

JOHN BRISTOW'S PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN ROBERT GALBRAITH'S *THE CUCKOO'S CALLING*

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Abstract: *John Bristow is the minor character in the novel The Cuckoo's Calling who has a problem with his decision in satisfying his id and superego. He is an ordinary man who has a job, family and girlfriend. However, his jealousy to his brother and sister forces him to kill them. This study focuses on analyzing the characterization of John Bristow, how his ego manages his id and superego and how anxieties appear as the effects of the problem. The aim of this paper is to examine the motif that leads John kills his step brother and sister. Psychology theory by Sigmund Freud is applied to analyze the character's psychological problem. Perspective from Al-Qur'an is used to examine the reflection of Qabil's character in the story of Habil and Qabil to John Bristow's.*

Keywords: *psychology; psychological problem; Robert Galbraith; anxieties; reflection.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Robert Galbraith, pen name of J.K. Rowling, wrote a novel entitled *The Cuckoo's Calling*. She is known as a fantasy novelist. Her most famous novel is Harry Potter series. *The Cuckoo's Calling* is Robert's first crime novel that has an interesting plot. This novel reflects the story of *Habil and Qabil* in the Al-Qur'an. The minor character, John Bristow is depicted as an ordinary lawyer. He struggles doing good to his parents, so that he can be accepted by them. At this point, he grows in fear and jealousy. He feels that his parents love his brother and sister more than him.

This study has an aim to discuss about John Bristow's psychological problem through analyzing his characterization. By describing his characterization, the motif of John Bristow kills his brother and sister can be found out. The minor character, John Bristow is feeling unfair just like Qabil in the story of *Habil and Qabil*. Therefore the second goal of this study is to find out the reflection of Qabil in John Bristow's character.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study uses some theories. First, new criticism theory to describe the character and characterization of John Bristow by applying close reading. Second, psychological theory by Sigmund Freud to explain the psychological problem of the character. Last, the result of discussion is compared to the prespective from Al-Qur'an to reflect the story of Bristow in *The Cuckoo's Calling* with the story of Habil and Qabil.

2.1 New Criticism

New Criticism emphasizes explication, or “close reading” of “the work itself.” In close reading, one examines a piece of literature closely, seeking to understand its structure, looking for patterns that shape the work and connect its parts to the whole, and searching for uses of language that contribute to the effect (Gillespie, 2010:172). Therefore, to begin the analysis is to go directly toward the work by applying new criticism theory which is focused on finding the character’s characterization.

According to Edgar V. Robert (1969:65), character in literature is an extended verbal representation of a human being, the inner self that determines thought, speech, and behavior. Thus, dialogue, action, commentary, suggests and the details of character’s traits will help in the process of analyzing and making conclusion about a character’s strength and qualities.

In the book of *Mastering English Literature*, Richard Gill (1995:127) explains further about the difference between character and characterization. “A character refers to a person in literary work; while characterization refers to the way in which a character is created”. It means that the reader can see the personality of a person in the novel through his actions and sayings or through other people’s saying about him.

2.2 Theory on Personality Dynamic and Anxiety

According to Hall (1954:65), reality anxiety happens when somebody considers that there is a danger around him. The source of the danger of anxiety is in the external world of that person instead of internal world. Meanwhile, neurotic anxiety occurs when the feeling of fear comes from somebody’s intuition toward certain object. The neurotic anxiety is aroused by a perception of danger from the instincts. This can be displayed in three different forms, they are free floating type, phobia, and panic or near-panic reaction. Furthermore, moral anxiety is the guilt feeling or shame which is aroused by a perception of danger from the conscience (Hall, 1954:68). This study uses the first and the second types of anxiety which are reality and neurotic anxiety since the character, John Bristow, experiences them in *The Cuckoo’s Calling*.

2.3 Perspective from Al-Qur’an

The Al-Qur’an view point will be useful to connect the theory of Freud and the concept of *akal, qalbu and nafsu* or idea, heart and lust that means hold, understand and distinguish. *Akal* is very important for all people. This is the third source of Islamic law after the Qur'an and Hadith, which is termed the *Ijtihad*. Rasulullah said:..... *no religion for people who have no idea/ sense* (HR. Bukari). *Qalbu* is derived from the word *qaraba* means, change, move or turn around, and this means heart. *Qalbu* will remain clean and be maintained by following

Allah guidance. *Qalbu* also becomes black and reversed if indulged. *Nafsu* is a willing that encourages people to achieve his wish. These impulses are often called primitive impulse, because it is free without knowing good and bad. Therefore, *nafsu* is often referred to as the encouragement of freewill

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The concept of *akal*, *qalbu* and *nafsu* are similar to id, ego and superego, and it will be used to find the similarity between the main character and the character of Qobil and Habil.

3. DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEMES

3.1 John Bristow's Characterization

John Bristow is one of adopted children of Sir Alec and Lady Yvette Bristow. He has a job as a lawyer. Furthermore, he has an adopted sister and a girlfriend. Those details are concluded from Robin's statements, the secretary of Cormoran Strike, a detective:

Lula Landry was adopted by Sir Alec and Lady Yvette Bristow when she was four. She grew up as Lula Bristow but took her mother's maiden name when she started modeling. She has an older brother called John, who is a lawyer. The girl waiting outside is Mr. Bristow's girlfriend and a secretary at his firm. They work for Landry, May, Patterson, the firm started by Lula and John's maternal grandfather (Galbraith, 2013:29).

This means that John Bristow is an ordinary man. Just like the other man who has a family, job and also a girlfriend. He is pretty rich because he wears nice suit, tie, watch and shoes which all looks expensive. "The prospective client followed Robin into the room. The immediate impression was favorable.....his dark gray suit was beautifully tailored, and the shining ice-blue tie, the watch and the shoes all looked expensive" (Galbraith, 2013:25).

Another fact of John is that he is the second adopted child. These following sentences state that John has one brother and sister.

"You wouldn't remember me, it was years and years ago...but I think you were friends with my brother Charlie. Charlie Bristow? He died—in an accident—when he was nine."

"I—this isn't easy. Firstly, you should know that my sister is—was—Lula Landry." (Galbraith, 2013:26).

Those sentences indicate that John has one brother named Charlie who died when he was nine and one sister named Lula Landry who also died. John feels sad and depresses when he lost all the member of his family. His dad also already died, and he lives only with his mother who has cancer and dying.

“It’s just been a dreadful time,” he whispered, taking deep breaths. “Lula...and my mother’s dying...”

“She’s given up completely since Lula died. It’s broken her. Her cancer was supposed to be in remission, but it’s come back, and they say there’s nothing more they can do. I mean, this is the second time. She had a sort of breakdown after Charlie (Galbraith, 2013:27).

In the case of Lula’s death, John does not believe that his adopted sister really committed suicide, and he hired Cormoran Strike to investigate. He hired Mr. Strike because he was a schoolmate of John’s late brother Charlie, who died when he fell into a quarry while bicycling.

“They say my sister killed herself. I don’t believe it.”

“Yeah,” said Bristow, dabbing the end of his nose with the wet handkerchief. “Well, I’m not denying that Lula had problems. She put Mum through hell, as a matter of fact. It started around the same time our father died—you probably know all this, God knows there was enough about it in the press...but she was expelled from school for dabbling in drugs; she ran off to London, Mum found her living rough with addicts; the drugs exacerbated the mental problems; she absconded from a treatment center—there were endless scenes and dramas. In the end, though, they realized she had bipolar disorder and put her on the right medication, and ever since then, as long as she was taking her tablets, she was fine; you’d never have known there was anything wrong with her. Even the coroner accepted that she had been taking her medication, the autopsy proved it.

“But the police and the coroner couldn’t see past the girl who had a history of poor mental health. They insisted that she was depressed, but I can tell you myself that Lula wasn’t depressed at all. I saw her on the morning before she died, and she was absolutely fine. Things were going very well for her, particularly career-wise. She’d just signed a contract that would have brought in five million over two years; she asked me to look over it for her, and it was a bloody good deal. The designer was a great friend of hers, Somé, I expect you’ve heard of him? And she was booked solid for months; there was a shoot in Morocco coming up, and she loved the traveling. So you see, there was no reason whatsoever for her to take her own life.” (Galbraith, 2013:28).

Those sentences convince everyone that John really loves Lula. John tells about Lula’s personality and her daily activities. He also says that Lula does not show that she would take her own life. That is why he cannot accept the reality that he lost his sister.

3.2 The Motif that Leads John Bristow Killing His Brother and Sister

The motif of John in killing his siblings is revealed by these quotations below.

“You—you can’t be serious?” said Bristow.

“I’m very serious.”

“But...does...Cormoran, are you saying you know who killed Lula?”

“Yeah, I think I do—but I still need to speak to your mother before we wrap this up.”

Bristow looked as though he wished he could drink the contents of Strike's mind. His myopic eyes scanned every inch of Strike's face, his expression half afraid, half imploring.

