience consists of helping, sadness, sincerity, and the third moral value of obligation consists of worship and caring for others. From the analysis conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto reveals that humans cannot be separated from the moral value of responsibility which is a fundamental aspect in social existence, it is difficult for humans to escape from the moral values of conscience and obligation because both are part of human personality that provide guidelines and behaviors that maintain order in life together. Through literary works such as the short story *Dancing in Paradise* it is able to prevent and filter the occurrence of moral crises in society which can then be implemented in all spheres of life both to families, leaders or fellow humans.

Keywords: Interpretation, Moral Values, Short stories.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a phenomenon that has brought significant changes in various aspects of human life, including in the field of education that is growing and affecting various aspects of life around the world. These changes are not only economic and technological, but also social and cultural caused by the impact of globalization (Sugiharto et al., 2024; Widiarti, 2022). This will result in the weakening of social moral values. This weakness will cause a monetary crisis that has an impact on daily life, and will also affect the moral character and attitude of human behavior in various parts of the world, including

Indonesia. In addition to bringing positive impacts such as technological advances, communication, and the economy, globalization also has negative impacts that cannot be ignored, especially significant changes in various aspects of life, including the values and norms embraced in society. Globalization has brought the world to become more connected and blurred cultural boundaries between countries. This process has an impact on the formation of more complex cultural identities among children, including elementary school students.

The impact of globalization, which cannot be properly balanced, can cause a moral crisis in

society (Aziza & Banjarmasin, 2020). The moral values that are the foundation for the life of society and the nation today are increasingly eroded and always become problems such as the lack of ethics or manners of a person today which is so concerning.

The lack of ethical manners has led to cases that are considered a fact that the current generation is on the verge of destruction. The solution to overcome this problem is the need to instill values that foster a positive attitude in order to solve various problems that exist in the real world and in short story literature (George, 2006). Learning about morality can be obtained from the literary works we read. Literature born by writers is expected to be able to provide knowledge satisfaction to readers

Literature can be said to be a form of outpouring of heart from an author that is produced from a reflection that can be realized in spoken and written language. Other sources explain that literature is an expression of an author's heart or thoughts (Erni, 2016). In building a literary work involves (thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs) (Khoerul Ummah, 2022). In literature, the value of beauty is not the main thing, but in literature it must include the values of life. The moral values contained in a short story can also be known through character descriptions, relationships between characters and dialogues.

Short stories are a type of literary work that is explained in the form of writing in the form of a story or story in a short, clear and concise manner that is rich in life values, including moral values. Short stories can be found in various print and electronic media with various themes. Fictional stories, the values contained in short stories can make a person interested in reading them (Putri & Ulfiyanti, 2023). According to Bertens (2004), there are three characteristics of moral values, namely those related to responsibility, conscience, and obligation. Moral values in short stories can provide learning and inspiration for readers in living their daily lives. Therefore, it is important to analyze the moral values contained in a collection of short stories

Literary works such as short stories can be an effective medium to convey moral messages to readers (Erni & Herwandi, 2018). Through the storyline, characters, and conflicts presented, the author can convey moral values that can be used as an example by readers. However, not all readers can grasp and understand the moral values contained in short stories well. Therefore,

an analysis of moral values in short stories needs to be carried out to help readers find moral values that are necessary for society to be used as role models and guidelines in living their lives (Mustari, 2011; Sanjaya et al., 2021). Moral values are also found in a short story by one of the reliable authors, Agustrijanto. In the quote, there are moral values contained in short stories *Dancing in Heaven* Agustrijanto's work related to conscience. This is shown by a mother who experiences extreme grief because of the loss of her child, no mother wants to lose her child so quickly that it causes her heartache.

The short story book *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto is also able to convey a good moral message for its readers related to the moral values of responsibility, conscience, and obligation. The story presented in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto also has many lessons that can be used as experiences and guidelines for life and is able to stir the reader's conscience, as if the reader is carried away about the story.

The formulation of the problem in this study is divided into 3 parts, including what are the moral values related to responsibility contained in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto?, the second is what are the moral values related to conscience contained in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto? and finally what are the moral values related to obligations contained in the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto? by Agustrijanto? This research aims to interpret the moral values that make up the short story *Dancing in Paradise* related to responsibility, conscience, and obligation.

