

HYBRID IDENTITY STEREOTYPING IN NOVEL *THE SUN IS ALSO A STAR* BY NICOLE YOON

Aliya Fadhillah

English Department, Faculty of Letters and Cultures, Universitas Gunadarma
Jl. Margonda Raya No. 100, Depok 16424, Jawa Barat
fadhillahaliya18@gmail.com

Abstract

*Novel is a prose fiction with inconsiderable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience. This source of this research is novel *The Sun is Also a Star* (2016) by Nicola Yoon. This research focused on stereotypes quality towards people with hybrid identity which occurred in the novel. The method used in this research is qualitative methods because novel is a narrative text form which contains action in it. Stuart Hall's concept is employed to analyse the research data. The discussion's findings are some of the racism actions occur in the novel in form of verbal action related to physical ability, physical appearance, bad words, sexual, and someone's trait. Not only verbally, the racism action is also represented by someone's nature.*

Keywords: *Hybrid Identity, Representation, Stereotyping, The Sun is Also a Star*

INTRODUCTION

Novel is one of literary works, usually fiction, comes in prose narrative form with inconsiderable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience. As novel is one of written literary works, it has the same characteristic as another work such as short story and novella. In fact, they have some similarity. They have plot, character, setting, point of view, and message. According to James Lawrence (1917:275) short story is a brief tale that can be told or read in one sitting. While, novella is a longer version of short story but shorter than novel, usually contains of 15.000 to 50.000 words ((Holman, 1980:415). Thus, we can say novel is a prose fiction that has more than 50.000 words in it.

Similar to short story and novella, novel has many genres, styles, and uses.

Besides for entertaining, novel as an imagination of human experience must be a reflection of the real society itself. Inglis (1938) explained in *An Objective Approach to the Relationship between Fiction and Society* that anthropologists and others frequently use the literature of a people as a source of clues to the nature of their culture. Even the words and form in which ideas are couched throw light upon the ideas, customs, and beliefs extant in a group. Since an author usually writes for readers having membership in his own society, the presumption is that literature will reflect what they have in common (Inglis, 1938:526). Back then, people would write what happened to them over the day into a diary or journal. Similar to diary or journal, what they wrote into a fiction prose, they must have experience it on their life or is currently happening in the society.

One of the novels that make real society as the main dish is *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon. The book was stated as #1 New York Times Best Seller, #1 Indie Next Winter 2016, and California Book Award for Young Adult (Gold) (2016), also John Steptoe New Talent Author Award (2017). Jen Doll reviewed this book on New York Times as "...a deep dive into love and chance and self-determination — and the many ways humans affect one another, often without even knowing it," (Doll, 2016). While Nivea Serrao said on Entertainment Weekly "...lays bare the hopes, dreams and regrets of everyone from family members to complete strangers...Fans of Yoon's first novel, *Everything, I Will Find Much to Love*—if not, more—in what is easily an even stronger follow up," (Serrao, 2016). Nicola Yoon, the author, is a Jamaican-American woman who is married to David Yoon, a Korean-American author. Similar to the author's life, the book tells a love story between Jamaican girl and Korean boy.

It becomes interesting to be discussed, a race issue concerning hybrid identity, because we all know, race issue is a sensitive thing in America. The term *racism* was coined in the 1930s, primarily as a response to the Nazi project of making Germany *judenrein*, or *clean of Jews*. The Nazis were in no doubt that Jews were a distinct race and pose a threat to the Aryan race to which authentic Germans supposedly belonged ((Rattansi, 2007:4). It was all in the

past, but doesn't mean we won't encounter it this day. Even from a long time ago, our black friend in America still face racism in the United States now. Now, not only black, but those who are not white, for example Asian, they face racism in America too. Even a hybrid people, a people who comes from different parents' background and race. Let's say your father is white, but your mother is Asian or black. Even though your father is white, but you still have this Asian or black blood streamed in your veins. It shouldn't be matter, but for people who already have these stereotypes against hybrid people, it won't as simple as that. Me and you might be people who doesn't care when there are people of different race walk along the pedestrian as us, but there is also not a little of those people who will stare at them as if they are from different galaxies.

Stuart Hall said that this racialized discourse is structured by a set of binary oppositions. One of them is the powerful opposition between *civilization* (white) and *savagery* (black)(Hall, 1997:243). From Hall's definition, we can conclude that all the good things go to the *white* while the *coloured* is represented with the opposite. That is what people usually have in mind. The *white* is more educated, while the *black* is lack of education. The *white* is more likely to be the master, while the *black* is supposed to be their slave.

