

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HORIZONS OF EXPECTATION REGARDING THE ISSUE OF HOMOSEXUALITY/LESBIANISM IN *ANNIE ON MY MIND* BY NANCY GARDEN

Yahya Kurnia Ramadhan

yahyakurniaramadhan@yahoo.com

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengambil novel *Annie On My Mind* karya Nancy Garden sebagai objek. Novel ini mengusung tema seputar homoseksual pada umumnya, khususnya persoalan diskriminasi masyarakat terhadap lesbian. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap perkembangan tanggapan pembaca terhadap novel *Annie On My Mind*. Tanggapan dalam penelitian ini diklasifikasikan berdasarkan periode kemunculannya, yakni tanggapan yang muncul pada periode pertama (1982-2002) dan tanggapan yang muncul pada periode kedua (2003-2012). Tanggapan yang hadir pada masing-masing periode tersebut juga dibagi atas tanggapan pro dan tanggapan kontra. Pada periode pertama muncul tanggapan-tanggapan yang mengarah pada persoalan isu (pesan). Sementara pada periode kedua mulai muncul tanggapan tentang unsur pembangun karya. Hal ini dikarenakan horizon harapan pembaca yang berbeda pada masing-masing periode, serta hal-hal yang mempengaruhi horizon harapan tersebutpun berbeda. Dari tanggapan pada dua periode tersebut, karya ini dinilai tidak mengandung unsur edukasi yang tepat khususnya untuk siswa sehingga kurang tepat beredar di sekolah. Namun karya ini dinilai tepat untuk sasaran yang dituju penulis, yakni kaum homoseksual, dari segi isi (pesan) novel ini dianggap mewakili isu homoseksual yang beredar di tengah masyarakat.

Keywords: Resepsi sastra, Horison harapan, Homoseksualitas, Lesbian

ABSTRACT

This research takes *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden as the object. This novel carries about homosexual theme generally, and especially the issue of discrimination to the lesbian. The purpose of this study is to uncover the development of the reader responses to *Annie on My Mind*. The responses in this study are classified based on the period of the emergence, the responses that turned up in the first period (1982-2002) and the responses that turned up in the second period (2003-2012). Responses that turned up in each period are also divided into the pro and the contra. In the first period responses turned up lead to the question of the issue (the message). While in the second period it develops to the element of fiction. This is because of the different horizon of expectations of the readers in each period, as well as things that affect different horizon expectations. From the responses in these two periods, the work is not considered a proper education especially for students. However, this work is considered appropriate for the target readers, namely homosexuals, in terms of the content (the message) which is considered to represent the issue of homosexuals that exist in the society.

Keywords: Reception Theory, Horizons of Expectation, Homosexuality, Lesbianism

Introduction

Annie on My Mind is a novel making Nancy Garden famous even more. This novel describes teen lesbian story which ended happily where both characters decided to reconcile and reunite. However, the book also raised controversy. There is a horrendous event in 1993 at school in Kansas where the book was banned and burned because some parents worried if *Annie on My Mind* could influence their teenagers to become homosexual. However, in 1995, the book was finally reinstated in the school library because according to the court, the ban is a violation of the freedom of expression. The issue about homosexuality is told in this novel as similar relationship between Annie and Liza. In this research, the writer is interested in analyzing Nancy Garden's novel entitled *Annie on My Mind*, a novel which exposes about the romantic relationship between two seventeen years old New York girls, Annie and Liza. The writer analyzes the different opinions of the reader's point of view of the chosen literary works. Analyzing this phenomenon, the writer has chosen reader response and reception theory.

The Background Of The Research

- The Identification of the Problem

The problem which is going to be analyzed in this research is the reader responses since the writer assumes that *Annie On My Mind* will attract sort responses through the issue of homosexuality/lesbian among the students since literary works are accepted differently by different people through the time, because they have different standard.

- The Scope of the Research

The writer limits the problem to reveal the reader-response/reception analysis along this novel. This research is limited to find out the readers' responses toward *Annie On My Mind* by Nancy Garden in this study. Therefore, the writer comes up with two research questions:

1. The readers receptions from first publication until recent time through the issue of homosexuality/lesbian among the students.
2. The development of horizon of expectations regarding the issue of homosexuality by presenting data and document concerning to the novel.

