

GUILLERMO ARRIAGA'S *BABEL*: UGLIFICATION OF NOBLE INTENTION

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Abstrak

Tujuan pembahasan ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana film ini memperlihatkan kegagalan dalam mewujudkan sebuah tujuan mulia. Teks skrip film ini dianalisa dengan menggunakan *text-based approach* yang difokuskan pada unsur sastra, seperti karakter, seting, dan plot (konflik). Penganalisaan unsur-unsur sastra ini dikaitkan dengan teori *uglification* oleh Nietzsche dan *uncouncious mind* oleh Freud. Hasil penganalisaan menunjukkan kesalahan diri sendiri menjadi penyebab utama kegagalan dalam mewujudkan sebuah tujuan mulia. Kesalahan-kesalahan itu berupa ketidaktepatan dalam berkomunikasi, kurangnya ilmu pengetahuan dan kecerobohan.

Kata Kunci: *uglification, intention, Nietzsche, Babel*

A. Introduction

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

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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 uglification of noble 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 noble intention as the effect of disability to communicate, lack of knowledge and carelessness.

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 affects 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 uglification 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.

B. Research Method

The analysis of movie script *Babel* is done through text-based approach. 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 related to the concept of uglification by Nietzsche.

C. Discussion

The movie's script *Babel* (2006) by Guillermo Arriaga reflects uglification of noble intention. Uglification is used to describe the failure in completing a noble goal because of errors (disability to communicate, lack of knowledge and carelessness). In *Babel*, this situation is represented by three characters: the husband, Richard Jones, the nanny, Amelia, and the teenagers, Yuseef and Ahmed.

1. Richard Jones

This character is a representative of a husband who has a noble intention to release his wife from the shackle of depression. Unfortunately, he fails to pursue it because of his own errors. His lack of communication and carelessness transform his noble intention into interminable quarrel. The lack of communication relates to his poor ability to communicate. It is reflected by conflicts arising between him and his wife as a result of misunderstanding. Meanwhile, the carelessness relates to his decision in choosing Morocco as a place for a vacation. He faces difficulties because of different facilities, environment, and technology. These reflect his lack of consideration and attention.

For the character's lack of communication, it happens between him and his wife. He fails to build a worthy communication even though it is a fundamental element in a relationship. He acts by his own self, without asking his wife's idea. It can be seen from the quotation below:

EXT. CASBAH TAMNOUGALT, MOROCCO-DAY

SUSAN

Richard, why did we come here?

RICHARD

What d'you mean why? I thought you would like it.

SUSAN

Really, why are we here?

RICHARD

To forget everything, to be alone.

SUSAN

Alone? (page 16)

The dialogue above shows that the character makes a decision by himself. He places his wife as the one who has to receive his decision. He does not let her to take a part in making a decision. These can be seen from the way the husband uses the words. His words *I thought* implies that he acts based on his own mind. Meanwhile, the repetition question from the wife portrays that she has no idea about her husband's thought. She knows nothing about her husband's plans, including his aims and reasons. She cannot predict what the husband is going to do. This fact plays a role in emerging a conflict between them. Both of them are not able to deliver their idea well. This leads them into misunderstanding. As a result, they cannot maintain their relationship. It also makes them come into uncomfortable condition. This condition guides them to have an incoherent communication.

Another error that ruins his noble intention is his carelessness. The character does not have a thoughtful consideration in choosing a country for a vacation. The country' has poor facilities, as described in the quotation below:

EXT. DESERT ROAD, MOROCCO – DAY

RICHARD

Where's the nearest hospital?

ANWAR

It's far away, about four hours (a beat). There's a clinic that's a little closer, about an hour and a half to the south. By bus it'll take us about two hours and a half though. It's the closest thing we've got. (page 33)

...

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – DAY

No cars drive by. The road is almost deserted.

