

THE POVERTY AND STRUGGLE OF FRANK MC COURT IN ANGELA'S ASHES

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Abstract

One of the literary works is novel. In novel we can find many kinds of characterization. The researcher chooses this novel as the data source because the novel is good to be analyzed about the struggle of human life. It will be a great inspiration and motivation to people who was born in poverty. So, this research aims to find out the characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt by using a sociological approach and to describe the indicators of poverty as a social problem. The character starts from the child until Frank McCourt to be succeed to face the obstacles in poverty. Besides that, the writer wants to know the struggles of Frank McCourt's life and how he can survive in poverty as a child. As a result, the reader can get the spirit of Frank McCourt's struggle and about his thought in many kinds character. This research used qualitative method in analyzing the data. The data was collected from a novel of Frank McCourt "Angela's Ashes" and in the form of quotation from novel that related to Frank McCourt's character. The result of this research is the characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt influenced by charity, health, government, justice institution, Limerick community, family, ethnocentrism, and employment office. There are also some indicators of poverty that show the struggle of Frank McCourt to survive in poverty, including: struggle in starving, in the bad situation that makes his father becomes alcoholic and her mother becomes a beggar, poor clothing and housing, and suffers from ill health.

Keywords: *Frank McCourt, novel, poverty, struggle, sociological approach*

INTRODUCTION

Literary works often describe about human's life that are related to culture, religion, social, moral and so on. Almost the whole literary works give impact to the readers when they have finished to read. Sometimes, the impact can be sad or happy and like or dislike, for them this impact is influenced by the kind of the story that they read. That's why literature as part of life because literature can give the impact to the society, and also the society can give the impact to literature. Endraswara (2013) found the following:

Literature will basically reveal the incident. But the incident was not "real facts", but rather a creator of mental facts. The creator of literature has been refined process using objective facts imagination, so an imaginative mental fact. (p. 22)

From the statement above we can conclude the literature cannot be separated from the real incident and the imagination of the author. Many people choose novel as a favourite literary work because the content of novel includes many aspects. In novel, we can

see how the author describes the story in wonderful plot, good setting and unique character. Beside that, we can get a moral value or an advice which is good or not. In this research, the writer analyzes and clarifies more deeply about the character of Frank McCourt in the novel "*Angela's Ashes*" written in 1996 by Frank McCourt.

In this research the researcher wants to analyze the novel because to find out the character of Frank McCourt that is good to be analyzed as inspiration and motivation to people who was born in poverty. Besides that, the writer wants to know the struggles of Frank McCourt's life and how he can survive in poverty as a child. As the result, the reader can get the spirit of Frank McCourt's struggle and about his thought in many kinds character. The writer conducts this research entitled "*The Poverty and Struggle of Frank McCourt in Angela's Ashes*". And the writer thinks that it is very interesting for doing a research by using a sociological approach. What is poverty and what is struggle? According to Aristotle in the book *Sociology inquiring into society*: poverty is the parent of revolution and crime. (p. 179). Then Haskin (2002) stated the effect of poverty as the following:

The effects of poverty on families and children cannot be overlooked, or overemphasized. Adults generally lack quality, affordable housing and are therefore at risk for homeless-ness or living in

nonstandard housing, both of which can lead to health risks. Maternal depression is quite common among adult women, and men and women are likely to experience chronic health problems, poor nutrition, and increased mortality rates. (p. 136)

The researcher found the research that related to this research. There is no many researches that discuss about poverty based on the novel, but the researcher only found how to conduct the character's research. To know the situation and condition of poverty, the researcher found this former research. Theresa C. Davidson, A Dissertation. The Department of Sociology. Doctor of Philosophy. Louisiana State University. United State: August 2005. She wrote about "*Loat in Transition: Welfare to Work in Lusiana*". From her research it can be concluded that the findings from this research show that many former recipients have left TANF and many of these leavers are working in the formal labor market. However, many are still mired in poverty and experience significant hardships. While they have a variety of strategies and rely on various forms of support, struggles continue. As the years since reform legislation continue to pass, it will be crucial to continue studying the effect that these policies have had on the poor.

