

Artikel Ulasan

Deconstruction of Mrs. Driver's Character in Mary Norton's the Borrowers Novel

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Abstract

This research is concerned with the deconstruction of Mrs. Driver's character in Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* novel. This research aimed to describe the meaning of her character and deconstruct her previous fixed view using the determined binary oppositions. This research used Derrida's deconstruction with a qualitative design in the form of a description. The data in this research were dialogues, text, narration, sentences related to Mrs. Driver's character and obtained by reading the novel several times. In the analysis, the depiction of Mrs. Driver's character and characterization in the novel is described using Robert's theory which is the action of characters reveal their qualities, what characters say reveals what they are like, what others say tells us about a character and the author, speaking as a storyteller or an observer may present judgments about characters. Then, her character is deconstructed using the determined binary oppositions, they are: offensive vs. defensive, bad person vs. good person, and powerful vs. powerless. The researcher deconstructed Mrs. Driver's character and discovered her previously fixed views as someone offensive, bad, and powerful are not absolute. The researcher concluded that Mrs. Driver's character inherited not just a bad meaning but also a good trait. Thus, the meaning of her character is undecidable. This research emphasized that literary works never have a fixed meaning, so the reader should not be chained by only one perspective.

Keywords: binary oppositions, character and characterization, deconstruction

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berkaitan dengan dekonstruksi karakter Nyonya Driver dalam novel *The Borrowers* karya Mary Norton. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan makna karakternya dan mendekonstruksi pandangan tetapnya sebelumnya dengan menggunakan persamaan biner yang telah ditentukan. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori dekonstruksi Derrida dengan desain kualitatif berbentuk deskripsi. Data dalam penelitian ini adalah dialog, teks, narasi, kalimat yang berkaitan dengan karakter Nyonya Driver dan diperoleh dengan membaca novel beberapa kali. Dalam analisis, penggambaran tokoh dan penokohan Nyonya Driver dalam novel dideskripsikan dengan menggunakan teori Robert yaitu tindakan tokoh mengungkapkan sifat-sifatnya, apa yang dikatakan tokoh mengungkapkan seperti apa dirinya, apa yang dikatakan orang lain memberitahu kita tentang tokoh dan karakternya, penulis, berbicara sebagai pendongeng atau pengamat dapat memberikan penilaian tentang karakter. Kemudian, karakternya didekonstruksi menggunakan oposisi biner yang ditentukan, yaitu: ofensif vs. defensif, orang jahat vs. orang baik, dan kuat vs. tidak berdaya. Oposisi biner yang ditentukan ini dianalisis menggunakan dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida. Peneliti mendekonstruksi karakter Nyonya Driver dan menemukan pandangan tetapnya sebelumnya sebagai seseorang yang ofensif, jahat, dan berkuasa tidaklah mutlak. Peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa karakter Nyonya Driver tidak hanya mewarisi makna buruk tentang dirinya tetapi juga sifat yang baik. Dengan demikian, makna karakternya tidak dapat ditentukan. Penelitian ini menekankan bahwa karya sastra tidak pernah memiliki makna yang tetap, sehingga pembaca tidak boleh terbelenggu oleh satu perspektif saja.

Kata Kunci: oposisi biner, karakter dan penokohan, dekonstruksi

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a portrait of human's life. Literature is inspired by facts and experiences. According to Hudson, literature is the portrait of life through languages. It can be regarded as something fundamental since it contains almost genuine life, people, thoughts, and feelings about life (Hudson 10).

Literature is divided into several genres such as lyric, epic or narrative, and drama. But there are more have been added such as biographies, essays, and novel (Abrams 108). In this research, the researcher used *The Borrowers* novel written by Mary Norton. The researcher tried to analyze this novel using deconstruction theory proposed by Jacques Derrida and show another fact that can be seen in the literary works.

Deconstruction is a theory that believes that the text can be reinterpreted and the meaning in the text cannot be determined. Based on Atkins, deconstructive critique seeks the navel of the text, the moment when any text would be different from itself, violating its systems of values, and becoming undecidable in terms of its apparent systems of meaning (Atkins 25). It emphasized that deconstructor must know and believe that a text has various meanings which means that the meaning of a text is undecidable.

