

## **Traumatic Mother in *Remember Me* by Mary Higgins Clark (Psychological Approach)**

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**Abstract.** This research entitled is Traumatic mother on *Remember Me* by Mary Higgins Clark; Psychological approach. It talked about Menley Nicholas as a wife of a criminal attorney that never stopped blamed herself for her son died because of a car accident. Her relationship with her husband became not harmony anymore until they had a new baby and they spent their holiday in a rent house called Remember house. Traumatic is a severe emotional or mental distress caused by an experience. This study used Psychological approach to analyze *Remember Me* especially about traumatic that the author used. The result shows that as a mother; Menley Nicholas blamed herself for her two years old son died. It made the story developed because when she tried to fix her relationship with her husband because she had a new baby she still couldn't forget her died son and it was used by others to replace her position as Adam'. It influenced the whole story of *Remember Me*.

**Keywords:** traumatic mother, *Remember Me*

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini berjudul *Traumatic Mother on Remember Me* karya Mary Clark Clark: *Psychological Approach*. Novel ini mengisahkan seorang wanita yang bernama Menley Nicholas sebagai isteri pengacara kriminal yang tidak pernah berhenti menyalahkan dirinya sendiri akan kematian anaknya karena kecelakaan mobil. Hubungannya dengan suaminya menjadi tidak harmonis sampai mereka mendapatkan bayi keduanya dan menghabiskan liburan mereka di sebuah rumah persewaan yang bernama *Remember House*. Trauma merupakan gangguan emosional atau gangguan mental yang disebabkan oleh pengalaman yang tidak baik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan psikologi untuk menganalisa novel *Remember Me* terutama tentang trauma yang digunakan oleh penulis novel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagai seorang ibu-Menley Nicholas- menyalahkan dirinya sendiri akan kematian anaknya yang berumur dua tahun. Hal ini membuat cerita berkembang karena ketika ia berusaha untuk memperbaiki hubungan dengan suaminya saat mempunyai anak keduanya ia masih belum bisa melupakan kematian anaknya dan ini dimanfaatkan oleh orang lain. Dan hal ini mempengaruhi seluruh cerita dalam *Remember Me*.

**Kata kunci:** ibu dengan trauma, *Remember Me*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Everything that is revealed by an author in a literary work is inseparable from real life. Likewise in literature, an author describes the psychology of imaginary figures through language that shows the character and behavior of the character.

Literary work is a psychological reflection of the author and at the same time has a psychological power towards the reader. So literature is an expression of the author who describes his emotions and thoughts. In addition, literary works have the psychic

expressive "object" of the author to explore his heart, soul movements are the driving force for a literary work production. (Endaswara, 2008: 102).

Wallekand Warren (1973: 94) said that literature is a description of life and life is social reality. Glorier (1977: 291) suggested that the statement is a unique part of a work of fiction as in the novel. Thus, each character can determine the outcome of the story as a whole.

Marry Higgins Clark is an American novelist. She was the winner of the 55th Edgar Allan Poe Award. Her novels are mystery novels and some are best sellers, one of which is *Remember Me*, which she wrote in 1994. This novel tells about Menley Nicholas, a book writer who married to a lawyer. Menley was traumatized by the loss of her 9-month-old son, Bobby, who died on a train when Bobby was with her. The death of Bobby made the relationship between Menley and Adam- her husband became in harmony because Menley always felt she was the cause of Bobby's death. But their relationship began to change when she gave birth to her second child Hannah. They both decided to take a vacation and rent a house called Remember House. While on vacation this story was developing. Menley, who was still traumatized by the loss of her first child, felt haunted by Bobby. She often heard Bobby's voice in the house. And it made her feel even guiltier about her husband. But Hannah's presence made her able to rise from her trauma

Menley's trauma made the story develop. When they rented Remember House, Adam Nicholas received a case of alleged murder of Vivian by her husband named Scott Covey. Scott has drowned his wife at sea. Nobody believed that so did Menley because Scott and Vivian loved each other and Scott loved his wife very much. Menley convinced Adam that Scott was innocent.