This short story tells about the pain of busker families in their poverty. It is played by 3 main characters, namely Siti Sundari, Sutrimo, and her son Suminten. This story starts from telling his life as a poor farmer, to deciding to migrate to Bandung for a better life, and as a result they only work as street buskers by dancing. At the end of the story, the child who plays the role of a busker is hit by a car when he is about to take change thrown by an angkot passenger. There are so many moral values contained in this short story *Dancing in Paradise*, one of the main ones is never giving up and being enthusiastic in facing life even though there are many gossips out there.

II. METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive

research conducted with the aim of presenting facts in depth. This type of research is library research, which is research conducted by utilizing data sources in the form of library materials such as literary books (novels, short stories, essays), journal articles, theses, research reports, official documents, and other electronic sources related to research topics (Hamidy & Yusrianto, 2003). This research method uses a qualitative analysis method, namely analyzing and describing theories with data (Moleong, L.J., 2007). The data analyzed is a short story titled *Dancing in Heaven* Agustrijanto's work by looking at the moral values it contains. With this method, the researcher presents data according to the reality as it is about the moral values contained in short story books *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto. Descriptive research is conducted with the aim of presenting facts in depth.

The data collection technique is carried out by reading and recording techniques (hermeneutics). Reading and taking notes techniques are a form of technique used to reveal a problem contained in a reading or discourse. Through this technique, all the languages used in Agustrijanto's short story *Dancing in Paradise* are read carefully to determine the form of moral values. Furthermore, the researcher also carried out recording activities to document the data obtained. The data obtained was then recorded and analyzed to identify the moral values contained in the short story.

The researcher's steps in interpreting the text of the short story are to choose moral theories that are relevant to the focus of the research. The moral theory used is the theory Bertens (2004) In which there are three characteristics of moral values related to the moral values of responsibility, conscience, and obligation.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Moral Value Data Analysis

Moral values are a value that is inseparable from other types of values and a value will have weight if it is followed by moral values behind it. According to (Bertens, 2004) Moral values have characteristics related to responsibility, conscience, and obligation.

A. Moral Values Related to Responsibility

According to Bertens (2004:25) "The moral value associated with responsibility is that people should not evade when asked for an explanation

of their actions".

In a short story titled *Dancing in Heaven* Agustrijanto's work has a moral value of responsibility consisting of hard work, never giving up, and education. For more details about the morals related to this responsibility, you can see the following short story quotes.

a) Strive

(Data 1)

The character of Sutrimo in the following quote is described as being in a life dilemma when he realizes that if he only relies on his main job as a farmer, he will not be able to meet his family's needs or guarantee his daughter's future. This realization prompted him to start thinking about finding additional work in order to bring progress to his family.

"I've been thinking about adding more, but what do you want to be?" Sutrimo asked his wife.

"Sir... Any kind of work. The important thing is halal. God is not blind, God is certain *madness* (giving) sustenance for us. My father is an avid golfer, golfer and golfer. It's not bad if we go for it," his wife suggested giving the value of possibility. Sutrimo seemed to consider his wife's proposal (Agustrijanto, 2004:25).

The moral values contained in the first data quote contain moral values related to responsibility in the form of hard work, judging from the quote "*I am also thinking of looking for additions*" which means that Sutrimo as the head of the family does not give up on the situation and continues to carry out his responsibilities to meet the needs of the family, especially for the future of his daughter. He tries to find additional income so that his family's needs are still met. Sutrimo's attitude shows that he behaves well and is moral in carrying out his responsibilities as the head of the family.

(Data 2)

Armed with the belief in a better livelihood, Sutrimo and his family left for Bandung. There are all brothers in Cidades, he muttered in his heart. For the time being, Mbakyu Sarni can help, said Sutrimo's confident heart. She will not doubt the kindness of her brother, a traveling batik merchant who contracts with her husband and three children in Gang Sukaterang Cidades. (Agustrijanto, 2004:27).

The moral value contained in the two data quotes above is a responsibility in the form of

Sutrimeo's hard work to find a decent life for his family. This is contained in the text *"Armed with the belief in a better livelihood, Sutrimo and his family left for Bandung"*. The quote can be understood that Sutrimo's decision to bring his family to Bandung was based on his faith and determination to fight for a more decent life. This action shows that Sutrimo did not give up on the situation, but dared to take risks to fulfill his responsibilities as the head of the family to provide a better future for his wife and children.

b) Never Give Up (Data 3)

The following quote describes the situation when Sutrimo and his wife were still overwhelmed with deep grief, they tried to rise from the downturn by strengthening each other. With determination and passion, they slowly accept the bitter reality of their beloved daughter's departure and begin to reorganize her life.