In this research, the researcher analyzed Mrs. Driver's character from Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* novel to show new perspective of her character. To find out the new perspective, the researcher used binary opposition to show the existing perspective and the new perspective to be analyzed. The binary opposition was initiated by Claud Levi-Strauss. Binary opposition is a system in language when two theoretical foreigners are strictly defined and contradict each other (Chunmei 109). Binary oppositions are also hierarchies where one element is always privileged over the other (Childs and Fowler 55). The researcher tried to reverse the hierarchy with the binary opposition concept and show the possibility of various perspectives and the complexity of meanings. Therefore, from the illustration, the researcher formulated the problem into the following question: How does deconstruction deconstruct Mrs. Driver's character in Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* novel? Then based on the problem, the aim of this research is to describe the deconstruction of Mrs. Driver's character in the *Borrowers* Novel. Hopefully, this research can be a significant contribution to the study of character through deconstruction theory and also provide helpful information that will increase the reader's critical thinking when reading novels with dualism.

2. RELATED LITERATURE

Literature has many works such as poetry, prose, film, novel, and many more. In this study, the researcher uses novels as the subject of the study. A novel is a long essay that tells the life of an individual and those around him (*Prah*). The term for a novel in the European language is called romance and the English name is derived from the Italian 'novella', which means something new (Abrams 190). The novel represents human relationships and experiences that involve characters and the people around them with certain backgrounds. Novel also different from prose or novelette. Abrams states in his book that the novel has a greater variety of characters, a greater complication of plot, amplifier development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (190). It means novel carries a heavier and more complicated story line.

In literature, character is one of the elements of the novel and is an important element that drives the storyline. According to *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* book, characters are parts of a literary sequence that are involved in a plot (Childs and Fowler 24). Characters can also describe ideas and themes in the novel and then create and resolve existing conflicts to control the storyline toward a predetermined ending. Characters in novels can be in

the form of humans, animals, inanimate objects, or anything that can be described as an individual. Moreover, character is formed from a broad pattern, as we know character is a social reflection, which brings its characteristics. The process by which a writer creates a character is called characterization. Jones states that characterization is a vivid description of a person (84). It means characterization, based on Jones's explanation, is a clear description of the characters in the story, and it is seen through their action, speech, and description.

Furthermore, in this research, the researcher had analyzed the character in the story using deconstruction theory proposed by Jacques Derrida. The mention of 'deconstruction' itself comes from the French language 'deconstruire' which in English means 'to cancel improvement or development, to be shattered to pieces' (Sikirivwa 44). But in philosophy, the word deconstruction arises from the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction appears as a response to the idea of Martin Heidegger, 'destructive', which in literature means 'destruction' or 're-building' (44). Deconstruction theory allows individuals to see how experience is determined by an ideology that we are not aware of, revealing something hidden in ourselves and our daily lives (Gorman 7). Derrida explains that deconstruction is already within the texts and only needs to be operated by careful reading. According to Miller, deconstruction relies on reading skills by paying close attention to linguistic devices, figurative language, and words and paying close attention to those details (qtd. in Gorman 8). Derrida tries to find unconscious orders, which ultimately refer to the hidden assumptions that lie behind the text. Four things are criticized by Derrida, namely logocentrism, phonocentrism, binary oppositions, and metaphysics of presence.

1. Logocentrism

Logocentrism is a belief that there is an ultimate reality or center or truth that serves as the basis for our thoughts and actions (Bressler 110). The truth is interpreted as singular, absolute, and universal. The term "logos" from logocentric comes from Greek which means "word" and "rationality". Logocentrism is an idea related to binary opposition. In Western philosophy, to establish one center of unity automatically another is decentered. It is based on a binary opposition system, which is for each center and opposing center, for example, God/humankind, good/bad. In each of the binary operations, one concept is superior to the others. (Bressler 110-111). The second one is phonocentrism.

2. Phonocentrism

Phonocentrism puts speech as the privileged and writing as the inferior (Bressler 111). It means phonocentrism believes speech is the source of truth and priority. This automatically leads to the notion that writing is only a secondary priority and makes Western philosophy ignore that language presents various possibilities.