The discussion concerning racial stereotypes has been conducted by some

people. One of them is AissahVara which used discursive analysis methods and theory of labelling, then the visual of the film was transferred into text with the help of *mise-en-scene* theory of film and also two previous researches about Django film Unchained. Contrast with the two previous researches which only focused on the coloured people, this study also discusses the white people who turned out to be also receiving some stereotypes towards themselves and also the stereotypes towards the coloured people which are being broken on the movie. Another research was conducted by John Dovidio, Nancy Evans, and Richard Tyler. They did a research by asking subject to choose *ever be true* or *always false* to the test word characteristics given toward the black and white racial categories. The result showed that positive traits are strongly associated with whites and the negative ones are strongly associated with blacks. Based on the studies above, it is interesting to see how racial stereotyping with hybrid identity is represented nowadays in the novel *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon.

METHODS

This research used qualitative methods because the object of this research is a novel text. The research focuses on the stereotypes quality which occurs within the novel. The novel title is *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon which was published by Delacorte Press in 2016. This research uses Natasha Kingsley characterization, the lead female

character as primary data. The data collection procedure uses documentation technique. Documentation technique is a text, visual, verbal and transcript documentation. The process involves three things, identification, classification, and categorizing (Nur Ali, 2018:99). The steps are: (1) identifying text that are related to stereotyping; (2) Categorizing the text as a data into racism action such as names calling, labelling, and etc. based on Stuart Hall's concept of stereotyping; and (3) Concluding, which datais dominant to be primary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sun is Also a Star (2016) by Nicola Yoon tells a story about two teens who grow up in America, but both of them are not pure American. The girl, Natasha Kingsley, is a Jamaican-born girl who moved to America when she was eight years old following her father, but threatened to be departed because of immigration issue. The boy, Daniel Bae, is born in America from both Korean parents. They both met at the same day Natasha should leave America. The novel tells about their one-day adventure from the moment they met till they fell in love and the moment Natasha finally leaves America because the universe is not sided with her family. Until their long-distance relationship between Jamaica and America, and they who decided to stop communicating with each other due to distance, then meet again ten years later becoming who they wanted to be when they

tell each other ten years ago.

Having hybrid people as characters, make actions related to racism such as stereotyping towards certain races to be happened a lot at this novel.

Racism Action Related to Physical Ability

Our coloured friends are blessed with athletic body and physical ability. It also happened with Daniel. He expects Natasha to be able to swim because she is black and she grew up till eight in Jamaica.

... "Wait," he says. "You can't swim?"

I shrink my head down into my jacket. "No."

His eyes are searching my face and he's laughing at me without actually laughing. "But you're Jamaican. You grew up surrounded by water." (Yoon, 2016: 95)

Stuart Hall said that sport is one of the few areas where black people have had outstanding success. It seems natural that images of black people drawn from sport should emphasize the body, which is the instrument of athletic skill and achievement (Hall, 1997: 231). People tend to think that the black is blessed with athletic body and good with sport. That's what Daniel expects from Natasha since she is black and grew up in Jamaica which the land is surrounded by water.

Racism Action Related to Physical Appearance

In this novel, racism action related to physical appearance is done towards Afro hairstyle.

... and suited black

women all with the same chemically treated hairstyle. Apparently—according to these posters, at least—only certain hairstyles are allowed to attend the board meetings. Even my mom is guilty of this kind of sentiment. She wasn't happy when I decided to wear an Afro, saying that it isn't professional looking (Yoon, 2016:127).

Afro hair is related to African people, because the only race that is born naturally with Afro hair on their head is probably only African. Frederickson (1987:49) said that Africa was and always had been the scene of unmitigated savagery, cannibalism, devil worship, and and licentiousness (in Hall, 1997:243). Since long time ago, Africa has been linked with perception like those mentioned above by Frederickson. Yoon also stated in the novel in hair section (2016:129) that on postslavery era, *good* hair was those with straight and smooth hair like European while curly, textured, and natural hair of many

African American was seen as bad. Maybe that's what makes people think that Afro is unprofessional and sadly lot of African choose to get rid of their natural hair, even though it is pretty. Proudly, Natasha choose to keep her Afro.

Another racism act related to Afro hair is done by Daniel's father. My dad finds what he's looking for one aisle over. "Here. Relaxer for your hair." He pulls a big black and white tub from a shelf and hands it to Natasha. "Relaxer," he says again. "Make your hair not so big." "Mr.Bae, I don't need any—" "Hair too big," he says again (Yoon, 2016:142).

Those sentences above can be translated into two things. First, Daniel's father only recommended something from his store, since he owns a hair treatment store for black people, because Natasha is a possible customer. Second, he doesn't like Natasha's hair, since it is an Afro. But Natasha thinks it is one kind of racism action because she stated in the following:

"That was terrible," I say, finally calm. "I don't think that could've gone any

worse. Racist dad Racist and sexist older brother." (Yoon, 2016:143).

Racism Action Done Using Bad Words

Next racism action is related to bad words, done by Charlie, Daniel's brother.

"Where's your girlfriend?" He says girlfriend like it's a joke, the way you would say a word like booger (Yoon, 2016:219).