- The Methods of the Research

▪ Collecting the Data

The first one is collecting the data by conducting the library research. For primary data, the writer uses the novel *Annie On My Mind* written by Nancy Garden. Whereas, the secondary data which is the information taken from some books connected to the story. The writer also uses library method; reading books, and sources from some related websites. For the first periods' data, the writer uses some book reviews, web blogs, and documents related to the novel. While for the second periods' data, the writer also uses some book reviews, web blogs, and interview.

▪ Analyzing the Data

In conducting the analysis, the writer starts by analyzing the intrinsic elements of this novel, which help the writer to understand the novel. After that, the writer analyzes the reader responses toward the novel *Annie On My Mind* by explaining the data and connect it with the Jauss's reception theory.

▪ Presenting the Result of Analysis.

In presenting the result of analysis, the writer uses a descriptive method where the research is conducted to describe specifically about the reader responses toward the issue of homosexuality/lesbian in *Annie On My Mind* that will be analyzed later.

The Review of Related Study

After conducting the library research in English Department of Andalas University, the writer found that no researcher has analyzed *Annie On My Mind* especially by using reader-response criticism.

Actually, there are many reviews about this novel, but in this part the writer will put two reviews, and the rest will be put as the data in analysis chapter.

First is a review of *Annie On My Mind* by Thomas Gregory (2001). In his review, Thomas Gregory said that the love theme in the novel as something that seeks to justify itself, in spite of the fact that every civilization of mankind has recognized such love as ruinous to family stability and individual happiness. Lesbian attraction is not the only dysfunctional behavior that has sought to justify itself through its association with romanticism. But the emotional and

psychological roots of homosexuality never touched upon leaving the reader to believe, one supposes, that there is no developmental difference between the homosexual and heterosexual personality.

Second, a review of *Annie On My Mind* by Joshua Coot (2011). In his review, he said that he can't see this being taught in schools, primarily because of the obvious opposition many parents would have for the book's outright stance on a very touchy moral issue. Other than that, in his classroom, he wouldn't subject his students to it, though he wouldn't forbid it either. Perhaps it is just a warning to let their parents know what they're reading before hands. Thinking back on Cart's description of young-adult in the eighties, this book seems to fit in exactly as he described. He could see how some might try to classify it along the lines of the "problem novel", but it isn't so neatly one or the other, though my own inclination is to put it more in the romance category.

In addition, the writer compares his research with another researches using reader-response criticism. First is a research by Atikah Zata Amani (06185102) entitled *Transformation of The Kite Runner novel By Khaled Hosseini's After Being Adapted to Movie: Reader Response Theory* (2011). Her research shows us the change as a form of reader-response transformation of the novel into a movie. She sees how the relationship between intrinsic part in *The Kite Runner* novel and movie and how the transformation process from *The Kite Runner* novel into *The Kite Runner* movie.

Lastly, a research by Arisa Tria Utami (06185047). Her research entitled *The Readers' Responses to O' Henry's Selected Short Stories* (2010). Her research sees the readers' responses to three short stories by O' Henry: *After Twenty Years*, *The Gift of the Magi*, and *The Last Leaf*. In analyzing her research, she refers to the reading habit and reading interest of the respondents, the readers' responses to the three short stories, particularly about their intrinsic elements, and readers' interpretations toward the stories.

The Development of Horizons of Expectation Regarding the Issue of Homosexuality/Lesbianism as Reflected in *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden

The sources of this research are classified into two periods, First two decades of reception of *Annie On My Mind* and the contemporary reception of *Annie On My Mind*. The first period is started from the time when *Annie On My Mind* first published (1982) until year 2002, whereas the second period is started from 2003 until the latest time (2012). The classifications that become the sources in this research suited with the types of reaction that appears along with the development of reception of the society regarding the issue of homosexuality on each period.

a. The First Two Decades of Reception of *Annie On My Mind* (1982 – 2002)

The first period is the decades of controversy. It held an important role to the development of the reception of *Annie On My Mind*. Critical appreciations become the beginning of the development of *Annie On My Mind's* history. The messages and the issues carried by *Annie On My Mind* got an uproar reaction from the readers. In *Annie On My Mind*, Nancy Garden explains the issue of homosexuality from her imaginary point of view. This is the problem that appears from many sides afterward.