Further, as more recipients continue to exit welfare for work, given what we know

about wages and incomes, research must focus on the experiences of the “working poor”. Policy will need to be redesigned to deal with the unique needs of those who no longer have welfare as a “back-up”, but must struggle to maintain employment. In addition, more research must be done on those who have exited welfare without work. They may have unique needs that are not currently addressed due to the assumption that eventually they will find work. Overall, we must expand our understanding of poverty in a way that reaches beyond static income measures and even beyond material hardships. Even though this research is not specific explain about the poverty, but it is adequate to realize that poverty related to welfare, wages, working poor, and social policy. That’s make the research to explain more detail about the poverty that happen in the novel of Angela’s Ashes.

Besides that, another former research that support this research is about character. Berlia Cahyo Widowati, Faculty of Letters: English Department As partial Fulfillment of the requirement for undergraduate Degree in English Literature Gunadarma University. Jakarta, July 2006. She wrote about “*A Character Analysis of Miss Marple in Agatha Christie’s ‘Nemesis’*”. Based on her research we can find kinds of Miss Marple’s character such as Miss Marple, she is an ordinary old woman who gets a mission to reveal the injustice case of Mr. Rafiel son, Michael Rafiel who is executed as the main suspect in

murder case of the young girl named Verity Hunt. She is a person who was born with the gift or natural genius and talent. Miss Marple has a good memory by considering her age; she is also a critical person in judging people is character. Her mind is practical but she is also hard working, organized and clever in her job; Those are all combined together with her great instinct to know the situation. That capability makes her becoming a wonderful and unofficial detective in her period.

In the first relevance research analyze about welfare, this related to the poverty that the writer want to write. The second relevance research analyzes about character, those are related to character analysis that the writer want to do. So, This research is related to the previous research in analyzing character according sociological approach. But in this research, the writer will specify the research in social problem and one of the main character in *Angela’s Ashes*.

To all poverty, there are so many people who keep struggling. Then definition of struggle as follow: According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2000), struggle: 1. (For something) to try very hard to do something when it is difficult or when there are a lot of problems. 2. To move somewhere or do something with difficulty. 3. (Against/ with somebody/ something) to fight against somebody or something in order to prevent a bad situation or result. 4. (With somebody) to fight somebody or try to get away from them. 5. (With somebody) (for

something) to compete or argue with somebody, especially in order to get something. (p. 1343)

Besides that, the researcher used the sociological approach to analyze the data, Semi (1993) Sociological approach in the early history of the emergence of literature as a mirror looking at history, especially the history of economic and technological development, as well as the history of class conflict. Any kind of community life activities, such as culture, economy, industry and encourage greater influence to the authors. A growing number of social phenomena and dialectic that occurs in a society increasingly rich with new ideas and writer. (p. 92)

Then Semi stated the detail of step works that used for sociological approach. Semi (1993) found the concepts and criteria described, the use of sociological approaches in the research literature should be considered work methods or steps as follows:

The talks are the most used to do about the figure of the author, the social aspect that is in the works, the reader or audience in terms of support discussed after talking about the author. The author discussed beforehand due to the assumption that the author is a key determinant of whether and how the social aspects of culture used, and also to determine the author of a large-size community the opportunity to accept and refuse the creation of a literary work. By knowing the background of the author of life would be easier to study other aspects.

It is important to discuss about the author is on the philosophy that was followed, political ideology, social status, education, socialization, and religious life. All of this is to determine the vision of authorship and patterns of struggle, which eventually poured into the works they wrote.

Intrinsic aspect of literary study is associated with the public interest and the mission of literature in raising living standards. The theme must be viewed in relation to the interests of society. The greater the benefits to society are many more high value given to the work. The desired character is a character that shows the struggle persistence in defending many aspect, not the character of the struggle for personal interests or the character adrift in a world of romance. The most awarded language is the language most familiar to the public.

Reception, impression, and welcoming the community to literary work also need to be analyzed. A rating of good literature, is literature that directly or not community use as a handle. Even though elements of moral and didaktive is overlooked by no means a problem not addressed the beauty of literature.

