

**Guillermo Arriaga's *Babel*:
Uglification of Noble Intention**

Thesis

*Submitted as partial fulfillment of the Requirement
to Obtain Strata One (S1) Degree*



By:

Sari Fitria

01652/2008

Advisors:

- 1. Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A.**
- 2. Delvi Wahyuni, S.S, M.A.**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ART
STATE UNIVERSITY OF PADANG
2012**

HALAMAN PERSETUJUAN SKRIPSI

Guillermo Arriaga's *Babel*: Uglification of Noble Intention

Nama : Sari Fitria
NIM/BP : 01652/2008
Program studi : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

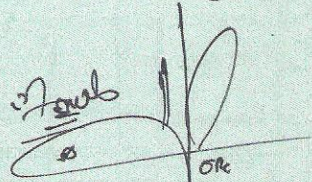
Padang, Agustus 2012

Pembimbing I



Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A.
NIP: 19540626 198203 2 001

Pembimbing II



Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A.
NIP: 19820618 200812 2 003

Diketahui
Ketua Jurusan



Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A.
NIP: 19540626 198203 2 001


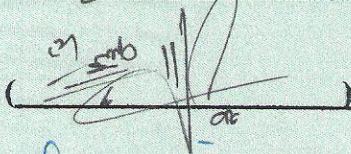
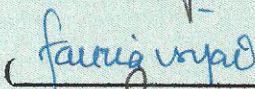
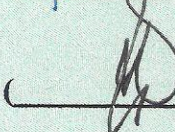
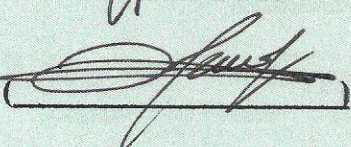
HALAMAN PENGESAHAN LULUS UJIAN SKRIPSI

Dinyatakan Lulus Setelah Dipertahankan di Depan Tim Penguji Skripsi
Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni
Universitas Negeri Padang

Guillermo Arriaga's *Babel*: Uglification of Noble Intention

Nama	: Sari Fitria
NIM/BP	: 01652/2008
Program studi	: Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Jurusan	: Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Fakultas	: Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, Agustus 2012

Tim Penguji		Tanda Tangan
Nama		
1. Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A.	Ketua	()
2. Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A.	Sekretaris	()
3. Dra. An Fauzia R. Syafei, M.A.	Anggota	()
4. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A.	Anggota	()
5. Havid Ardi, S.Pd., M.Hum.	Anggota	()

ABSTRAK

**Fitria, Sari. 2012. *Guillermo Arriaga's Babel: Uglification of Noble Intention*.
Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni,
Universitas Negeri Padang.**

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa teks (karya sastra) film *Babel* (2006) karya Guillermo Arriaga. Masalah yang dibahas adalah sejauh mana film ini memperlihatkan sebuah kegagalan dalam mewujudkan tujuan mulia akibat kesalahan sendiri dan seberapa jauh kontribusi unsur sastra seperti karakter, konflik dan seting mampu mengungkap bentuk-bentuk kesalahan yang berujung pada sebuah kegagalan. Tujuan dari penganalisaan ini untuk mengetahui sejauh mana kesalahan yang datang dari diri sendiri secara tidak sengaja bisa mengubah tujuan mulia menjadi sebuah tragedi. Analisa didasarkan pada teori *uglification* oleh Frederich Nietzsche dan konsep *unconscious mind* dari Sigmund Freud. Hasil penganalisaan menunjukkan ada tiga bentuk kesalahan yang menyebabkan kegagalan terwujudnya sebuah tujuan mulia, yaitu kurangnya ilmu pengetahuan, kurangnya komunikasi dan kecerobohan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praises to Allah for the strengths and His blessing in completing this thesis.

The writer would like to send her appreciation to the supervisor Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A. for the supervision, motivation and patience. Her constructive comments and suggestions give most contribution in completing this thesis. Then, the writer would like to send her gratitude to the co-supervisor Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A. for the correction, encouragement and support in improving this thesis. Her gratitude also goes to the examiners: Dra. An Fauzia R. Syafei, M.A, Al-Hafizh, S.S.,M.A, and Havid Ardi, S.pd., M.Hum, for the suggestions and valuable comments that give contribution in the analysis.

Her gratefulness is sent to Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A as the chairman, Dra, An Fauzia R. Syafei M.A as the secretary, and Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A as the head of study programmers of English Literature, all the lecturers and staff in English Department of State University of Padang for their assist during her academic years in this university.