Menley's trauma also made Elaine, Menley's best friend and Adam was jealous. Elaine saw Adam loved his wife so much that she hoped she could replace Menley's position as Adam's wife. Elaine, who was Menley's best friend while in Remember House, used Menley's trauma by giving horror stories about Remember House. Elaine knew that Scott Covey killed his wife, in collaboration with Scott in an attempt to get Adam. She recorded several footage of the child's voice that resembled Bobby to convince Menley that Bobby haunted her and made her trauma worse. Elaine told Scott to kill Menley by drowning her in the sea as if Menley committed suicide due to the trauma she had so that she could replace her to become Adam's wife. Her efforts failed, because Menley was able to control her trauma and tried to remain calm against Scott, who in the end both was arrested by the police.

Based on the story above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the trauma that happened to Menley as a mother who felt guilty about her child's death and her efforts to control the trauma to stay alive for her second child using a psychological approach.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a psychological approach. Wellek and Warren (1973: 94) said that literature is a description of life and life is social reality. Glorier (1977: 291) suggested that characterization is a unique part of a work of fiction as in the novel. Thus, each character can determine the outcome of the story as a whole.

In *Remember House*, Clark tells the life of the main character as a writer who was traumatized by the death of her first child. Because trauma is a psychiatric problem, the researcher uses a psychological approach to analyze the psychiatric problems experienced by the main character. In using a psychological approach because the study is a novel as one of the products of literary works, the researcher also conducts novel intrinsic analysis that focuses on characters and characterization; plot and plotting.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Analysis intrinsic novel**

According to Abrams (1981: 200) characters are people displayed in a narrative work, or drama, which the reader interpreted as having moral qualities and certain tendencies such as those expressed in speech and what is done in action. Characterization is a representation of a clear picture of someone displayed in the story.

### **Character and characterization**

According to Foster (1970:75) character can be divided into simple or flat character and complex or round character. Foster said that flat character in their purest form; they are constructed round single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning or the curve towards the round. Meanwhile complex character is a character that has various possibilities on the side of his life, his personality and identity. A round character can have a certain character that can be formulated, but it can also display character and various behaviors, maybe even as contradictory and unpredictable. Compared to simple figures, round characters are more like real human life, because in addition to having various possible attitudes and actions, it also often gives a surprise (Abrams, 1981: 20-21).

In novel *Remember Me*, the main character is Menley Nicholas. This character is a round character because she is portrayed as a mother who is strong in fighting her post trauma. The other characters are Adam Nicholas; Menley's husband is flat character. From the beginning of the story until the end, he was portrayed as a good husband and loved his family so much. He supported the story developed because as the lawyer, he received Scott Covey's case who was suspected murder his wife. It made Scott knew Menley and they introduced each other. The antagonist characters are Scott Covey and Elaine. They were round characters. At the first story they were portrayed as good people and cared to Menley, but at the end of the story they were portrayed as bad character. They were the main source of Menley's terror in *Remember House*. All the terrors to Menley were from Scott and Elaine. They coordinated each other to get their ambitions. Scott wanted to save himself from being suspected as Vivian's death or his wife's death. Elaine wanted to replace Menley's position as Adam's wife. Scott agreed to kill Menley because Elaine knew that he murdered his wife. It made the story became interesting and how Menley effort to fight herself from all the terror that she received.

### **Plot and Plotting**

Stanton (1965: 14) said that a plot is a story that contains the sequence of events, but each event is only connected with a cause and effect, one event caused or caused another event to occur. In line with Stanton, Boulton (1985: 45) said a plot is a story, a selection of events is arranged in time; it has causality, one thing leads to another.

Based on time, plot can be divided into progressive and flash Back. On Remember Me, its plot is flash back. The story is begun with Menley's scary when she saw Scott Covey in her rent house and it's the climax of novel. Then story continued with how Scott Covey explained when her wife was drowned in the sea, how Menley and Adam decided to rent house, Adam received Scoot Covey's case, Menley was haunted in her rent house, then back to the first story when she saw Scott Covey in her house and tried to kill her by bringing her to the sea and tried to drown her, the story continued to Elaine was arrested by the police because she planned all he things to replace Menley's position as Adam's wife and it is the end of the story as Menley and Adam bought Remember house as their own house and continued their life.