In addition the image reflects readers in the study, it also reviewed and considered the influence of the work is a problem for readers and for writers. What positive effects they have received.

Another thing that should receive the assessment and review of the values, ethics, culture, philosophy in literature. The assessment of this done while assessing aspects of indoctrination, dogma, didactic, and social protest contained therein. (p. 94-95)

METHODS

This scientific research paper uses a qualitative method by using a sociological analysis. Endraswara (2013) Descriptive research means explanation the data in the form of words or pictures, and the result is not in the form of numbers. The data is generally in the form of recording, and also is not the numbers. The data is generally in the form of notes, photographs, recordings, documents, or other official records. In qualitative research reporting with thorough verbal language is very overlooked because of all the interpretations and conclusions drawn conveyed verbally. Descriptive qualitative approach is the view that all things exist in the form of a system of signs that should not be underestimated, they are all important, and all of them have influence and connection with others. By describing all kinds of sign systems (semiotics) may provide a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied. (p.30)

The source of data in this thesis is a novel entitled "*Angela's Ashes*" written by Frank McCourt in 1996 as the primary data. The novel is used as the primary data, to analyze the characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt in this novel. The Data are taken

from the quotation that related to poverty and struggle of Frank McCourt. The descriptive method in this research aims to provide an outline of poverty and struggle of Frank McCour in Angela's Ashes novel. According to Best and Kahn 1982:119) descriptive research is a research method that try describe and interpret object appropriate with situation.

The steps of collecting data are: Reading the Frank McCourt's novel "*Angela's Ashes*" thoroughly while identifying the sentences related to poverty. Underlining the quotation related to the characteristic of poverty of Frank McCourt. Dividing quotation into 2 aspects: Deciding the quotation that support the social problem aspects that influence poverty of Frank McCourt. Deciding the struggles that influence Frank McCourt to survive in poverty. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes the data by doing: Editing the data, this step includes checking all the data, in this case all the quotations related to poverty and struggle, in terms of appropriateness of the data with the theme of this research. Next step is classifying the data, All the data in this research are concerned in related to poverty and struggle of Frank McCourt. The last step is analyzing the data, doing the analysis of data that consider the certain theory. The researcher explores the data analysis with that theory. And the researcher analyzes to prove the aspect which the writer wrote in techniques of collecting data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the research is explained as follows. From quotation poverty and struggle, the 90 data found as a proof of problem of the research. Based on the theory of Sami, 90 data which are the most appropriate with the theory. The descriptive qualitative method used for analyzing these 30 data are: (1) Poverty: 65 data, Epistrophe 25 Data.

The characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt in “Angela’s Ashes” by using a sociological approach.

Data 1 (Poverty)

One of the purposes and functions of religious institutions in terms of both manifest and latent is as follows: the solidarity in society will be strength and develop mutual aid. Over the life of the poor in Limerick, McCourt family also relies on the assistance given religious institution. One of them obtained the assistance of the St. Vincent de Paul of Society. There is no reason for embarrassment for a hungry stomach. Thus, the McCourt family regularly represented his mother Angela Sheehan always take allowances and assistance from St. Vincent de Paul of Society.

McCourt family who always obtained the assistance of the St. Vincent de Paul of Society:

*“Mam say ‘tis all right
for her to be begging at*

*the St. Vincent de Paul
Society for a docket for
food.” (AA,1996: 103)*

Indeed, when Christmas, McCourt family in difficult circumstances. They do not have anything to eat. Angela Sheehan brings Frank and Malachy to the St. Vincent de Paul society to get the lunch special. However, it turns out, hope it was worth it. They only got coupons for groceries. In this poor condition, Frank McCourt’s Mam asked her children to beg even in Christmas when other people happy to celebrate the moment and eat well, but it was not happening to them.

Data 2 (Poverty)

Many people argue about expensive healthcare. It makes difficult for poor people who can seek treatment when ill. They just treat pickup only. In fact, sometimes they make the wrong diagnosis.

A little knowledge about health in poor people it’s too bad. They often do not care the disease for a long time, it causes the death. This situation the same as in McCourt family life. McCourt has twin brother. But they were dead because of having a complicated illness. Besides that, Grandmother’s Frank was also dead because of being late treated.