The writer would like to dedicate this thesis to her parents, Yurnita and Basri Burhan, for their endless love. Their smile, patience, and attention play an important role in completing her study. A special thank is also sent to her beloved brothers, Firman and Ari, for supporting and cheering her up in her gloomy days. Lastly, a special thank goes to her family in English Department year of 2007, 2006 and 2005 for the friendship, care and support that help in finishing this thesis.

Padang, September 2012

Sari Fitria

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

All of people commonly have a noble goal. Collins (2010) defines it as an intention that is based on high moral principles. It refers to a precious goal that is completed by a person for another person's importance. In order to reach the noble goal, people tend to do many kinds of efforts. However, no matter how hard they try, sometimes, those efforts are doomed to fail. As a result, they may fail to make their dream come true. Even those actions may lead them into a tragic ending. As stated by Gee (1992) that errors can create a crisis condition. It means that a minor error can spell a big trouble.

Actually, one's failure to pursue a dream may occur due to errors that they have done. Reasons (2004) states errors become the root of human failure. It implies that errors may take an important role in creating a failure. When people do errors, they are going to face some troubles that complicate their ways in reaching a goal. As a result, they have to get involved in a failure. For example, some people may be careless in taking actions or have no knowledge in choosing the right action. Consequently, their goal cannot be completed easily.

The condition when a failure happens because of errors is called uglification. In *The Oxford American Writers Thesaurus*, uglification is described as a disfigurement or an imperfection. It relates to a failure in completing a goal.

Moreover, uglification produces disaster or tragedy as the effect of errors. As stated by Allison (1991) that:

In any case, from the problem that concerns us we can conclude that Nietzsche wants to pose uglification as a bad taste that is founded on error. It creates decline and youthful madness.

It implies that uglification occurs for errors that result a risky and fatal condition. It is described as a condition when something distressing and dangerous happened. In running their life, people try to avoid risky condition since it is regarded as disturbance. However, in the case of uglification, risky condition becomes main part that has to be faced by people who involve in it.

An unfortunate state of Indonesian workers who work abroad is an example of uglification. Their noble intention is to improve their life and their family at the cost of living far from their home. However, they face some troubles because their lack of knowledge. For example, they cannot communicate well with their masters for language barrier, they are not capable of using modern household appliances. Consequently, they have to face a tragic condition, such as getting violence from their masters or being jailed for many accusations. In this case, their noble goal to get better life fails to be pursued. It changes into a tragedy that harms them both physically and mentally. Occasionally, it also causes death.

Another example of uglification is depicted by an incident, happened to volunteers that were joined in IHH, an Islamic Turkish NGO that achieved as a charity organization in more than 115 countries. In *BBC News* on May 31, 2010, it was explained that this NGO did a trip to Gaza to deliver many kinds of charity for people there. However, they got involve in some troubles because of their

carelessness. For instance, they decided to cross Israel territory to save time even though they did not have a legal document to cross the territory. Therefore, their ship was attacked by Israeli troops and some of the volunteers were dead. In this case, their noble goal to help people in a conflict area transformed to tragedy that effects death.

The phenomenon of the uglification of intention is not only found in reality but also appeared in literary works. It is narrated in *Babel* (2007), a movie script by Guillermo Arriaga. In this movie script, the uglification happens in a small unit of societies, that is, family. It is interesting to be analyzed since the uglification happens to the characters in this movie. The characters, a husband, a nanny, and teenagers depict the uglification of intention as the effect of carelessness, lack of communication and knowledge.

1.1.1 Uglification of Noble Intention

There are two terms that is needed to be explained in this analysis. The first term is noble intention. Davidson (1980) says that intention is used to manifest desires. Through intention, a person is inclined to take a real step to make his desire come true. Desire without intention will not cause any action. Hence, intention is regarded as a real goal that people are going to pursue. Meanwhile, Collin (2010) defines noble as a high moral principle. Thus, noble intention can be described as a valuable goal that is done by a person for another person's importance.

The second term is uglification. According to Eisenstein (2007), uglification produces ruination. When uglification occurs during pursuing a noble goal, the goal

tends to transform into ruination or disaster. Meanwhile, Nietzsche in Allyson (1991) explains that uglification happens unintentionally as the effect of errors. Heuvel (2002) depicts error as an unintentional wandering or deviation from accuracy. This can include an error in action, caused by poor reasoning, carelessness, insufficient knowledge, etc. In this analysis, the uglification of intention deals with the failure of the characters in pursuing their noble goal. It happens because of their carelessness, lack of knowledge and communication that lead them into serious troubles.