A phenomenal rejection toward *Annie On My Mind* in this first period is in 1993 at school in Kansas, where the book was banned and burned, because some parents worried if *Annie on My Mind* would influence their teenager to become homosexual. However, two years after the protest, in 1995 the book was finally reinstated in the school library because according to the court the ban is a violation of the freedom of expression.

- The Contra Party

The initial reaction to *Annie On My Mind* began with parental protest on the issue offered by Nancy Garden. Parents of students at a school in Kansas rejected *Annie On My Mind* because of the lesbian issue offered by Nancy Garden is educationally unsuitable for their children. The parents' anxiety to *Annie On My Mind* make them voiced displeasure and rejection of *Annie On My Mind*. It is a contra reaction that appeared at the beginning of *Annie On My Mind*.

The happy ending in *Annie On My Mind* received an important attention by the readers. In her work, homosexual characters which were built by Nancy Garden finally reunited after the rejection and punishment from the school.

In the social condition, lesbian in the 1982 was still seen as a troubling social problem in the Kansas society. Kansas is a region of the United States. At that time, there are plenty of actions that try to oppose, resist and discriminate the homosexual in the United States, even from the previous years. In 1978, Senator California published a policy to prohibit a homosexuals to teach in public schools. Even at the time, the gay-groups protested loudly and protested by anti-gay groups, and the anti-gay prevails on their demeanor. The actions rejecting homosexuals continues. They became one of the public anxieties, moreover it is also supported by the religious values that bind them.

- **The Pro Party**

Two years after *Annie On My Mind* was banned in Kansas, in 1995 occurred the repeal of the ban in the court. The actions were taken by students at two schools in Kansas in December 1994. The protection of the freedom of reading in schools is being conducted by the students, supported by some other parties for the purpose of local government to revoke the ban of *Annie On My Mind*. Although initially refused by the government, but in January 1995 the government finally agreed to refund *Annie On My Mind* and revoke the ban.

Pro reaction coming from student and a national group that supports students' movement is a national LGBT organization. It is a pro-reaction to the existence of *Annie On My Mind* as a literary work which also was worthy appreciated. Students who become the key actors of the revocation action of the bans of *Annie On My Mind* highlighted the issue about freedom to read. For *Annie On My Mind* as well as novels or other books that are controversial, which still deserves to be appreciated by the readers. They also rejected the ban by the reason that the ban was a violation of freedom of expression.

b. The Contemporary Reception of *Annie On My Mind* (2003 – 2012)

Following the first period, in the second period pro and contra also appears on the *Annie On My Mind*. Pro and contra appears as a discourse in the media, not as frontal as what happened in the first period. The development of pro and contra is not only to criticize the issue of homosexuality in *Annie On My Mind*, but also the intrinsic elements of the work. The critical reader in this period develop to the essence of *Annie On My Mind* as a literary works, that finally pointed to the problem of the aesthetics of a work.

- The Contra Party

The contra in the second period (2003-2012), the rejection happened because not providing a proper educational. Readers' rejection for the weakness of the elements of fiction is turned up. Therefore the contra reaction during this period based on two issues; the rejection based on moral problem and rejection that is based on the strength of the element of fiction of *Annie on My Mind*.

Rejection based on moral issues comes from readers which comprises among teachers, students, or readers with other backgrounds. The academics refused *Annie On My Mind* because of it is not suitable for giving the student a good lessons on morality, especially to be taught to the students. *Annie On My Mind* is not exactly be in school, it is not exactly read by students with the reasons not provides a proper education, especially moral issues, as well as the parents' voiced in the early period in the presence of *Annie on My Mind*. Although *Annie On My Mind* suitable for the homosexuals, but not for those who are not educated. The readers above, not burning, not banning and not conclude that *Annie on My Mind* is a bad work. However they are more open to discourse that this work was not suitable for the students due to the desire and obligation as an educator to give the right values and moral in the development of the students.