McCourt family have bad health till
dead:

Little brother of Frank McCourt was
dead:

“Six months after Oliver went, we woke on a mean November morning and there was Eugene, cold in the bed beside us. Dr. Troy came and said that child died of pneumonia and why wasn’t he in the hospital long ago? Dad said he didn’t know and Mam said she didn’t know and Dr. Troy said that’s why children die. People don’t know. He said if malachy or I showed the slightest sign of cough or the faintest rattle in the throat we were to be brought to him no matter what time of day or night. We were to be kept dry at all times because there seemed to be a bit of a weakness in the chest in this family.” (AA, 1996: 87)

That’s the poor condition when your family was sick and you cannot bring them to the hospital. It’s hard to get money for eat, moreover to get the family in hospital. So, the thing that they can do is let their family be healthy naturally or to be critics and nobody can help them anymore.

Data 3 (Poverty)

Routinely, McCourt family was dependent on government dole. Little brother of Frank had just died from an illness. The People sympathetic to the Labour Office that

Frank got a few pennies from there. Even, the dole was never enough for McCourt family, moreover the dole was also according to the number of McCourt family.

Frank McCourt’s family got the dole from the Labour Exchange:

“The morning after Oliver’s burial Dad went to the Labour exchange to sign and collect the week’s dole, nineteen shilings and sixpence. He said he’d be home by noon, that he’d get coal and make a fire, that we’d have rashers and eggs and tea in honor of Oliver, that we might even have a sweet or two. He wasn’t home by noon, or one, or two, and we boiled and ate the few potatoes the shopkeepers had given the day before. He wasn’t home anytime before the sun went down that day in May. There was no sign of him till we heard him, long after the pubs closed, rolling along Windmill Street, singing.” (AA, 1996: 80)

Exactly McCourt family get the dole every week from the Labour Exchanges, but his father always misapplies the money for drinking alcohol in the pub, and he never thought about his wife and children, that’s why the condition keep getting worse because of irresponsible father.

Data 4 (Poverty)

Occasionally the extended family of Angela Sheehan still help McCourt family when condition is so bad. However, they often helped McCourt family by poor action, criticize, insult and be rude before. Beside that, they blame Malachy is the cause of every problem in the McCourt family. This is what makes Angela ostracized by her family, including her mother.

The bad treatment of Angela Sheehan family to McCourt family:

“A year later another child was born. Angela called him Malachy after his father and gave him a middle name, Gerard, after his father’s brother. The MacNamara sisters said Angela was nothing but a rabbit and they wanted nothing to do with her till she came to her senses. Their husband agreed.” (AA, 1996: 11)

The poverty that McCourt's family went through continued to drag on. Even Angela's family isolates them. So that there's no family will want to help them through this poverty.

After analyzing the data that related to social problem that effect the poverty of Frank McCourt, the researcher then analyzing the struggle of Frank McCourt to Survive in poverty in ‘Angela’s Ashes’

Data 5 (Struggle)

Frank told to his father that his brothers and him was hungry, but his father only laughed:

“I tell him we’re all hungry and he lets out a crazy laugh. Hungry? He says. Och, Francis, your wee brother Oliver is dead. Your wee sister is dead and your weebrother is dead.” (AA, 1996: 77)

Because of McCourt’s father is a heavy addict of alcoholic, he always ignores his children. Once, McCourt felt very hungry and wanted to eat. Then he told his father, but the father's reaction was just laughing. Though he is a child, but he did not get the responsibility from his parents. In this situation, McCourt should think about looking for food by himself.

Data 6 (Struggle)

Basic human needs almost related to the food, cloth, and house. In *Angela's Ashes*, story about cloth was very bad. Frank and his brothers who still baby did not wear good diapers, and also the clothes that they wore every day. The clothes that they wore was the clothes that every time exist on their body. If the clothes they were there's a hole, his mother would patch the outfit, and so on.

