

Confronting Violence in the Novel *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi

Coates (2015)

THESIS

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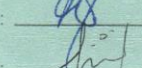
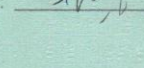
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ABSTRAK

Hasbi.2019. Confronting Violence in the Novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Thesis.UniversitasNegeri Padang.

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Skripsi ini merupakan analisa dari novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) yang ditulis oleh Ta-Nehisi Coates. Topik yang dibahas adalah bagaimana karakter berusaha menghadapi kekerasan yang dilakukan oleh orang kulit putih. Permasalahan dari analisis ini adalah sejauhmana Novel tersebut mengungkapkan usaha karakter menghadapi kekerasan yang secara halus yang dilakukan oleh orang kulit putih terhadap orang kulit hitam, serta seberapa besar fungsi elemen-elemen fiksi seperti karakter, seting dan konflik berpengaruh untuk memperlihatkan usaha karakter dalam menghadapi kekerasan tersebut. Tujuan dari analisis ini adalah untuk mengungkapkan usaha karakter melawan kekerasan yang dilakukan orang kulit putih, serta untuk mengetahui peran karakter, seting dan konflik dalam membantu mengetahui usaha karakter menghadapi kekerasan. Teori yang digunakan dalam analisis ini ialah konsep *self-awareness* dari Duval dan Wicklund. Metode yang dipakai adalah *text-based interpretation* dan *context-based interpretation*. Hasil dari analisis ini menunjukkan bahwa usaha karakter dalam menghadapi kejahatan dapat menyelamatkan dirinya dari kematian. Dengan kata lain, orang kulit hitam bisa selamat dari kekerasan dengan berusaha menghadapi dan melawan kekerasan itu sendiri.

Kata Kunci: *Kekerasan, Orang KulitHitam, Kesadarandiri.*

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CHAPTER IZ

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Although the equality has been launched before the law, but it is still found that people using skin color to judge others. It is used to see whether someone is in respect position or not. Commonly, people who are respected are the one who has power, and they are white. While the people who do not have power is seen as uncivilized, uneducated, and even as criminal. It influences the reaction against other people. In addition, it causes white commit a crime to black because they think that they are superior toward black.

There are some treatments of crimes established black as torture, violence, and murder. Unfortunately, nobody cares of them. Even the law which is expected to protect the society does not provide it to them. Hence, they must solve all the crimes with their own. They have to protect themselves, family and relatives. They have to be brave to confront the violence and find the way to secure.

There are some evidences of violence toward black. Rubinowitz and Perry in their article *Crimes without Punishment: White Neighbors' Resistance to Black Entry* (2002) in journal *criminal law and criminology* states:

Similarly, Detroit witnessed a continuous stream of housingrelated racial crimes between World War II and the 1960s. There were over two hundred incidents against Blacks moving into predominantly white neighborhoods, many of which involved window breaking, arson,

vandalism, and physical attacks. The problem peaked in the mid-1950s, when the city's economy faced critical problems, and accelerated again in the early 1960s'. Over the decades, this widespread racial resistance involved thousands of whites, many of whom committed crimes against hundreds of Black victims who were among the first families to cross the residential color line. (p.347)

The quotation above shows the cruelty, the crimes are received by the black. This happened not because they have done the crimes, but because they are black. In other way, they live as neighbor of white. It means that white do not accepted black as their neighbor, because Black is different from them. That is why black receive bad treatment from White. It can be seen in the sentence/*There were over two hundred incidents against Blacks moving into predominantly white neighborhoods, many of which involved window breaking, arson, vandalism, and physical attacks.*/

Another evidence comes from the article entitled *Discrimination Against Black Students (2016)* by Aloud and Alsulayyim:

“African American were subjected to major abuses and denial of basic rights that other citizens were enjoying, for example voting rights and economic rights (Badat, 1999)”.(p.3)

This shows that Black is the main object of America to receive the injustice, violence and discrimination. They are the object for torture. They do not have the same rights such other people (white). On the other hand, the perception of those

who say that the black is not part of them, it causes they are also not given the right to be involved in providing the voting rights for the good of country, and this is one example of the injustice they get. This treatment is only intended for black, not for people who break the law or commit evil acts.