"I must be there," he said. "She's very weak." (Galbraith, 2013:403).

Those sentences tell that Cormoran wants to investigate John's mother. John lets him investigate his mother and makes sure that he is also there when Cormoran does it. These scenes give evidence that John Bristow helps Cormoran to gain information from his mother, and he helps his mother to make sure that she is strong enough to answer all the questions from Cormoran later. In these situations, Mr. Bristow tries to satisfy his superego through becoming a good man.

John intends to accompany his mother when she is interviewed by Cormoran. It looks like that he is a good man who really care of his parent, but there is a reason behind that. John Bristow does not want Cormoran asks his mother about questions that bring him into a danger, and he does not want the detective to check around his house because there is something hidden.

"I told you quite clearly that I didn't want you to see my mother without me present!"

"Don't you even want to know what I found today in your mother's wardrobe?"

"You went—you went inside my mother's wardrobe?"

"Yeah. I wanted to have a look inside those brand-new handbags Lula got, the day she died."

Bristow began to stutter:

"You—you..."

"The bags have got detachable linings. Bizarre idea, isn't it? Hidden under the lining of the white bag was a will, handwritten by Lula on your mother's blue notepaper, and witnessed by Rochelle Onifade. I've given it to the police."

Bristow's mouth fell open. For several seconds he seemed unable to speak. Finally he whispered:

"But... what did it say?"

"That she was leaving everything, her entire estate, to her brother, Lieutenant Jonah Agyeman of the Royal Engineers."

"Jonah... who?"

"Go and look on the computer monitor outside. You'll find a picture there."

Bristow got up and moved like a sleepwalker towards the computer in the next room. Strike watched the screen illuminate as Bristow shifted the mouse. Agyeman's handsome face shone out of the monitor, with his sardonic smile, pristine in his dress uniform.

"Oh my God," said Bristow (Galbraith, 2013:425).

In those sentences Comoran finds the important thing, that is, a note written by Lula. Lula leaves all her wealth to her biological brother, Jonah Agyeman. John looks shock. He shows his id which looks like he is on shock after hearing what Cormoran said. This scene has been explained in Sigmund Freud's id theory that an id pushes the person to obtain pleasure

without concern for the other's need. However, John looks shock when Cormoran says about Jonah. Jonah is Lula's biological brother. He is a soldier. John knows about Jonah and he does not want Jonah to gain all Lula's wealth.

"No, John, you weren't deluded," said Strike. "Not deluded. More like bat-shit insane."

"I said you're bat-shit insane. You killed your sister, got away with it, and then asked me to reinvestigate her death."

"You—you cannot be serious."

"Oh yeah, I can. It's been obvious to me from the start that the person who benefits most from Lula's death is you, John. Ten million quid, once your mother gives up the ghost (Galbraith, 2013:426).

Cormoran states that John is insane because he kills Lula but he asks Cormoran to reinvestigate the case. At those sentences, it looks that John kills Lula because of money. Hall (1954:84) states that id is without logic, values, moral or ethic. In this scene, John serves the need of his id by killing his sister, Lula. He is selfish and becomes irrational because of money.

In addition, John also serves his id by killing Lula's friend, Rochelle. The proof is in following sentence: "And you killed her, just the same way you killed Charlie, just the same way you later killed Rochelle: you pushed her, hard and fast—maybe you lifted her— but she was caught by surprise, wasn't she, just like the others? (Galbraith, 2013:437).

In those sentences, John is very successful in fulfilling his desire. He kills his siblings, Charlie and Lula, and also kills Rochelle to serve his id. Mr. Bristow cannot control his ego, and this explanation matches with Freud's theory when the theory states that ego sometimes is called the executive agency of the personality because it controls action, selects the features of the environment to which a person will respond, and decide how a person's needs can safely be satisfied. It serves as the mediator between the demands of the id and the demands of the environment (Hall, 1954:408). This means John's id wins over his ego, because he cannot control his ego and serve his id by killing Rochelle.

There is another example in which John's ego serves both his superego and id, that is his act of asking Cormoran to investigate his sister' suicide case. "What exactly is it that you would like me to do for you?" Strike asked. Bristow replaced the cup shakily on the desk, then gripped his hands together tightly. "They say my sister killed herself. I don't believe it." (Galbraith, 2013:24).