3. Binary Oppositions

Based on Bressler western metaphysics is formed from binary operations or conceptual opposition systems which are called binary oppositions (Bressler 110). In this binary operation, one concept is superior to the others. So, it can be concluded that binary opposition has an idea related to logocentrism when one element is always privileged and another automatically decentered.

4. Metaphysics of Presence

Derrida points out that the metaphysics of presence concept is related to logocentrism, phonocentrism, binary oppositions, and other ideas put forward by Western thoughts in its conception of language and metaphysics (Bressler 111). Derrida's view of presence is not something that independently precedes writing, but presence exists with writing. With deconstruction, Derrida believes that it is a strategy for reading to open up a new interpretation that is unseen by those who are bound by the restraints of Western thought (Bressler 112).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researcher used a deconstruction approach in the qualitative method. According to *A Companion to Qualitative Research* book, qualitative research is predominantly a text-based discipline (Flick et al 8). It can be concluded that qualitative research is a method that focuses on the data in the form of text such as interview transcripts, spoken words, or textual medium, or anything as long as the data is transformed into readable text.

In conducting this research, the source of the data was taken from *The Borrowers 2-in-1* novel written by Mary Norton published by Hachette UK in 2011. The novel consists of 368 pages. The data are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, speeches, paragraphs, dialogues, or narrations that include the character's actions, thoughts and so on that are related to Mrs. Driver's character. In order to collect the data, the researcher used several steps by Goetz and LeCompte to identify the data. There are four steps involved in collecting the data, first is finding the artifact or documents, second is identifying the material, third is analyzing the material, and last is evaluating the material (155). In this research, the researcher follows four steps to collect the data. First, the researcher found and chose the novel that is *The Borrowers* novel as the object of the research. The researcher comprehended and read it carefully. Second, the researcher identified the material by writing some notes to collect the data that is related to the research question. Third, the researcher analyzed the material by classifying the data that is related to the topic. In the last step, the researcher evaluated the data to terminate the research data.

Then, for analyzing the data, the researcher used several steps by Bressler, which were: The first step, researcher found the binary operations that rule the text. In this step, the researcher comprehends the novel first and reads it carefully. The second step, the researcher responded to the values, concepts, and ideas beyond these operations. In this step, the researcher classified the data and took the binary operations that are related to the topic. The third step, the researcher overturned the present binary operations by deconstructing the previously held worldviews. The previously held worldviews refer to the structured meaning. The fourth step, the researcher accepted the possibility of various perspectives or levels of meaning in a text based on the new binary inversions. And the last step, the researcher enabled the meaning of the text to be undecidable.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Offensive vs. Defensive

4.1.1. Data MD-01

"You know what this means?" she said to Crampfurl.

"No" he said.

"The police," said Mrs. Driver, "that's what this means—a case for the police." (Norton 90-91).

The data above shows Mrs. Driver's characterization through her speech which is what characters say reveal what they are like. Offensive is a behavior when someone is trying to attack or insult and cause someone to feel hurt and it involves aggressive, confident, and rude traits to show the dominant side and take control (*Smith*). It emphasizes the meaning of her character that is offensive because she indicates to catch the borrowers by calling the police when she finds out all the missing objects which leads to the intention to do harm or attack the borrowers and shows her domination in the house who does something without having permission from her employer. On the other hand, the data above also can be seen as defensive. Defensive is when one is trying to defend himself/herself from threats or criticism, either physically or verbally and it involves fear, denial, or rational traits (*Smith*). Mrs. Driver is the only person

who is trusted to manage everything in the house as a nanny and housekeeper. Her job requires her to be conscientious and maintain the trust of her employer. The action of the borrowers who "borrow" can bring the accusation to Mrs. Driver. By calling the police and catching the borrowers, she will bring the evidence that another existence is stealing and interfering with the peace of the house to defend herself from her employer's criticism and losing her job.