The quotations above shows that black often get crime caused of racism and skin color. They are viewed as inferior and cause the crime happen to them anytime. Therefore, they must secure. They have to fight for the crimes they get. This can be achieved by improving education, gaining trust and get position in the country. They must teach their children about the history of Black so far, about the challenges and struggles of life to be able to secure, while this will be a lesson for their children in order they can secure and give freedom for their future and future generations.

This issue is also exposed in literary works. The study of confronting the violence only focus on novel *Between The World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015). This novel was written as a letter from the main character to his son. The main character tells his son the black's life in America. Black who get violence such as shooting and beating, which have an impact die for some people. He tells it based on his experience from childhood till adulthood and having a son. He presents the story as to give motivation for black to confront the violence and getting secure. The result is, black people find the way to obtain the security in a state of black get violence and injustice. This novel is interesting to be analyzed because it reveals the life of black who has been a victim of violence and try to confront it for a long time. Here we can see black's struggles to get secure amid

the violence that threaten their lives. This analysis is focused on character as a father and has a child. How to deal with crime in order to get secure can be seen from the main character's life taught by his parents when he was young to adulthood.

1.2 Confronting Violence

There are two terms in this issue, confronting and violence. According to Merriam Webster (2020), confront means to face especially in challenge. While violence means the use of physical force as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy. In addition, based on Oxford Dictionary (2010), confront means to deal with a problem or difficult situation, while violence means physical or emotional force and energy. In this study, confronting means to face something difficult, and violence means the violence in a subtle way. Confronting violence in this analysis refers to how does the Character deal with difficulties, crime and violence so he can secure himself.

1.3 A Brief Description of Author's Biography

According to Bryan in his writing entitled *Ta-Nehisi Coates* (2016), told that Ta-Nehisi Coates was born on September 30th 1975, Baltimore, Maryland. He has six brother and sisters. His father named William Paul Coates, who is publisher and had been a member of the Black Panther Party, founding and running the Black Classic press, which specialized in African American titles. His mother named Cheryl Waters, was a teacher. Coates graduate from Woodlawn High School in Baltimore and continued his study at Howard University in

Washington, D.C., for five years to study Journalism but left before got his degree. After leaving Howard, Coates worked as a reporter for the Washington city, then moving on to write for the Village Voice, Philadelphia Weekly, and Time. He is a writer, journalist, and a national correspondent for the Atlantic. His writing expose the issue like racial bias, urban policing, and racial identity, especially in relation to the African American Experience.

Based on Sparks in Britannica.com which is entitled *Ta-Nehisi Coates* (2018) says that Coates began writing for a variety of periodicals, including *Washington Monthly*, to which he contributed the attention grabbing essays “Confessions of a Black Mr. mom”; *Philadelphia Weekly*; *Mother Jones*; *the Village Voice*; *Entertainment Weekly*; *Time*; and *O, the Oprah Magazine*. In addition, Bryan explains that in 2008 Ta-Nehisi Coates published his first book *the Beautiful Struggle* (2008) which discuss about his father involvement in the Black Panther Party movement, the growing street crime to crime, and his experience in Baltimore. His second book *Between the World and Me* (2015) which told about American history against African American.

Alter in his essay *Ta-Nehisi Coates wins National Book Award*(2015) mentions that Ta-Nehisi Coates won the National Book Award for nonfiction Wednesday night for *Between the World and Me* (2015). Bryan also said that Coates won a MacArthur foundation “Genius Grant” fellowship in September 2015.

The work of coates is very touching readers for those who read his work will be swept away in the story as if the reader can feel the story of coates. In the

work written by Packer entitled *George Packer Responds to Ta-Nehisi Coates* (2017) state that:

There's a lot to admire in Ta-Nehisi Coates's new essay. It's one of these pieces that grabs you with its paragraph and never lets go. The argument keeps gathering force, building on the striking Imagery and the caustic scouring of the polemics, to the very end. At its heart is the undeniable truth that racism remains fundamental in American Politics.

This shows that Coates's works is very awesome, beautiful and hypnotize his readers. The last sentence of the quotation above explains that Coates's works revealed about his experience and observations about the racist in America. Moreover, it is also to tell you the whole world that racist is the usual thing and always occurs in America.