### **Traumatic mother in *Remember Me* by MaryHiggins Clark (Psychological approach)**

Carruth (2006; 16) said that trauma is a mental disorder because of traumatic events such as suffering a severe health crisis, facing the death of a loved one, or being suffering the victim of a violent crime. In Remember House by Mary Higgins Clark, Menley Nicholas- the first character- got her traumatic because she saw her lovely son death. "*Knowing he was dead. Rocking him in her arms. Screaming and screaming, "Bobby, I want Bobby. Bobbbbyyyy."* (Clark: 1994: 23). The child's death made the main character felt guilty and it caused her suffered from post traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which, according to Zweeben (2010; 270), one of the signs was flash back or feeling like the scary events were happening again. This also happened to the main character who was always remembered his son died every she heard word " tragic accident"..

"Tragic accident. How many times had she heard those words. They triggered such terrible memories. They flooded over her. Driving on that unfamiliar country road, Bobby in the backseat. A glorious sunny day. Feeling so great. Singing to Bobby at the top of her lungs. The unguarded railroad crossing. And then feeling the vibrations. Looking out the window. The conductor's frantic face. The roar and the screech of metal as the braking train bore down on them. Bobby screaming, "Mommy, Mommy." Then his eyes closing. He was dead."

"...Adam glanced at her. "oh my God. "They were approaching a rest stop. He pulled into it, braked the car and turned to wrap his arms around her. It's okay, sweetheart. It's okay."

In the backseat, Hannah began to wail.

Bobby wailing, "Mommy, Mommy."

Hannah wailing...

"Make her stop!" Menley screamed. "Make her stop!" (Clark : 1994:23)

In according to Zweeben, Carruth (2013: 37) stated that the symptoms can start from the person's own thoughts and feelings. Words, objects, tragic or situations that are reminders of event can also trigger re-experiencing symptoms. From the quotation above, it can be seen when she heard tragic accident Menley always remembered the incident whenshe drove a car on a road she didn't really know and finally her car was hit by a train which caused his son died. Menley always sweat and didn't control herself to be able to distinguish between Booby and Hannah her second child. It happened when Menley wasn't able to forget herself from the accident that made her lovely son died.

Traumatic Mother in *Remember House* is also reinforced by the expression of Psychiatrist who cared for Menley.

"You're having what is called delayed post-traumatic stress disorder, which is not uncommon after a frightful experience, but there is treatment available, and I recommend it." (Clark: 1994: 13).

How others can in the traumatized person life and the whole respond to trauma can have either a detrimental or ameliorating impact on how traumatized people experience the traumatic event, makes meaning of it, and negotiates the emotional hazardous landscape of his / her relationship to the trauma. It can be seen when Menley had her second child. At the first time she refused her first child with her.

"And when Hannah was finally born, and the doctor had laid her in the arms arm in the delivery room, she had pushed her away." I want Bobby, "she had sobbed. "I want Bobby." (Clark: 1994: 57)

Because traumatic events create disconnection in relationships, the people closest to the traumatized person can experience of disconnection and thus ameliorate the influence of traumatic events on a person's identity, meaning, and worldview in a supportive way, offering hope, comfort, a sense of safety, acceptance and compassion and helping people realize that his / her reactions to traumatic events are not normal personal failures. The clinic provides a context in which the traumatized person can feel safe enough to be vulnerable, rebuild the connection, and repair damage to his / her sense of self (Zweeben: 2013: 101). This was also done by Dr.Kaufman, who treated Menley as stated in chapter three.

"She has been seeing the psychiatrist, Dr. Kaufman, weekly, and Kaufman wholeheartedly endorsed the idea of a vacation.