One month later, in the midst of the scorching sun that burned the skin, a father whose face was thick with makeup danced alone at a red light stop on Jalan Siswa Pejuang accompanied by his elderly wife with a black veil and a kebaya belel. The wife accompanied him with a soap box guitar nailed with rubber tire strings. The appearance is unattractive, the movements are rigid. The advantage is only in his melodious voice which seduces the Javanese style (Agustrijanto, 2004: 35).

The moral values contained in the data citation three contain moral values related to responsibility in the form of never giving up with the quote *"One month later, in the midst of the scorching sun that burned the skin, a father whose face was thick with makeup danced alone at a red light stop on Jalan Siswa Pejuang accompanied by his elderly wife with a black veil and a kebaya belel"*. From the quote, it reflects that Sutrimo and his wife never give up, they still struggle to make a living by dancing at red lights even though they are hot and full of limitations. This action shows his responsibility as the head of the family who is willing to sacrifice his shame to meet the needs of life.

c) Education (Data 4)

The following quote describes a touching incident between a father (Sutrimo) and his daughter (Suminten) where the father feels anxious about the continuation of Suminten

school if they move to Bandung.

"What do you think of the school in Bangalore?" Sutrimo asked concerned. Suminten hugged his father.

"Sir, in Bandung there are many mosques. So I'm just a normal person, ba'da Maghrib. It's the same..., after all, I don't dream of a good school," Sutrimo felt sarcastic. Pride secretly slipped in. He is grateful to have a daughter full of understanding like Suminten (Agustrijanto, 2004:25).

The moral value reflected in the fourth data citation is Suminten's responsibility for his religious education. Even though his family plans to move to Bandung, he is still determined to continue his study school, so he wants to show that he wants to maintain his father's trust and prove that he remains obedient even though he has traveled. This is in accordance with moral values related to responsibility, good to be imitated in daily life.

B. Moral Values Related to Conscience

Bertens (2004) Declaring value always contains some kind of invitation or appeal. But in moral values this demand is more urgent and more serious. Realizing moral values is an appeal from conscience. One of the hallmarks of moral values is that they only give rise to the voice of conscience that accuses us of underestimating or opposing moral values and praises us when it embodies moral values.

On short stories *Dancing in Heaven* Agustrijanto's work has the moral values of conscience which consists of help, sadness, and sincerity as follows:

a) Please help (Data 1)

"Hello, ma'am, you want to cross the street, okay?" Ask a friendly question. The hijab-wearing elementary school girls just looked at her strangely. Suminten knows, the questions make them uneasy. However, he still volunteered and showed his good faith.

"Come with me, my dear. *Right at the red light, I went to the middle of the road to dance, I crossed," he said happily as if he had helped people.* Sure enough, as soon as the light moved from yellow to red, Suminten shouted, "Come on, ma'am, quickly walk behind me! Mum.. Come on, ma'am!" (Agustrijanto, 2004:22).

The moral value contained in the data quote above is the emergence of conscience in the form of helping Suminten to help elementary school

children who have difficulty crossing the road, namely *"Right at the red light, I went to the middle of the road to dance, I crossed,"* He said it was as if he had helped people. The quote can be understood that Suminten's conscience does not have the heart to let elementary school children who have difficulty crossing when at a red light. Suminten's attitude shows that he has a conscience. This is in accordance with moral values related to conscience, good to be imitated in daily life.

b) Sadness (Data 2)

The following quote describes the sadness of a mother who saw her daughter when she took the Rp100 coin thrown from the crowded public transportation window, but unfortunately when she took the money the yellow light immediately turned green and lit up and when she struggled to reach her sustenance money, mercilessly a sedan hit her body hard it made her mother Suminten sad as quoted below.

"Yes, God O Rabbi... Suminten...!!, screamed Siti Sundari roaring. Several people who witnessed the unfortunate accident ran close to the victim. Suminten's body was covered in blood without a word being spoken". (Agustrijanto, 2004:32).