Sentence above could also be translated into two meanings. Charlie thinks Natasha as disgusting as a booger or Charlie is mocking Daniel because his girlfriend is black. As we know, the good thing is always going with the white while the bad thing is going with the black.

Next racism action is done by Charlie (again) when he is having an argument with Daniel.

"...You think because you bring some black girl in here? Or should I call her African American, or maybe just—" (Yoon, 2016:222).

We all can guess that Charlie might almost say the banned word because the next thing happened is Daniel punched him. We all know that mentioned the banned word nowadays considered as racism act.

Racism Action Related to Stereotyping of Someone's Trait

More racism action in the novel is done

by Charlie. He accused Natasha of being a shoplifter because she is black.

“Who is This?” he asks, still only looking at me.

Next to me, Daniel takes a deep breath and readies himself to say something, but I jump in.

“I’m Natasha.” He stares at me as if there must be more to say. “A friend of your brother’s,” I continue.

“Oh, I thought maybe he’d caught a shoplifting customer.” His face is a parody of innocence.

“We get that a lot of those in a store like this.” His eyes are laughing and mean. “I’m sure you understand.” (Yoon, 2016:138).

From the way Charlie treated Natasha on their first meeting, we can see that he is mocking her because she is black. From Frederickson’s statement, shoplifting can be categorized as savagery, that’s why Charlie thought so when he saw Natasha. Moreover, he is laughing like innocence when he said those things without considering Natasha’s feeling.

Racism Action Related to Sexual

Another racism act done by Charlie is related to sexual.

“Hair too big,” he says again.

“I like it big,” she says.

“Better get a different boyfriend, then,” says Charlie. He waggles his eyebrows to make sure we all get his innuendo.

Good joke, Charlie,” I say. “Yes, my penis is only an inch long.”

(Yoon, 2016: 142).

Natasha’s ‘big’ is relating to her big Afro while Charlie makes fun of penis’ size. Black racism and slavery often linked with power, masculinity, and sexual, as told by Hall in his book (1997:259-270). Hall also states:

The conscious attitude amongst whites—that ‘Blacks are not proper men, they are just simple children’—may be a ‘cover’, or a cover-up, for a deeper, more troubling fantasy—that ‘Blacks are really super-men, better endowed than whites, and

sexually insatiable'. It would be improper and racist' to express the latter sentiment openly; but the fantasy is present. And secretly subscribed to by many, all the same. Thus when blacks act 'macho', they seem to challenge the stereotype (that they are only children)—but in the process, they confirm the fantasy which lies behind or is the 'deep structure' (1997: 263).

Thus, people see black people as someone with high sex drive. Maybe that's what Charlie made a joke from, that Natasha prefers someone with big penis because she is black.

Racism Action Represented from Someone's Nature

The next one is Charlie (again), even though not done directly by Charlie, but told by his little brother instead.

"Well, it is not like I've dated a ton of girls. One Korean. Charlie, though? It's like he is allergic to non-white girls." (Yoon, 2016: 312).

Charlie's nature shows us the reason he is rude to Natasha. He is allergic to non-white girls. Maybe because he thinks white is on the upper hand, they are civilized, and all the good things go to them.

CONCLUSION

From novel *The Sun is Also a Star* (2016) by Nicola Yoon, which takes hybrid people as the main characters, there happen to be lot of racism actions. The racism actions are mostly directed towards the black. There are some kinds of racism action done in the novel, such as racism action related to physical ability, physical appearance, bad words, sexual and someone's trait. Those actions are done verbally by the characters inside the novel. There is also one racism action not done verbally, but is represented by someone's nature.

Based on the racism actions done such as above, what we can conclude in this novel is people tend to stereotype the black people is good with sport, Afro hair is unprofessional, black is savage, and have high sex drive. Also, that non-white is not good enough.

REFERENCES

- Aissah Vara. (2015). "Stereotip Orang Kulit Hitam dan Orang Kulit Putih dalam film *Django Unchained*". *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*. Vol. 3 No. 1.
- Doll, J. (2016, November 11). Retrieved October 25, 2019, from The New York Times:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/13/books/review/the-latest-in-realistic-fiction-for-young-adults.html>
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Holman, C. H. (1980). *A Handbook to Literature*. Bobbs-Merrill Education Pub.
- Inglis, R. A. (1938). "An Objective Approach to the Relationship Between Fiction and Society". *American Sociological Review*, 1.
- Lawrence, J. (1917). "A Theory of the Short Story". *The North American Review*, 275.
- Nur Ali, A. J. (2018). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*. Jakarta: Gunadarma University.
- Rattansi, A. (2007). *Racism, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Serrao, N. (2016, November 2). Retrieved October 25, 2019, from Entertainment Weekly: <https://ew.com/article/2016/11/02/sun-also-star-nicola-yoon-ew-review/>
- Yoon, N. (2016). *The Sun is Also a Star*. New York: Delacorte Press.