Even though the police already says that Lula is dead because of committing suicide, John insists that Lula is killed by someone. At first, it seems that John really loves Lula. John superego cannot be stopped easily when he faces obstacle. His ego strategizes to continue the

actualization of the strong superego's push. Then acting as a good man is the option which his ego chooses. John Bristow wants to show to the people around him that he is a nice man. He would like others think that he is sad of his sister's death. But the fact is, John knows Lula has a biological brother, Jonah, and also she is leaving everything to him. That is why John wants to trap Jonah to be the suspected person. He asks Cormoran, because he thinks that Cormoran is just a clumsy detective.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that John Bristow's ego struggle hard in order to satisfy his id and superego. Thus he is not in healthy personality condition as the result of his psychological problem.

3.3 John Bristow's Psychological Problem

John Bristow experiences reality anxiety because of bad traumatic experiences in his childhood. He starts to have his fear since he lives with his family. First, knowing that he was unloved by his mother caused him experiences trauma.

"No matter how much you've fawned over your mother, and played the devoted son, you've never come first with her, have you? She always loved Charlie most, didn't she? Everyone did, even Uncle Tony. And the moment Charlie had gone, when you might have expected to be the centre of attention at last, what happens? Lula arrives, and everyone starts worrying about Lula, looking after Lula, adoring Lula. Your mother hasn't even got a picture of you by her deathbed. Just Charlie and Lula. Just the two she loved." (Galbraith, 2013: 433).

According to the quotation, one of the causes of John Bristow's reality anxiety is the rejection of his mother. It is resulting to his lack of being loved just like what the children should have. Being under a condition of an adopted child, John Bristow feels anxious. Thus, it ends up with his action of killing his brother and sister. John's anxiety feeling is derived from his outer world, e.g his family and the unhappy condition of being rejected.

In addition, John Bristow's reality anxiety is also triggered by his hatred to his uncle, Tony. Tony who has an important role of raising him wants John out of his family's life.

"Tony knows you did it, doesn't he? All that bullshit about the hard, cruel things he said after Charlie died. Tony was there; he saw you cycling away from the place where you'd pushed Charlie over. Tony saw Charlie dead at the bottom of that quarry, and he told your parents that he thought you'd done it, didn't he? He was right to be worried, wasn't he? I think you've always been a bit scared of Tony." (Galbraith, 2013:435).

According to the quotation above, Tony hates John because of his action of killing Charlie. Tony knows there is something wrong about John. This also shows how he worries about Lula.

Overall, it is clear from the discussions above that John Bristow has experienced reality anxiety. He undergoes some traumatic incidents throughout his childhood. He starts to gain his fear since he was a child resulting from being unloved by his mother and going through unsatisfying life in his family. Furthermore, this unhappy childhood continues in his life until he commits some crimes.

Besides reality anxiety, John Bristow apparently experiences neurotic anxiety as well. The main reason is his fear which comes up from his own intuition. This instinct-based fear can be seen in his bad thought, intense irrational fear and panic reaction. His fear passes his consciousness and makes him become helpless. For instance, as Cormoran Strike says about John, he always loses by his better-looking sibling which is stated in the quotation below.

“And that in itself must have felt great, John, didn’t it? The idea of being the only child, at long last? And never losing out again to a better-looking, more lovable sibling?”

“Fuck you,” snarled Bristow. “Fuck you, Strike. What do you know about anything, with your whore of a mother? What was it she died of, the clap?” (Galbraith, 2013:434).

It shows that from the beginning Cormoran knows that John is only pretending to be sad loosing his siblings. In short, it is clear that although people around him do not actually become a threat to him, he fears that they will do something bad to him.

Beside his intense irrational fear, the second indicator of John Bristow’s neurotic anxiety is also observable from his panic reaction. This reaction, which appears suddenly, happens when he fears of Cormoran Strike who found out John’s true color. Cormoran Strike finally finds out that John kills his own sister, Lula. He also knows that John kills Lula’s friend, Rochelle. As Cormoran says in this sentence:

“You put every obstacle you could in the way of me finding Rochelle,” Strike went on, as though he had not heard Bristow. “You pretended you didn’t know her name, or where she lived; you acted incredulous that I thought she might be useful to the inquiry and you took photos off Lula’s laptop so that I couldn’t see what she looked like. True, she could have pointed me directly to the man you were trying to frame for murder, but on the other hand, she knew that there was a will that would deprive you of your inheritance, and your number one objective was to keep that will quiet while you tried to find and destroy it. Bit of a joke, really, it being in your mother’s wardrobe all along.

Strike saw Bristow’s tongue flick around his mouth, moistening his lips. He could feel the lawyer’s fear. (Galbraith, 2013:427).