The moral value contained in the data quotation above is the moral value of sadness related to the conscience of a mother who cries when she sees her child in an accident. This quote describes the moral value in the form of deep sadness experienced by Siti Sundari, her mother Suminten. His emotional exclamation, *"Yes, Allah O Rabbi... Sumting...!!,* and his roar showed how much he felt lost and shocked by the tragic event that befell his son Suminten.

c) Sincerity (Data 3)

The following quote explains the sincerity of Suminten's heart in accepting all of Allah's decrees, even though he and his family had to live in poverty.

"You're so sad that you don't have any money?" he snarled.

"Owalah, Nduk.. Nduk... You should be ashamed of yourself. You can't make you happy. You should be able to continue your education. Let me be a doctor like that in health centers." Suminent laughed. For him, his father's dream was his dream as well. However, what his father said only made him seem even more amused

about his stupidity and poverty.

"That's it, sir. This is all God's will. "Yes, sir? "It's just a matter of doing it," Nancy said... "I want to dance! Mom, get ready, yo!" he said excitedly giving the command (Agustrijanto, 2004:31).

The moral value contained in the third data quotation about conscience is the sincerity of Suminten accepting all life events as God's will without blaming anyone in the quote *"Oh, it's (already) sir. This is all God's will. "Yes, sir? "I just want to be able to do that,"* he said. This shows that he chose to live his role patiently and sincerely without rebelling against the fate that befell him.

C. Moral Values Related to Obligations

According to Bertens (2004:125), the obligation is to learn the moral rules that apply in our actions. Moral obligations do not come from outside and are not determined by agencies, but come from the sense of humanity itself.

In the short story entitled *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto, there are moral values of obligation which consists of worship, caring for others as follows:

a) Worship (Data 1)

This quote reflects the moral value of the obligation in the form of the worship of performing the Dzuhur prayer which is contained in the following quote.

"Nduk, today is not normal, is it?" said *Sutrimo to Suminten after he saw his daughter finish performing the Dzuhur prayer in front of the store* (Agustrijanto, 2004: 30).

In the data quote one above, there is a moral value related to the obligation in the form of worship, that Suminten continues to perform Dzuhur prayers in the midst of his busyness, even in an unusual place in front of the store. This shows that Suminten puts worship as a priority in his life, even though the situation may not be good. This behavior shows that he understands that prayer is an obligation of a Muslim that must be carried out on time. He does not delay or leave it even if he is in a public place or in an activity.

b) Care for others (Data 2)

For Yu Sarni, who has extensive association with his batik customers, it is relatively easy to get information about boarding houses or rented houses. *Although she was nervous, Yu Sarni*

actually felt sorry for her sister's fate. But, it really can't help completely. So, he temporarily allowed his house to be divided with plywood for the Sutrimo family (Agustrijanto, 2004:29).

In the data quote two above, there is a moral value regarding the obligation to care for others, which is "Although she was nervous, Yu Sarni actually felt sorry for her sister's fate. But, it really can't help completely. So, he temporarily allowed his house to be divided with plywood bedding for the Sutrimo family". From this quote, it can be understood that although Yu Sarni actually feels worried about the existence of the Sutrimo family which is none other than his own sister, but he still cares about his younger brother by temporarily allowing his house to be occupied by the Sutrimo family.

IV. CONCLUSION

Morality is something that the author wants to convey to the reader in a short story contained in a literary work and the meaning contained through the story. Moral values related to responsibility, moral values of conscience, and moral values of obligation.

The importance of this research is seen from the moral message that the author of the short story *Dancing in Heaven* by Agustrijanto wants to convey is that true happiness can be found even in difficulties and suffering, through self-acceptance, sincere love, and unwavering hope. This short story teaches us not to give up in facing life's challenges, find beauty in simplicity, and accept reality, including death, with an open heart and full of peace.

The short story *Dancing in Paradise* by Agustrijanto shows a different perspective on responsibility and morality by depicting characters who face life's harsh challenges, but still hold on to the values of humanity and true love.

In the short story *Dancing in Paradise* by Agustrijanto, responsibility is not only seen from social norms or family obligations, but rather personal awareness to maintain integrity and inner peace, even in the face of death. This perspective differs from the conventional view that often judges morality through the lens of social rules or outcomes, as the short story emphasizes that true morality comes from the ability to accept oneself and others unconditionally, and to act with a sincere heart, even though life may not always live up to society's expectations. Basically, humans also cannot be separated from moral values,

conscience, and obligations because they are both part of human personality that provide guidelines and behaviors that maintain order in life together. This is in accordance with moral values related to obligations, both to be emulated and applied in daily life.

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