The dialogue shows that the character has lack of consideration. He chooses a country in which its facility is not as good as his country. It implies that he picks the country for an unqualified reason. The lack of facility, including health center and transportation, portrays that he does not identify the place that he chooses. He does not predict the difficulties that he is going to face there. The setting in the text refers to Morocco's accommodation that complicates the character's movement. This condition leads him into a trouble. It strengthens his position as the one who is careless since he visits a place that causes trouble for him.

2. Amelia

This character is a nanny who fails to actualize her noble goal toward her employers. Her noble intention to protect the kids that she is taking care for fails to complete due to her lack of knowledge and carelessness. The lack of knowledge is shown by her poor ability in understanding regulation and her failure in

mastering her field of work. Meanwhile, the carelessness is reflected through her choice which takes reckless actions.

The character's error that relates to the lack of knowledge is shown through her poor comprehension of the law. Since the character is just an illegal immigrant who works as a nanny, she has poor quality in understanding law as seen in the following quotation:

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM, POLICE
HEADQUARTERS – EVENING**

Amelia sits in a room painted white. An American, his hair slicked back, dressed in a shirt and tie, sits before her.

POLICE OFFICER

You've committed serious crimes.

AMELIA

I just took the kids to my son's wedding.

POLICE OFFICER

You took them to another country without their parents' permission and you put them in danger.

AMELIA

Sir, I raised these kids since they were born. I take care of them day and night. I feed them breakfast, lunch and dinner. I play with them. Mike and Debbie are like my own children.

POLICE OFFICER

(sternly) But they are not your kids, ma'am.

The quotation above shows that the character tends to think and act in a naive way, without realizing the realities. She is not able to differentiate which one a legal and an illegal action is. She acts without realizing the applicable rules. She makes an important decision without recognizing the facts. This can be seen from her persistent argument that indicates she does not understand law. Meanwhile, the police' words *you took them to another country without their parents' permission* implies that she seems not understand that she needs legal document to take the kids out of a country. This condition leads them to have a conflict with police. Through her incomprehension in law, she assumes that she has not committed in a criminal act.

Besides, the character's lack of knowledge is shown in her field of work. She fails in preparing the kids to travel to a country that has some differences from theirs. It gives an impression that she is not qualified for her job. It supported in the quotation below:

EXT. BORDER CROSSING – DAY

Debbie and Mike stare through the windows, shocked at the new world they are entering: other people, other architecture, other colors, other noises.

MIKE

My mom told us Mexico is really dangerous.

Amelia and Santiago look at each other and smile.

EXT. CHICKEN COOP – DAY

Santiago shows Mike how to hold the chicken. Mike grabs it and holds it between his arms, smiling, oblivious to what will happen. Santiago grabs the chicken by the head and pulls it off. The chicken starts to shake, spurting blood everywhere. Mike, stunned, lets the animal fall to the ground and the chicken starts its mad race.

The Mexican kids start screaming excitedly, chasing the headless chicken. Nobody notices that Debbie and Mike, completely shocked, are about to cry. (page 123)

The quotation shows that the character unintentionally traumatizes the kids through her unknowledgeable action. She does not know how to understand the kids' feeling. She is not able to place them in their comfort zone. It can be seen through the expression of fear and anxiety from the kids *completely shocked, are about to cry*. Besides, she tends to act with her own perspective, without paying attention to the kids' needs. She does not give the kids' any information in facing another culture. It makes the kids come into shock and distress condition. This condition happens for the nanny's poor ability in recognizing them. As a result, she cannot protect the kids.

3. Ahmed and Yussef

These characters are a representative of teenagers who have a noble goal to protect his father but they fail to pursue it because of their own errors. They fail to protect his father due to their lack of knowledge and communication. The lack of knowledge relates to their poor ability in understanding law. It is shown from their action that is attacking and telling a lie to police. Meanwhile, the lack of communication happens between them and their family. They ignore to share ideas with them.

The first error is the lack of knowledge about weapon according to the law. The character seems not understand about how to use a weapon in a permitted way. It is stated in the following quotation:

DESERT HILLS – DAY

Abdullah and his sons run full speed. Yussef sees the trucks in the distance.