4.1.2. Data MD-02

"You know why. You're a wicked, black-hearted, fribbling little pickpocket. That's what you are. And so are they. They're nasty little crafty, scampy, scurvy, squeaking little——"

'(Norton 96).

The data above is dialogues between Mrs. Driver and the boy when she found that it was the boy who stole everything in the house, helped them, and gave it to the borrowers. From Mrs. Driver's speech, it can be categorized as characterization which is what characters say reveal their qualities. Mrs. Driver's speech shows directly how offensive she is when she does not hesitate to mock the boy with rude words. She hurts the boy with her words to show how angry she is and also shows her dominant side which makes the boy unable to speak properly. But after analyzing deeply, the data above also shows her defensive side. Her bad words show her anger that what the boy had done could threaten her position and her employer's trust. Someone who shows anger is sometimes considered bad, but anger can show someone is under pressure, harmed, threatened, or treated unfairly ("Universal Class"). From her speech, her anger shows that she is protecting herself from the unfair treatment of the boy and the borrowers. Mrs. Driver is just trying to defend her job in the house.

4.1.3. Data MD-03

"Mrs. Driver laughed again and pushed him roughly through the green baize door. 'They'll be moved all right,' she said. 'Don't worry. The rat-catcher will know how. Crampful's old cat will know how. So will the sanitary inspector. And the fire-brigade, if need be. The police'll know how, I shouldn't wonder. No need to worry about moving them. Once you've found the nest,' she went on, dropping her voice to a vicious whisper as they passed Aunt Sophy's door, 'the rest is easy!'" (Norton 96).

Another data that showed Mrs. Driver's offensive also can be seen from the data above from her action, which can be categorized as the actions of characters reveal their qualities when she pushed the boy and locked him in his room, which is an offensive act because it involves rude trait and it can be seen from the word 'roughly'. Mrs. Driver doesn't hesitate to act rude even to the ten years old boy. But, after deeper analysis, the data also showed her defensive side. Mrs. Driver's action who acting roughly and locking the boy inside his room may have looked so offensive but it also can be seen as defensive because she tried to defend the boy from getting further involved with the borrowers who was an unknown creature. This action was reasonable and rational because the boy was only ten years old and what he did could have been manipulated by the borrowers.

4.2. *Bad Person vs. Good Person*

4.2.1. Data MD-04

"It's just a boy they have upstairs. It's nothing at all, but I heard Mrs. Driver said that she'd take a slipper to him, see if she wouldn't, if he had the mats up once again in the hall." (Norton 63).

A bad person is someone who shows undesirable, harmful, or unpleasant actions (Baumeister et al. 325). It can be seen from the character's speech above that Mrs. Driver threatens to take her slippers, which could imply that Mrs.

Driver will hit the boy with her slipper if the boy opens up the mat again in the hall. The data above falls into the category that what others say tells us about a character. From the words of the Homily, we know directly that Mrs. Driver is not a good nanny because she uses threats even to a 10-year-old boy. It is also shown by Mrs. Driver's bad-tempered side, where she gets angry easily over little things. But after being analyzed, the data also considered her as a good person. A good person is someone handy, caring, and trustworthy (Smith 341). She scolded and threatened the boy with a slipper because the boy opened the mat in the hall. It might happen for the umpteenth time and get in the way of her tasks and work which has to keep the house tidy and clean. With threatened the boy, can teach the boy a lesson that the boy should not do things that are not allowed, especially if the boy lives in someone else's house, which shows Mrs. Driver's caring side towards the boy.

4.2.2. Data MD-05

Even Aunt Sophy had felt it when Mrs. Driver brought up her wine; she heard it in the clink of the decanter against the glass as Mrs. Driver set down the tray and in the rattle of the wooden rings as Mrs. Driver drew the curtains; it was in the tremble of the floor-boards as Mrs. Driver crossed the room and in the click of the latch as Mrs. Driver closed the door. 'What's the matter with her now?' Aunt Sophy wondered vaguely as delicately, ungreedily, she poured the first glass (Norton 87).