1.1.2 A Brief of Guillermo Arriaga

Guillermo Arriaga was born on March 13, 1958 in Mexico City. At the age of 13, he lost the sense of smell after a brutal street fight that would later serve as inspiration for some of his works. Before engaging in his writing career, Arriaga tried out a variety of jobs and professions, amongst which were that of boxer, basketball player and professional soccer player. He completed a B.A. in Communications and a M.A. in Psychology at the Ibero-American University. Arriaga has directed, produced and written short films, documentaries, television series, radio and television commercials.

Arriaga has been a college professor for more than 25 years. When he is teaching at the Universidad Iberoamericana, he met film director Alejandro González Iñárritu and decided to make a feature length, multiplot film set in Mexico City. Then, they produced *Amores Perros* (2000), one of the most heavily praised films in the recent history of Mexican cinema. Other movies that he produced are *Un Dulce Olor a Muerte* (1999), *The Hire: Powder Keg* (2001), *21 Grams* (2004), *The Three*

Burials of Melquiades Estrada (2005), *Babel* (2006), *El Búfalo de la Noche* (2007), *The Burning Plain* (2009). Moreover, Arriaga is also a productive author. His novels are *Escuadrón Guillotina* (1991), *Un Dulce Olor a Muerte* (1994), *El Búfalo de la Noche* (1999), *Night Buffalo* (2007), *A Sweet Scent of Death* (2007), *The Guillotine Squad* (2007).

During his career as writer, Arriaga has earned numerous literary awards for almost all of his works. They are BAFTA (2000, 2004, 2007), Cannes Film Festival (2000, 2005), Golden Globe Award (2007), ALMA Award (2007), Oscar (2007), Ariel Awards (2001), Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards (2007), Chicago Film Critics Association Awards (2006), Independents Spirit Awards (2006), Lleida Latin-American Film Festival (2001), Montreal Festival of New Cinema (2000), Online Film Critics Awards (2000), Phoenix Film Critics Society Awards (2004), Satellite Awards (2006), Toronto Film Critics Association Awards (2006), Venice Film Festival (2008), Washington DC Area Films Critics Association Awards (2003), Western Heritage Awards (2006), Writers Guild of America USA (2007).

One of Arriaga's movie scripts, *Babel* (2006) gets the most awards among other works. This movie depicts how small mistakes and lapses in judgment can have tragic consequences. Beradinelli (2006) states that:

Babel is a masterwork from a writer whose each effort re-enforces his international reputation. This movie is as mature and potent, and also cathartic, thought-provoking.

This statement shows that Arriaga succeeded to make a movie that is popular around the world. The conflict in this movie that involves some countries in different continents becomes the main attraction for the audience. Moreover, in this movie, the

problematic story is full of tricks so that it challenges the audience to get into the story. Overall, this movie depicts the problems that really happen to people and countries around the world. It makes the audience feel the conflict at all.

Arriaga is a writer that pays attention to differences of culture in different countries. He often explored about racism and different culture of countries in his movie's script *Babel* and his other works. In an interview by Charlize Theron for *IndieLondon* in 2007, he said that:

All of the films I've written are very personal and based on personal experiences. This one comes from several places. Basically, it came from my hunting background. I've been going to the border since I was a kid, and I've been very close to this territory where things get mixed. I've felt the racism at the border, I've felt the tension between both cultures, and I've also felt the love stories between these cultures and the friendship between them. So, that's where it comes from.

This statement shows that Arriaga is a person who is rich of experience. Thus, the experience becomes the main inspiration of his works. Through his works, he shares his knowledge and experience to other people. Moreover, Arriaga is a person who respects differences, such as culture and races. Thus, he tries to influence her readers to respect other through his works.

1.1.3 *Babel*

The movie's script *Babel* (2006) by Guillermo Arriaga reflects uglification of intention. Uglification is used to describe the failure in completing a noble goal because of their own errors. In this movie, the errors are carelessness, lack of

communication and lack of knowledge. In *Babel*, this situation is represented by some characters. The first character is Richard Jones, a husband who has a noble intention to release his wife from the shackle of depression. The next character is Amelia, an illegal immigrant who works as a nanny. When her master joins a vacation trip, she takes the kids to her homeland in order to keep care for them. The last character is the teenagers, Ahmad and Yussef, who want to protect their father from the police.

The first character, Richard Jones, fails to pursue his goal due to the lack of communication and the carelessness. Firstly, the lack of communication happens between him and his wife. It relates to his poor ability to communicate that leads them into misunderstanding. It is depicted through their quarrel when they are in a vacation. It is also shown by his wife's uncomfortable feeling, covered by the wife's attitude. Secondly, the case of Jones' uglification is carelessness. It is portrayed by his decision to have a trip in Morocco that has contrasts condition with his homeland. Morocco has different facilities, environment and technology with their country. This situation makes his problem worse.