YUSSEF

The police, the police...

They run up a hill to try to lose them, but shots start to ring out.

YUSSEF

They're shooting at us.

Yussef dives on his belly and snakes his way through the rocks. He gets the rifle, loads it and aims at the police. He shoots without hitting anything. Abdullah turns to him.

ABDULLAH

Don't shoot, don't shoot!

Yussef doesn't pay attention. He loads again and aims. Yussef aims carefully. He picks out one of the cops who has been shooting barely protected by one of the trucks' fenders. Yussef shoots and the policeman collapses.

ABDULLAH

Give me that rifle...

Yussef turns to his father.

YUSSEF

They're going to kill us. (page 77)

The dialogue shows that the character does not know any rules in using and owning the weapon. He uses the weapon based on his wants. It is portrayed through his ignorance toward his father's warning. In addition, his action that uses the weapon many times indicates that he does not recognize the weapon as a forbidden item. Meanwhile, he seems not to understand that he owns the weapon illegally. It is reflected by his action that attacks the police. The setting of the text refers to his condition which is panic. The words *shoots start to ring out* support him to defend himself without thinking about a rightful action. This condition

leads him to have a conflict with the police. Due to the lack of understanding, he does a criminal action unintentionally.

Another point is the lack of knowledge about police as a considerable state agency. The characters seem not to understand what kind of agency the police is. It is shown through their action that being dishonest to them, as reflected in the quotation below:

DESERT -- DAY

When they climb a hill, they encounter a convoy of Moroccan police trucks. They are terrified. The vehicles screech to a dramatic halt before them, lifting up much dust. Alarid opens the passenger window.

ALARID

Hey, do you know where Abdullah Adboum lives?

Ahmed and Yussef exchange a glance. Yussef nods.

YUSSEF

Yes.

Ahmed gets very nervous. Yussef points the wrong way with an air of certainty.

YUSSEF

Over there, you have to cross those mountains.
(page 55)

The text shows that characters have no knowledge in differentiating a lawful and a lawless action. They seem not to know that their action can be classified as a criminal act. The setting of the text refers to a nervous and frightened atmosphere which influences them to take an improper action. The words *exchange a glance* expose their uneasy condition. It supports them to have a misconception in taking action. This condition also provokes them to have an internal conflict. They are aware that they have done something wrong but they do not want anyone to know. This condition supports them to take an unknowledgeable action.

Another kind of error is the lack of communication that happens between them and their family. They ignore to share their problem with their own family. It is stated in the quotation below:

ABDULLAH

A terrorist attacked a tour bus on the road.

YASIRA

But there aren't any terrorists here.

ABDULLAH

You never know. The police are looking for the culprits now.

Yussef, nervous, looks up. Ahmed doesn't even dare raise his eyes. Yussef and Ahmed again exchange a furtive glance.

YUSSEF AND AHMED'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Night. An oil lamp in a Nescafe jar lights the house. The family sleeps in the only two rooms in the house. One of them is the parents room, the other the children's. We hear a goat bleating in the darkness. Abdullah's snoring. Yasira's breathing. The crunching of wood in the night cold. Neither Yussef, nor Ahmed can sleep. They both look at each other, anxious. (page 25)

The dialogue shows that the characters do not trust their own parents. They keep their problem from them. They intentionally do not let them to interfere in their problem. It can be seen from their attitude and body language. In addition, they assume their parents as a person who cannot relieve their problem. Thus, they avoid to discuss with them. Unfortunately, it makes them suffer since they do not have a right person to share. The setting of the dialogue refers to their condition which is worried. This atmosphere leads them to act passively. This condition also makes them face an internal conflict. They are really scared but they cannot tell about it to other. Consequently, they avoid to have a rich communication with others.

D. Conclusions

The movie script *Babel* (2006) by Guillermo Arriaga reflects uglification of noble intention. It is exposed through text based approach 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.

Notes: This article is written based on the Sari Fitria's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A., 1st advisor, and Delvi Wahyuni, S.S, M.A., 2nd advisor.

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