Another of Mrs. Driver's characteristics as a bad person can be seen from her action from the data above, which is the action of characters reveal their qualities. Mrs. Driver begins to notice that some objects in the house are missing, which was the boy who took all the objects in the doll house and gave them to the borrowers. She suspects the boy and is angry about it. She can not control her emotions and let her employer know it from her action which shows her unpleasant action because of her disrespectful behavior and her bad side as a bad-tempered person. But besides that, the data also showed Mrs. Driver's character as a good person. It also can be seen from her action which is the action of character reveals their qualities. Through her actions, Mrs. Driver shows her good side as someone that handy at doing her job. Even though Mrs. Driver is in an unstable emotional state due to the situations that occur such as missing things in the house or her suspicion of Aunt Sophy that it was the old woman who did it, Mrs. Driver does not simply abandon her responsibility and continues to serve her well, which showed that she respected her employer.

4.2.3. Data MD-06

The boy had felt it too. From the way Mrs. Driver had stared at him as he sat hunched in the bath; from the way she soaped the loofah and the way she said: 'and now!' she had scrubbed him slowly, with a careful, angry steadiness, and all through the bathing time she did not say a word. (Norton 87).

Another Mrs. Driver's characteristic as a bad person also can be seen from the data above when she showed her unpleasant actions that can be categorized as the action of characters reveal their qualities because she made the boy uncomfortable by showing her anger and it can be seen from the words 'angry steadiness'. But even so, Mrs. Driver also showed her good qualities. It can be seen from her actions that does not immediately get angry and treats the boy roughly. She just conveys the anger silently, not saying anything which is different from her usual attitude. She shows her attitude and it can be seen from the words 'scrubbed him slowly' and 'with a careful' that she tried to control her emotions to make the boy feel a little comfortable. She tries to be rational that he is just a boy and also shows her character as someone who is caring to the boy.

4.3. *Bad Person vs. Good Person*

4.3.1. Data MD-07

After she had left other things were found to be missing, and no one was involved in her place. From that time onward Mrs. Driver ruled supreme. (Norton 13).

Mrs. Driver is also known as a powerful figure in several narrations and dialogues where she shows the power she has in the house. Powerful is an attitude in which a person has dominance to influence a place and also influences any actions taken by a person (Haugaard 1). The narration shows how Mrs. Driver eventually becomes someone who reigns above the rest, it is also explained in detail that Mrs. Driver's position among the other maids and trusted. The data above is an example of how the author may present judgment about character. But, after deeper analysis, the data also showed Mrs. Driver's character as a powerless figure. The definition of powerless itself is a belief that one's action cannot influence others (Seeman 2002). Mrs. Driver does have power over other workers, which means she can do anything without the approval from Aunt Sophy as her employer, but this also shows that the power that she possesses can not influence everyone because after all, Mrs. Driver is also only a worker in the house and there is another power above her, which means that she is a powerless figure.

4.3.2. Data MD-08

It was not Aunt Sophy, however, who missed them first. It was Mrs. Driver. Mrs. Driver had never forgotten the trouble over Rosa Pickhatchet. It had not been, at the time, easy to pin-point the guilt. Even Crampfurl had felt under suspicion. 'From now on,' Mrs. Driver had said, 'I'll manage on my own. No more strange maids in this house-not if I'm to stay on myself'. (Norton 86).

Other data that shows her powerful figure also can be seen from the dialogue above, Mrs. Driver demonstrates her power, dismissing the other maids when it is discovered that some items are missing and deciding to take care of everything in the house on her own. In Mrs. Driver's speech, she shows her power to control everything in the house. But, besides her powerful character, she is also a powerless character. From her action in the data above, Mrs. Driver begins to suspect that someone is trying to bring her down. It can be seen from the words 'even Crampfurl had felt under suspicion' that showed her character as someone afraid of losing her current position, that her power cannot control anyone again, and choosing to manage everything in the house alone, which makes her a powerless figure.

4.3.3. Data MD-09

These things had disappeared gradually, one by one: it was someone, of that she felt sure, who knew the house—and someone who wished her ill. Could it, she wondered suddenly, be the old herself? The old girl had been out of bed lately and walking about her room (Norton 86).