In addition, Maelo also gives his comment to Coates's work in his writing entitled *The Bleak View of Ta-Nehisi Coates* (2017):

I was left with a sinking feeling in my depths after reading Coates. I had been among those who had wanted to believe that we had arrive at a place in our history where obvious bids toward racial and ethnic divides would make some unelectable. Namely, that hatred could not stand as a party platform. I was wrong. The America that we all live in has grown on the blood of saints, slaves, and sinners, and history is not so easily forgotten. I also had brought, in part the stories brought forth on the left that people were driven to Trump because of economic disparities.

That they just differed from other counterparts on the other side of the aisle on who is to blame for the country's problem. Regardless of how precisely accurate that premise is, the Balrog of racism has not been defeated. He still stands on the bridge challenging our passage in a great and terrible fury.

The quotation above shows that Coates revealed about the reality in America. Coates's works also helps to make people understand and realize (I was wrong). This makes the reader feel the situation which told in his work, and can be the sound of black that tells how their lives in America, and the black who became victims.

1.4 *Between the World and Me* (2015)

The novel *Between the World and me*(2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates shows some issues. They are White's cruelty toward Black, the condition of being Black, the injustice toward black, and confronting the violence. In this analysis, I reveal the issue confronting the violence, because that is the more interested issue in this novel to analyze and it is the implied meaning that I found in this novel. Confronting the violence in this analysis refers to how does the Character deal with difficulties, crime and violence so he can secure himself.

Confronting the violence is represented by the main character as Black people who tells to his son how to secure himself in America. This novel such as a letter to his son. He told the cruelty of the world where he lives, and Black who lives with fear in their life because black often get violence although they do nothing. His life is often in danger situation because of the violence, but nobody

can help them, and even the law cannot protect them. He tries to continue his life in that bad condition in order to secure himself as well as he can. In this analysis, confronting the violence can be seen through giving education and protection by the character's parents.

The first one is giving education. The Character's parents ask him to read the book in order to understand the condition and situation around him. His parents ask him to write all of the problems while he gets trouble at school. He has to be an intellectual by increasing his education and get a chance to have a good position in the society and be respected.

The second one is giving protection. The Character's Father beat him when he stays away from his parents in order he will not be beaten by other or the police. The Character's Mother holds his hand tightly while they go out in order he will not get danger. The Character learns the culture and the language of the street to protect himself from the violence in the street.

1.5 Problem of the Study

Confronting the violence is an important issue in the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates. There are two research questions used to analyze the issue of confronting the violence which are formulated as follow:

1. How does the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates show the issue of confronting the violence?
2. To what extent do the character, setting, and plot (conflict) in the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) reveal the issue of confronting the violence?

1.6 Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on two main points. The first one is to find out how the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates shows the issue of confronting the violence. The second one is to know to what extent the character, setting, and plot (conflict) in novel *Between the World and Me*(2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates reveal the issue of confronting the violence.

1.7 Previous Study

The analysis about confronting the violence in the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates has not been found yet. However, there are three studies which have given contribution in analyzing this novel. The first one is the study by Haris entitled *Re-Presenting Black Masculinities in Ta-Nehisi Coates' Between the World and Me* (2018). The second study is by Güven entitled *Post-Colonial Analysis of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (2013). The last study comes from Albarrak entitled *Racial Discrimination and Violence: A Psycho-social Analysis of Richard Wright's Native Son and The Long Dream* (2016).

The first study by Haris entitled *Re-Presenting Black Masculinities in Ta-Nehisi Coates' Between the World and Me* (2018). This study relates to the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Connell, who explains that hegemonic masculinity has been conceptualized as the “normative” model for masculinity, an essentially white and heterosexual model which embodied “the most honored” way of being a man, required all other men . The study focuses on character and

plot. The result of the study is the character breaks the stereotype towards Black which said that Black is irresponsible, laziness, and brutal.

The second study is by Güven entitled *Post-Colonial Analysis of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (2013). This study focus on the character and conflict. This study relates to the concept of Binary Opposition by Tyson, who said that colonialist ideologi was based on the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) peoples, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded. The result of this analysis shows that the real darkness is Europe rather than Africa due to European's mistreatment against the natives, since the Europeans close their eyes to the suffering on the natives.

The third study is from Albarrak entitled *Racial Discrimination and Violence: A Psycho-social Analysis of Richard Wright's Native Son and The Long Dream* (2016). This study relates to the concept Neurotic Disorders by Homey, who said that the causes of neurosis are discrimination, exploitation, inequality in learning and job opportunities and social status. Albarrak focus on character in analyzing two wright's novels *Native Son* (1940) and *The Long Dream* (1958). The result of the study shows that in *Native Son* the character is afraid to interact with white and in *The Long Dream* the character's fear come into his unconsciousness became his dream. The character is haunted by fear, anxiety, castration complex which is victimize of white.