"The episodes are understandable and in the long run beneficial," she said. "For nearly two years after Bobby's death, you were in denial. Now that you have Hannah, you're finally dealing with it. Take this vacation. Get away. Enjoy yourself. Just take your medication. And, of course, call me at any time if you need me. Otherwise, I see you in September." (Clark: 1994: 13)

Herman (1992: 51) also describes the multidimensional impact of trauma on identity. "Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. Menley's relationship with her husband even though Hannah was already there, their second child was still not normal because Menley felt that her husband still did not fully trust her in terms of caring for children. As Menley revealed when Adam wanted to go home quickly and met Menley and Hannah. "After they said good-bye, he replaced the receiver and whispered to himself," I hope the real reason for rushing home is not that you are trusting me alone with the baby." (Clark: 1994: 15). This distrust of ability arose as a result of losing her first child so Menley felt that she was not fully trusted that she could take care of her second child. Menley's guilty also can be seen when she had argued with her husband when Adam didn't allow her to swim without him.

"She stopped." And be sure to leave the monitor on when your daughter is asleep. Right? And don't you think it would be nice to have Amy stay overnight? To mind me, not Hannah, me? Right? And isn't your little

weapon the implied threat that we need full-time live-in help because maybe this post-traumatic stress thing is a problem? After all, I was the one who drove the car in front of the train when your son was killed." (Clark:1994:132)

Menley felt that her ability to take care herself and her baby was not fully trusted by her husband. She didn't realize that actually her husband really loved and cared her. This different perspective made her and her husband often argued.

" Adam grasped her arms. "Menley, stop it. Damn it. You keep blaming me for not forgiving you for Bobby's death, but there's no question of blame here. The only problem is that you can't forgive yourself." (Clark :1994: 132)

As a mother with two years of trauma and getting therapy, Menley has begun to be able to control herself to be stronger because she is needed by her second child Hannah. Although she is still often haunted by the fear of losing her child, she can control her emotions.

"By mid-morning, Menley had begun to convince herself that the terror that had been recovered from her had been simply a vivid dream. With Hannah held tightly in her arms she walked outside to the edge of the embankment. "(Clark: 1994: 61).

The terror experienced by Menley in Remember House proved that Menley was a tough mother who could face all terror to take advantage of her condition and be able to continue her life.

"Because you're crazy, Menley, that's why. Crazy and hallucinating and depressed. Everyone, even Adam, is going to be so grateful that you didn't take the baby with you when you committed suicide.".....

Menley had to will herself not to panic. She had held her breath until her lungs were bursting, forced her body to go limp when she was wild to struggle..."(Clark :1994 :320,330)

Actually Menley's traumatized had been relieved as her therapist said she could take vacation with Adam and her second baby. But in her rent house when she was on vacation she often heard train's voice that made her afraid.

"Hannah cooed and pulled her mother's hair, and as Menley gently disentangled the small fingers, a thought came to her: last night when I woke up to the roaring of the train, Hannah was screaming.

"Did the train wake you up too?" she cried. "Was that why you were so frightened? Oh, Hannah, what is happening to us? What kind of craziness are you picking up from me?" (Clark: 1994:173)

The train voice made her trauma released. She became worried something bad would happen to her and her second baby. It's common sign for traumatized person; as Carruth (2013: 37) said that the symptoms can start from the person's own thoughts and feelings. Words, objects, tragic or situations that are reminders of event can also trigger re-experiencing symptoms. In this case, Menley heard train's voice and it made her remembered Bobby when he was hit by train in her car. This condition made her trauma was worst. And of course it would not be saved for her and her baby. This condition is strengthened by Menley therapist when Adam called him and told something bad happened

to Menley. He suggested Adam to not allow Hannah and Menley alone. They had to finish their vacation and return to New York.

"There was a pause. Then, speaking carefully, the doctor said, "Adam, I don't think Menley should be alone with Hannah, and I do think you should bring her back to New York. I want to admit her to the hospital for a little while. It's better to be safe. We don't need any more tragedies in your family." ((Clark: 1994:179)

## CONCLUSION

From the intrinsic analysis can be seen that the main character is Menley Nicholas. This character is a round character because she is portrayed as a mother who is strong in fighting her post trauma. While plot and plotting of this novel uses flash back. The story starts from the climax novel which then returns to the previous events.

Traumatic mother in this novel is represented by Menley since she lost her first child. Her traumatic is relieved after she got her second child. To fight her traumatic and terror in her rent house she realized that her second child needs her and she has to continue her life.

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