It is clear from the quotation above that John really gets panic for two things. The first, he gets panic when Cormoran looks for Rochelle and investigates her about Lula. Mr.Bristow is afraid that Rochelle will say the truth that John is not the heir of Lula. That is why John kills

Rochelle. Even though Rochelle does not realize that John is the killer. She just wants money from John, and John thinks that Rochelle will bring him into a danger. The second, John gets panic when Cormoran knows that he is the killer. As a result of this panic reaction, John moistens his lips and Cormoran feels his fear.

3.4 The Reflection of Habil and Qabil Story in *The Cuckoo's Calling*

In the Al-Qur'an, there are perspectives about *akal*, *qalbu* and *nafsu* or idea, heart and lust. In *The Cuckoo's Calling* the character of John Bristow reflects the character of Qabil. John and Qabil kill their brothers; John kills Charlie and Lula meanwhile Qabil kills Habil. Qabil achieves his wish by serving his *nafsu*. He kills Habil like John Bristow who serves his id. This proves that the theory of Sigmund Freud, id, ego and superego, has already existed in the Al-Qur'an. Robert Galbraith or J.K. Rowling wrote *The Cuckoo's Calling* in the 2013, even though she is non-Muslim, but her novel reflects to the story of *Habil and Qabil*.

The readers can take some lessons from *The Cuckoo's Calling* and also from the story of Habil and Qabil. Murder will always occur if people serve their id or *nafsu*. *Qalbu* is the moderator between *akal* and *nafsu*. Qabil is controlled by *nafsu* and kills Habil. He cannot use his logic because his *akal* lost to his *nafsu*.

It can be learned from the story of *Habil and Qabil*, the first murder in the world, that man should keep his heart from being spiteful. If envy controls human emotion and feeling, he/she will be able to do bad things to others and even to his/her own family.

4. CONCLUSION

There are two main topics of this study, that are John Bristow's psychological problem and the reflection the story of Habil and Qabil in *The Cuckoo's Calling*.

John is the second adopted child of Yvette and Alec Bristow. He has two other adopted siblings named Charlie and Lula. John is a lawyer. John is an ordinary man who is obedient to his parents. He cares and loves his mom. But he feels that his parents, especially his mother loved Charlie and Lula more. Being aware of this situation, John wants to be the only one. He decides to kill his brother and sister without his parent knowing it.

John has problems in satisfying the pretension from his egoistic desire (id) and noble moral standard (superego). Thus it creates a psychological problem in his life. Moreover, from the analysis, it could be revealed that Bristow's inequity towards the fulfillment demands of his id and superego provokes his psychological problem.

The analysis proves that John Bristow experiences the authority war between his drives and superego. As an ordinary man who has flesh and blood (id), he is the individual character

who only makes efforts to cast about his own contentment. However, he has a moral standard and social values which come from his environment. Thus, his ego urgently needs to accommodate both of them fairly through *modus operandi*. In other words, the ego needs to create or have a strategy in order to be good moderator. In addition, his ego actualizes his id and superego through acting as a lawyer or ordinary man and a killer.

John Bristow also experiences some anxieties for the reason of his unbalanced treatment to his desire and moral standard. First, he experiences being unloved by his mother followed by an unhappy and unsatisfying life in his family. Then, other experience when he is being hated by his uncle too. These experiences happened in Bristow's youth and adulthood has a role to shape his neurotic anxiety. His anxiety comes as his fear to repeat his bad time, such as fear of losing the love from his mom when his parents adopted Lula.

The last discussion is the reflection of *The Cuckoo's Calling to Habil and Qabil*. It is proved that *The Cuckoo's Calling* reflects *Habil and Qabil*. John kills his own sibling just like Qabil kills Habil. Theory of personality dynamic which is about id, ego and superego is already stated in Islam that are *akal, qalbu and nafsu* or idea, heart and lust. *Qalbu* is the moderator between *akal* and *nafsu*. Qabil is controlled by *nafsu* and kills Habil. He cannot use his logic because his *akal* lost to his *nafsu*.

Through the analysis, it can be concluded that it is important to protect children from traumatic condition even though they are lack of certain things that people are said to require. It is observable in the novel that trauma possibly brings great influences toward the development of a child. In addition, the unsupportive society and surroundings where the child lives can also bring significant effects to child personality. A person may get so afraid and tensed with the society due to the bad treatment from the society.

Furthermore, it can be learned that crime does not always come from biological and environmental factors, yet it also comes from the person himself as he or she struggles for something, either to be free, to fulfill his or her desires and needs, as well as to be what he or she wants to be.

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