The data above tells about when Mrs. Driver still has no idea who is someone that stole everything and she starts to suspect Aunt Sophy which is her employer. The words 'who knew the house-and someone who wished her ill' show the power that Mrs. Driver has as someone who knows clearly about everything in the house among other workers. She is the one who knows everything in the house and if there is anyone who tried to put her in a disadvantageous position, it could be someone who also knows as clearly as her. But besides her powerful character that knows everything in the house, the data also showed Mrs. Driver's character as a powerless figure. From the words 'someone who wished her ill', it can be seen that her power can no longer influence the people in the house because there is someone that tried and wanted her downfall, and it can be achieved by reversing the situation, which makes Mrs. Driver as a powerless figure.

4.3.4. Data MD-10

"And a nice merry-andrew she'd look if I caught her at it—creeping about the downstairs rooms in the middle of the night. All right, my lady," muttered Mrs. Driver grimly, 'pry and potter allyou want—two can play at that game!" (Norton 86).

From the data above, Mrs. Driver showed her character as a powerful figure in her speech, and it can be categorized as what characters say reveal what they are like. From her speech, she suspected Aunt Sophy which showed that only someone who knows better than her can do such a thing. It is emphasized that she has power over the other workers. In addition, she also shows her powerful figure from the words 'two can play at the game' because she tried to maintain her dignity as an honest person, she would do that and she would show it to her employer. But after analyzing deeply, Mrs. Driver shows an agitated attitude, making her also a powerless figure. She senses that her power is wavering and Aunt Sophy is currently testing her fairness by deliberately taking things and wondering if Mrs. Driver will realize this or not. Mrs. Driver also felt that Aunt Sophy was watching her, and tried to find her mistakes to get rid of her from her job which made her a powerless figure because the fate of her job is in the hands of her employer.

4.4. Discussion

After analyzing Mrs. Driver's character in *The Borrowers* novel, the researcher found four types of characterization in Mrs. Driver's character. The action of characters reveal their qualities, what characters say reveals what they are like, what others say tells us about a character, and the author, speaking as a storyteller or an observer, may present judgments about characters. After describing Mrs. Driver's character using Roberts theory, the researcher uses the gathered information from her characterizations to determine the binary opposition that governs her character in the novel. The researcher found three binary oppositions that govern Mrs. Driver's character in the novel. There are offensive vs. defensive, bad person vs. good person, and powerful vs. powerless. In the previously fixed views, Mrs. Driver's character is shown as an offensive figure because she tries to attack the borrowers and says harsh words to the boy, but after her character is analyzed deeply, Mrs. Driver is shown as defensive because all she does is just doing her job and defense herself from losing her job. She is also shown as a bad person because of her whether in doing her job or taking care of the boy. But on the otherhand, with her persistence, she shows her good side as a nanny by doing her job properly and her controllability. She is also depicted as a powerful figure because she has the power to control everything in the house without anyone questioning her attitude. But because of that power, she also has anxiety about losing the trust of Great Aunt Sophy when she is not doing her job properly which shows that she is also a powerless figure because another power above her controls her. With the binary oppositions that had been founded, the researcher overturned those binary oppositions using the deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida.

5. CONCLUSION

After analyzing Mrs. Driver's character in Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* novel, this research comes to the conclusion part. The researcher concludes that Mrs. Driver's character was presented through four types of characterizations among the five by Roberts. The action of characters reveal their qualities, what characters say reveals what they are like, what others say tells us about a character, and the author, speaking as a storyteller or an observer, may present judgments about characters. Mrs. Driver's character is shown as an offensive, bad person, and powerful figure. The researcher deconstructed Mrs. Driver's character using three binary oppositions found in the text and overturned the present binary oppositions. The binary oppositions are offensive vs. defensive, bad person vs. good person, and

powerful vs. powerless. The researcher proves that Mrs. Driver could be offensive or defensive depending on the point of view. Mrs. Driver's character can be seen from both sides, which is bad or good. She is also powerful because she has the power to maintain everything on her own, but she is also powerless because all the power that she has is given by her employer. The researcher concludes that Mrs. Driver's character does not have absolute meaning. The meaning of her character is undecidable depending on the reader's interpretation and perspectives.

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