In addition, there are some negative responses criticizing the fundamental element in *Annie on my Mind*. Some readers expressed that the weakness of Nancy Garden's work is leaked on the constructive elements which are not strong enough. They thought *Annie on My Mind* is not an interesting work. Some weaknesses found in the characterization remains unclear. Beside, the storyline is also not that interesting because of the plain and predictable plot. The characters issues, uninteresting story, and predictable plot offer an unfulfilled expectation to the reader. The readers' unfulfilled expectation or anything that does not directly expected by readers from a literary work, of course, is not only influenced by the things that stick on the reader.

The negative responses and rejections to *Annie on my Mind* also appears in the second period. However it is very much different from the rejections occurred in the early period. The contemporary readers problems is, however, still concern of the moral issues on *Annie on my Mind*, but it is more tolerant than in the early periods of it presence.

- The Pro Party

As a writer, Nancy Garden tried to reveal her collective experience, an affair that is closed to her world, she presented in her work *Annie on My Mind*. Her experience as a lesbian became her exploration of imagination and makes it as an alternative story she offered to the readers. Nancy Garden reveals the reality from different angles; she opened a hidden discourse of a reality in her fiction. Nancy Garden seeks to represent the voice of minority, in this case homosexuals.

The pro reaction in the second period (2003-2012) towards *Annie on My Mind* supports the alternative story offered by Nancy Garden. Many readers felt that *Annie on My Mind* represents the homosexual issue. Moreover the homosexuals itself feel that they are being discussed obviously and truly by Nancy Garden on *Annie on My Mind*. For homosexual readers, *Annie on My Mind* is really close to them, besides telling the story of homosexuals, the background of the author itself was also influent. Nancy Garden is homosexual.

Nancy Garden exposed things that some people judge as “out off track”, *Annie on My Mind* makes the reader surprised and frowned. However, Nancy Garden just trying to be honest in her work, Nancy Garden forces her readers to be honest about what really exists outside the fiction world. Nancy Garden trying to describe the anxiety of the homosexuals within the society. Her personal lesbian background is the major fact that makes homosexuals feel Nancy Garden’s *Annie on My Mind* represent their problems. This is, indeed, subjective that Nancy Garden defending her people. The Homosexuals need to be accepted and acknowledged. Most of them want the freedom to love and the freedom to express.

c. The Application of Jauss’ Thesis in *Annie On My Mind* by Nancy Garden

- Thesis One

In **thesis one**, Jauss explains that literature is not a monument that reveals the one and similar meaning. Meaning that appears on the reader will be influenced by the experience of the readers. Historical literature is built by previous literary experience by the reader. Thus, the rejection of *Annie On My Mind* influenced by two things; First, the reader’s experience (reading or knowing) that the literary works themed homosexual that present previously does not discuss about a happy ending. Second, the reader's experience in the practical world about homosexual issues that should be opposed.

- Thesis Two

Beside the reader's experience problem, in his thesis, Jauss also explained the horizon of expectation. Readers' horizon of expectations arises as a result of the historical moment of literature that includes a pre-understanding about gender, literary forms and themes that have been owned previously. It was expressed by Jauss in Jauss **thesis two**. Readers' horizon of expectation of *Annie on my Mind* is also influenced by the pre-understanding on the issue of homosexuality, resulted on rejection to the thing offered by *Annie on my Mind*. As a literary work, the reader expects *Annie On My Mind* will give an ideal message.

- **Thesis Three**

In **thesis three**, Jauss explain his though about aesthetic distance based on the horizon of expectation with the connection to historical literature. According to Jauss, if there is an aesthetic distance between the horizon of expectation with a new literary work, the admissions process can change the good horizon of expectation, through the denial of the aesthetic experience that is already known, or through the awareness that a new aesthetic experience has emerged. Jauss describes that there is a time when the new works will have the aesthetic distance. Most of the readers rejected *Annie On My Mind* influenced by the distance between the textual *Annie On My Mind* with the readers' horizon of expectation that created the rejection. For the readers, a happy ending offered by Nancy Garden in *Annie On My Mind* is a bad thing for them to be received.