These works give contribution and inspiration in analyzing the issue of confronting the violence in novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi

Coates. The first study uses the same novel but different topic and theory. In the second and third study use the different novel with different topic and theory. Unlike the previous studies, this study focus on the way the character confronts the violence which is given by his parents.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The analysis is supported by context based interpretation and text based interpretation. In context-based interpretation, the study of confronting the violence relates to the concept 'self-awareness' by Duval and Wicklund. Self-awareness is the ability of a person to think, act, gain experience as an individual and they can also think about what they are experiencing, thinking and they are doing. In the article entitled *Self-awareness: The Starting Point of Change in Individuals – An Empirical Analysis* by Jayashree state that "self-awareness is defined as "the capacity for introspection and the ability to reconcile oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals" (p.14). That statement shows that Self-awareness make people introspect themselves as individuals. It makes people return to a better condition after being aware of the situation and condition that happened before. In addition, Jayashree mentions that:

Duval and Wicklund proposed that, at a given moment, people can focus attention on the self or on the external environment. Focusing on the self

enables *self-evaluation*. When people are self-focused they compared the self with *standards of correctness* that specify how the self ought to think, feel, and behave. The process of comparing the self with standards allows people to change their behavior and to experience pride and dissatisfaction with the self. Self-awareness is thus a major mechanism of self-control. (p.14)

The quotation above shows that self-awareness is a very important thing that must be present in each of individual. Through awareness, people can recognize their own situation and environment so that they can do a self-evaluation. Awareness can lead people to evaluate themselves, how they should think, act and behave. It allows people to change their behavior, experiences and dissatisfaction with themselves. The process in self-awareness will make people change to the state of the environment and the situations they have faced. Self-awareness is the main thing in self-control.

In the article entitled *How your Client's Private Self-awareness Influences Choice* by Goukens, et al state that:

Self-awareness theory (Duval & Wicklund 1972) begins with the assumption that at any given moment, people's attention may be focused on themselves or the environment, but not both. People are typically not self focused, but certain situations can cause them to focus their attention inward, such as gazing into a mirror, standing in front of an audience, or seeing themselves in a

photograph or videotape. When their attention is directed to the self, people reside in a state of objective self-awareness. Self-awareness can be public, involving the awareness of oneself from the perceived perspective of others (e.g. standing in front of an audience), or private, which refers to awareness of oneself from a personal perspective (e.g., gazing into a mirror) (Fejfar and Hoyle 2000). (p.1)

The quotation above shows that people's attention is focused on two things, self and environment. However, people are more likely to focus on certain situation that causes them to focus their attention on the situation, such as the situation they are experiencing. The situation that occurs in themselves and the environment of each person raises awareness in themselves.

In this novel, self-awareness refers to main character (Black) as a father who wants to teach his child how to secure in their environment. Black must have self-awareness in order that Black confront the bad situation they receive. Black must rise against the violence he experienced. Black is aware that one way to fight this violence is to educate his child that what others consider (uneducated, criminal, uncivilized) toward black is incorrect. They deserve to be respected, getting the same rights as others.

Confronting the violence that is faced by Black can provide awareness to Black to rise and be able to maintain the next generation. Black can find ways to reduce or avoid the crimes that he has received so far, so that this can be used as a lesson to provide protection for children so as not to get the same violence.

Spokane in the article entitled *confronting violence* written by the Spokane regional health district-data center in 2017 state that:

This report is meant to generate awareness and discussion about the extent, complexity, and unfair distribution of violence in this community. Based on report findings, stakeholders should consider where alignment and partnership with other organizations can be furthered to confront and eliminate violence in Spokane County. When asked in interviews, community partners highlighted the challenges that any one service organization has in meeting the needs of Spokane County individuals. Combating violence takes the collective efforts of stakeholders who provide services on many different levels, from working directly with victims to changing policies, and shifting cultural view. Violence prevention is everyone's responsibility, and fortunately, best practices can be found, learning from other communities who are tackling violence. There is something that everyone can do to prevent violence. (executive summary 6)

The quotation above shows that confronting the violence can raise awareness for those who accept violence itself or for those who see or experience violence directly. Violence that is found causes people to rise up and look for ways to prevent the violence itself or at least to reduce the violence received. Awareness can be in the form of efforts to prevent violence. Prevention means showing that people who get violence must get out of the problem of the violence they face, and be able to face the circumstances accepted and try to avoid them.