The second character, Amelia, does not success to pursue her goal due to lack of knowledge and carelessness. For the lack of knowledge, it is shown by her poor understanding in law and her failure in mastering her field of work. She does not understand if she has committed in a criminal act and she unintentionally endangers the kids through her unknowledgeable action. For the carelessness, it is indicated by her choice which takes reckless actions. She does not think thoroughly in making a decision. She also has lack of attention through the surroundings.

The last characters, Ahmed and Yussef, fail to pursue their goal owing to the lack of knowledge and communication. The characters' lack of knowledge is described through their lack of understanding about law. They attack and lie to police. Another case of Ahmed and Yussef's uglification is lack of communication. It happens between them and their family. They prefer to not share their problems and their ideas to them.

1.2 Problem of Study

This analysis is focused on the uglification of intention. Therefore, the research questions are:

1. How far does *Babel* expose the uglification of intention?
2. To what extent do the fictional devices, such as characters, setting and plot (conflicts) give contribution in exposing the uglification of intention?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study is going to find out how far *Babel* exposes the uglification of intention. Besides, this study is done in order to explore to what extent characters, plot (conflicts) and setting give contribution in disclosing the uglification of intention.

1.4 Previous Study

The analysis about *Babel* that focuses on the uglification of intention has been not found yet. However, there are some studies in journals and articles that have given contribution and inspiration in analyzing this movie.

The first analysis is written by Patricia Pisters (2010), entitle *The Mosaic Film - An Affaire of Everyone: Becoming Minoritarian in Transnational Media*

Culture. In this analysis, Pisters analyzes three mosaic films, *Babel* (2006), *WWW.What a Wonderful World* (2006) and *Kicks* (, 2007) and discuss about the characters who choose to be minoritarian. In this analysis, fictional devices, such as character, conflict and setting, are used to reveals the minoritarian. This analysis deals with the concept of Nomadic Thought by Deleuze. It relates to politics of becoming-minoritarian. The result, it shows that becoming-minoritarian does not necessarily mean becoming member of a minority group. On the other hand, it is a process of de-identification and de-figuration. Transnational media and culture become the main case of this de-identification and de-figuration.

The second study that gives contribution in this study is written by Len Platt, entitle *The Hannibal Lecter Novels: Modern/Postmodern Fables* (2006). In this analysis, Platt focuses on setting and characters in some novels that are written by Thomas Harris. Platt concludes that Harris's novels exposes modern/postmodern era. This analyses deals with the concept of modernity by Nietzsche. In this analysis, Platt claims that there is uglification of modernity in Harris's novels. Platt concludes that the uglification of modernity effects a disaster for civilization. The disaster is depicted through decadence in some important elements of life. They are disintegration of moral and aesthetics, and also devaluation in culture.

Those studies above have inspired and enriched the knowledge in analyzing this study. The first study exposes a topic of being minoritarian in the movie *Babel*. The second study depicts the uglification of modernity in Lanlord's novels. Unlike those studies, this study focuses on the uglification of intention that is represented by the characters in the movie. It is emphasized on the characters, setting and conflict faced by a husband, a nanny, and teenagers.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this movie script is engaged with the concept of uglification by Frederich Nietzsche. Nietzsche in (1886) states that uglification happens for omission (error). It indicates that errors take an important role in creating uglification. When people make error, their action tends to fail their efforts in reaching a goal. Moreover, Nietzsche in Kerruish (2009) states omission (error) as a suppression of emotion and causal self. These two things becomes the root of people's error in taking action.

The first case of the error is suppression of emotion. It deals with feeling that people try to repress. The repressed feeling may be anger, fear, anxiety, etc. Nietzsche in Kerruish (2009) states that when we suppress an emotion, the energy of that emotion does not go away. This energy may come at an error. It implies that the suppressed emotion is not really covered, but it emerges in an error action. People who suppress an emotion tend to be not aware that the suppressed emotion effects their action. As a result, they may make an error when they force themselves to suppress an emotion. Besides, suppression of emotion relates to one's desire. He adds

A suppression of emotion does not point to a natural kind, but a projection of desire. It is this subject that is believed to cause an individual actions and thoughts.

The quotation above shows that a suppression of emotion appears in people who cannot express their desire freely. It can be described as a condition when someone faces an obstacle that make her has to keep her desire inside. This hidden desire has an essential role that influences one's actions.

The second case of error is causal self. The idea of the causal self relies on emotion that causes action. Nietzsche and Kerruish (2009) asserts that

Fear is the dominant emotion of the causal self, and this is not simply a fear of punishment. Punishment establishes within the subject a more general fear: the fear of the indeterminate or unknown occurrence and its possible effects, such as pain.