- **Thesis Four**

The readers raise the pro and contra reaction on each period (age). The way the readers voiced their reaction also vary in accordance to the each spirit of the age, in this case between the first period (1982-2002) with the second period (2003-2012). The rejection to *Annie On My Mind* in the early influenced by critical readers for the value of religion, moral and social. This period shows that the readers read the literary work tied with the values that exist around them.

It is different with the second periods' rejection that more discuss about *Annie On My Mind's* position as a *segmentive work*. As well as the pro reaction at these two periods which was based on the spirit of different era. In the first period, the people who received *Annie On My Mind*, carries the freedom of writing to the author for their work, while in the second period, the pro reaction accept *Annie On My Mind* switched and developed to the question of the representation of the issue to the party addressed by the author (homosexuals) in *Annie On My Mind*. This is listed in the Jauss **thesis four**. Jauss described the spirit of the age. For him the reconstruction of the horizon of expectations to literature since it was created and greeted in the

past to the present, will produce different variants of receptions according to the spirit of the different age.

- Thesis Seven

In Jauss **thesis seven**, he revealed the issues of literary history. According to him, the task of literary history is not completed only by presenting the systems in the literary work synchronically and diachronically, but also must be connected with the general history. The distinctive and unique from literary history deserves to get the extinction in general history. This connection does not end with just finding a description of the existing social situation in the literature. The social function of literary work will be realized when the literary experience of the reader get into the horizon of expectations regarding the practical life, made self better understand the world, and finally have impact to the social behavior.

This matter happens in the readers' reception on *Annie on My Mind*, most readers reactions, especially contra reaction (rejection) arising from the reader read their horizon of expectation to the practical life. Parents at the beginning of *Annie on My Mind* presence, afraid if in practical life, their children who read the novel will act similar to the activity in the novel. Readers deliberately thrusting their desire for the existence of the work that could be the right solution according to the social norms and social problems.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the data through the research before, the writer finds that the responses of the two periods having a different critical angle. In the first period turned up the responses that lead to the question of the issue (the message) and not too much criticize about the elements of fiction. The rejection turned up concerning to the fidgetiness from the readers regarding the education value from the work, *Annie on My Mind* is not considered to contain of the appropriate education element, especially for students that made the work is not suitable to be placed at school. The rejection finally leads to the acceptance of this work on by the reason of freedom of reading (in terms of the reader) and freedom of expression (in terms of the author).

In the second period, the contra responses to *Annie on My Mind* turned up more educative. During this period, the contra responses is not just discuss the issues, but also reveals the elements that build the work, such as plot and character. The pro responses also extends , not

only about the things outside the work such as the freedom to read and freedom of expression that appears at the beginning, but the pro voice of readers also developed the essence of the work, which finally conclude that this work represents the voice of the homosexual and has advantages in terms of the selection of a different ending from the other homosexual-themed works, however this work become something new.

Overall, the responses to the second period led to the conclusion that the work is judged appropriate for the target readers, namely homosexuals, in terms of content (the message) of this novel is considered to represent the issue of homosexuals that existed in the society. However, from the development of the reader reception and horizon of expectation toward *Annie On My Mind*, can be seen that there are a lot of things that will affect the readers' horizon of expectations, the things that exist in the reader, the readers' surrounding, as well as things that are in the work itself. Background of the readers will affect to their horizon of expectations. The readers' horizon of expectation in each period will be different according to the each spirit of the age.

Readers' responses through *Annie on My Mind*, develop based on the readers' horizon of expectations in each period. Readers' responses that developed in attitude, criticism, a more educative point of view and does not frontal, described that the literary readers are more tolerant. The writer concluded that nowadays the literary readers are more open-minded and have a lot of consideration in criticizing a literary text.

The varied readers' responses in response a literary text, affirms that the presence of literary text is not based on one meaning. In the literary text reader has a freedom to determine the point and perspective to the translation of a text. As well as literary texts from the approach, understanding and the author's experience will make the work properly be presented to for the target, as well as *Annie on My Mind*.

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