Like in this novel, the main character has awareness after he gets and sees violence that occurs in the family or the environment around him. He realized that he had to find a way to deal with the violence and secure himself. He educates his child to understand Black's condition. How Black lives as people who face evil and do not get justice. Therefore Black confronts the violence with education and protection that is provided by his parents.

In text-based interpretation, fictional devices give contribution in exposing confronting the violence within the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015). They are character, setting and plot (conflict). Character is an important element to analyze this novel. Klarer in his book entitled *An Introduction to Literary Studies*(2004)states that "characters in a text can be rendered as types or as individuals". There are two types of characters in fiction, protagonists and antagonists. The protagonist is also said to be the main character and the antagonist is the opponent of the protagonist itself. Characters help the reader to understand the meaning of the literary work by seeing the way of thinking of the character, how to act, conversations with other characters, and the way to resolves conflicts.

In this analysis, main character is a father who tells his child how to secure himself as Black in America. He tells the story of Black's former life which is not much different from the present situation seen by his son. His son witnessed that there is no punishment for the murderer who had killed Black. The law does not conduct further investigations to try the killer. The main character also tells how his parents gave a lesson to solve the problem and provided protection to him.

Hence, he could secure from the police who were very feared because Black's death was often caused by white police. His parents beat him so he would not be beaten by the police, solve the problems he faced by writing it in his book and try to find his own solution, and he was also told to read the history of Black to understand Black's condition itself.

The other fictional device is setting. According to Klarer in his book entitled *An Introduction to Literary Studies* (2004) explains that the term setting denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops. In this novel, Character has been faced with a situation that is not fair to Him. He lives in insecurity because he can be killed only because He is Black, and there is no justice for Him. The justice is not for Black. That is why He must secure Himself against injustice, and fight the violence.

The last fictional device to analyze this novel is plot (conflict). According to strategies for educational improvement (2010) conflict is the interaction of plot and character or the opposition of two forces. There are four types of conflict: character against self, character against character, character against society and character against nature. In the novel *Between the World and Me* (2015), the conflict is between Character against society. Law does not protect Him. He lives in fear. However, He must survive by learning the situation around Him such as learn the language of the street, and protect His child from the unexpected violence.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that the three fictional devices: character, setting and plot (conflict), are really useful in revealing the meaning

behind the text. They lead the researchers to look beyond the text and finally find the meaning of this novel.

1.9 Methodology

The analysis of novel *Between the World and Me* (2015) by Ta-Nehisi Coates is done through text-based interpretation and context-based interpretation. In text-based interpretation, the novel is analyzed by fictional devices; character, setting and plot (conflict). Each of the fictional devices gives contribution in revealing the meaning of the novel. Character is used to reveal how His parents teach Him to live as Black, provide protection and education for Him. The plot was used to find the conflict faced by the character with society and the people in power. Setting deals with situation, atmosphere and bad condition such as violence faced by character to express the ways to secure himself.

In context-based interpretation, the novel is analyzed by using the concept of “self-awareness” by Duval and Wicklund. “Self-awareness theory (Duval & Wicklund 1972) begins with the assumption that at any given moment, people’s attention may be focused on themselves or the environment, but not both. People are typically not self focused, but certain situations can cause them to focus their attention inward, such as gazing into a mirror, standing in front of an audience, or seeing themselves in a photograph or videotape. When their attention is directed to the self, people reside in a state of objective self-awareness. Self-awareness can be public, involving the awareness of oneself from the perceived perspective of others (e.g. standing in front of an audience), or private, which refers to awareness

of oneself from a personal perspective (e.g., gazing into a mirror) (Fejfar and Hoyle 2000). In this novel, Character is aware of the environmental conditions, difficulties and violence he faces. He realizes that he must be able to survive from the violence he receives. He must stay alive and try to find a way to be able to live safely, and peacefully in order He can show the abilities He has and He deserves to be respected like white. He survives by education and protection that is provided by his parents.

CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION

This chapter reveals *confronting the violence* by analyzing the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting. The main character as a