The quotation shows that fear becomes a major emotion that presences in a person. In this case, fear is not defined as an emotion that comes to people in certain times only. However, the fear refers to a basic emotion of people that tends to presence in themselves. It means that the fear will be a part of human in every condition. It indirectly makes them having dubiety in taking action. As a result, they may do errors.

In some cases, people do not aware that they have made errors. This fact relates to the concept of unconscious mind. As Freud in Cherry (2001) states

The unconscious mind is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. The unconscious continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences.

The quotation shows that the unconscious mind is usually suppressed from conscious mind, consisting all of suppressed desires, drives and also suppressed memories. This condition, basically, takes a part in shaping people's action. However, they do not realize this impact. In other words, they are unaware about the actions that they have taken. Thus, in some circumstances, they are not aware if they have done errors.

The combination of uglification and unconsciousness concept takes an important role in analyzing this movie script. In this movie, all of the characters (the husband, the nanny, and the teenagers) have suppressed desire so that they do errors. However, they are not aware about the error. Consequently, they fail to actualize their goal. This fact carries uglification and unconsciousness as important concepts in this analysis since it is related to the topic of the movie script.

The analysis of this movie script is supported by text-based interpretation. Guerin (2005) says this approach is focused on the analysis and the interpretation of the text itself. It signifies that the presence and the meaning of this movie script are found by interrelation among the elements of text, such as characters, plot (conflict), and setting.

Character is the essential element in revealing the meaning of this movie script. Roberts (1999) states a character may be defined as a verbal representation of a human being. In order to analyze the character, it is important to focus on the character's actions, thoughts, dialogues and how they react toward certain conflict of circumstances. In this analysis, the characters are represented by the husband, the nanny, and the brothers who fail to pursue their noble intention.

Plot that is focused on conflicts is another device that is used in analyze this movie script. Jacob (2003) states there are conflict between character versus opposite character, character versus society, character versus nature, and character versus society and character versus self or internal conflict. It indicates that conflict can take the shape of envy, hate, anger, argument, lies, quarrel, and many other actions. In this analysis, the characters' inside and outside conflict have an important role to reveal the uglificaion of intention.

Another device that is used to analyze the movie script is setting. It relates to situation, location, and atmosphere of the characters in the story. Madden (2002) says:

Setting in fiction is the location and atmosphere of the story. It has a direct and indirect impact on character and conflicts. It supports and emphasizes the story meaning.

The quotation shows that the setting is essential to influence the characters' condition. It supports and complements the conflict and the character in order to convey the meaning of the story. In this analysis, the setting relates to the condition that is faced by the characters. The husband is confronted with a condition which relates to a conflict between him and his wife. The nanny involves in a condition that forces her to bring the kids to her hometown. The brothers are faced in a condition which make them has to compete to get their father's attention.

1.6 Methodology

The analysis of movie script *Babel* is done through text-based interpretation. Furthermore, it is done by analyzing fictional devices: characters, plot (conflicts) and setting. Characters and conflicts are used to evoke the uglification of intention by analyzing characters' action. Then, setting deals with the atmosphere and temporal environment, gives contribution in the process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. Meanwhile, plot (conflicts) plays important role in conveying the meaning of this movie script. Moreover, these elements are analyzed based on the concept of uglification by Nietzsche.



CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The movie script *Babel* (2006) by Guillermo Arriaga reflects uglification of intention. It is exposed through text based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, setting and conflicts. The characters in this movie have position as a husband, a nanny, and teenagers who have to face uglification because of their own errors. The first character, the husband, confronts with uglification as the effect of his lack of communication and carelessness. The second character, the nanny, faces uglification because of her lack of knowledge and carelessness. The last character, the teenagers, involve in uglification due to their lack of communication and knowledge.

In the husband's case, the errors make him fail to pursue his noble goal. The setting refers to Morocco's condition and his distasteful relationship with his wife. This point extends his problem with his wife. The husband is not able to express his idea in a useful way. Meanwhile, in the nanny's case, the errors trap her into a serious criminal act. The setting is emphasized to the condition of panic and worry. This makes her endanger other people's life and argue with police. For the last characters, the teenagers, the condition of panic, nervous and fear make them act in a rush. Their poor understanding in law also ruins their action. As a result, they involve in a conflict with their family and the police.

In short, it can be affirmed that position, profession and education cannot make people apart from the uglification. They will face uglification if they do errors, no matter how great their position or education is. It is because the errors lead them into unpredictable troubles. As a result, they fail to pursue their noble goal.

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