When Frank got a job as telegram boy, he was confused because he only had

one cloth with the bad condition, so many holes, and the colour had changed. Exactly, he was very embarrassed. But he did not care of everyone that insulted him. When Frank washed his cloth before he went to post office and started his work as a telegram boy, he wore Grandma's dress, because at that house did not another cloth anymore.

Frank McCourt rinsed the dirty diapers in the lavatory in order they used the next day:

"She sends me down the hall to rinse the dirty diapers in the lavatory so that they can be hung up to dry and used the next day. Malachy helps her wash the twin's bottom though he's ready to fall asleep himself. I crawl into bed with Malachy and twins. I look out at Mam at the kitchen table, smoking a cigarette, drinking tea, and crying. I want to get up and tell her I' be a man soon and I'll get a job in the place with the big gate and I'll come every Friday night with money for eggs and toast and jam and she can sing again anyone can see why i wanted your kiss." (AA, 1996: 21)

Many people think this will not happen anywhere. For example, the use of disposable diapers many times, washed and

used it again. This happened because the McCourt family did not have money to buy new diapers, so the existing, used, washed, dried and used again. How poor.

Data 7 (Struggle)

In absolute poverty discuss about sanitation facilities, Frank family initially did not know the lavatory in front of their rent house is only one lavatory in the lane. It was used for 11 families there. So, any family that threw anything into the lavatory that always smelled odor by them. If warm condition was not too severe, but when the rainy season, The lavatory would be poor. Because the dirty water spread till their house for months. This made their house dirty and full of flies.

Besides the smell of the lavatory, beside their house there is a stable. And the smell of the stable and stables were attracted to the rats.

Frank McCourt family tried to fight against the rats and the stink from lavatory:

"We fight the rats and we fight the stink from that lavatory. We'd like to keep our door open in the warm weather but you can't when people are trotting down the lane to empty their brimming buckets. Some families are worse than others and Dad hates all them even though Mam tells him it's not their fault if the builders a hundred years ago put up

house with no lavatories but this one outside our door. Dad says the people should empty their buckets in the middle of the night when we are asleep so that we won't be disturbed by the stink." (AA, 1996: 241)

In front of their rental house is a toilet, they have been very clean. But in all conditions the lavatory disturbs cleanliness. When floods, water overflows, when dry, the odor stings. So that dirty animals like rats roam their homes.

Data 8 (Struggle)

Frank got diseases but they could not go to doctor because of poverty.

Frank McCourt got bad eyes infection, but he cannot do something:

"There's a sore at the top of my nose between my eyebrows, gray and red and itching. Grandma says, don't touch that sore and don't put water near it or it'll spread. If you broke your arm, she'd say don't touch that with water it'll spread. The sore spreads into my eyes anyway and now they're red and yellow from the stuff that oozes and makes them stick in the morning. They stick so hard i have to force my eyelids open with my fingers and Mam has

to scrub off that yellow stuff with a damp rag and boric powder. The eyelashes fall off and every bit of dust in Limerick blows into my eyes on windy days." (AA, 1996: 256)

Prolonged eye pain that occurs cannot make McCourt do something to save himself. Allowing pain, infection, blurred vision, until finally healed naturally. All happened because he did not have money and do not have parents who are responsible for their children.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt in "*Angela's Ashes*" by using a sociological approach, that viewed social problems that happened in Limerick and influenced Frank McCourt. The aspects that influenced Frank McCourt involve charity institution, health institution, government institution, Limerick community, family, ethnocentrism, employment office, and justice institution. Those aspects have a big interaction with the characteristics of poverty of Frank McCourt by a sociological approach to define social problems. All aspects in analyzed the poverty based on sociological approach are nothing really saved him from poverty. As like as this institution did not exist and not going well. So that Frank McCourt saves himself from poverty not the institution or someone.

The struggles of Frank McCourt to Survive from poverty in “*Angela’s Ashes*” are related to the indicators of poverty, including: struggle in starving; Frank stole the food from the store and farm, Frank worked to the post office and the other place that could get money. After the researcher do deep analyzing how does Frank McCourt get food. he once stole, begged, worked or asked many people for help. But all ignored him, including his parents. But he keeps struggling in many ways.

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