

## SIBLING RIVALRY IN JANDY NELSON'S *I'LL GIVE YOU THE SUN* NOVEL: A PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

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### ABSTRACT

Conflict between siblings is a common phenomenon which happens in many families, that not many people care about. It is also reflected in literary works. The study discussed the jealousy, resentment, conflict, and the causes that happen between siblings in a novel entitled *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson. To answer the proposed questions of the portrayal and the causes of sibling rivalry, the researcher used psychological perspective. The study aims to find out the aspects and causes of sibling rivalry in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun*, especially in Jude and Noah Sweetwine's characters. A qualitative research approach was employed to fulfill the objectives of this research. The data were collected through reading and understanding the aspects and the causes of sibling rivalry that occur in the story. The findings revealed that sibling rivalry appears in the story, where the two main characters, Jude and Noah Sweetwine experience conflicts, jealous toward each other, and resent the sibling and the parents. The causes are children have a talented sibling, parents favor a child, children depend on the parents' attention and affection, and children reject their sibling.

**Keywords:** Psychological, Sibling Rivalry, Jandy Nelson, "*I'll Give You the Sun*"

### ABSTRAK

Konflik antara saudara adalah fenomena yang biasa terjadi dalam suatu keluarga, yang tidak banyak orang peduli akan hal tersebut. Sibling rivalry juga digambarkan di karya sastra. Penelitian ini membahas kecemburuan, kemarahan, konflik, dan penyebab-penyebabnya yang terjadi antara saudara dalam novel yang berjudul *I'll Give You the Sun* oleh Jandy Nelson. Untuk menjawab masalah-masalah dari pelukisan dan penyebab-penyebab dari sibling rivalry yang telah diusulkan, peneliti menggunakan pandangan dari sudut psikolog. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu aspek-aspek dan penyebab-penyebab dari sibling rivalry pada novel Jandy Nelson yang berjudul *I'll Give You the Sun*, terutama pada karakter Jude dan Noah Sweetwine. Penelitian kualitatif digunakan untuk memenuhi tujuan-tujuan dari penelitian ini. Data-data dikumpulkan melalui membaca dan memahami aspek-aspek dan penyebab-penyebab dari sibling rivalry yang terdapat dalam cerita. Dari data-data yang ada, telah ditemukan bahwa sibling rivalry muncul di dalam cerita, dimana dua tokoh utama, Jude dan Noah Sweetwine mengalami konflik, cemburu terhadap satu sama lain, dan membenci saudaranya dan orang tuanya. Penyebab-

*penyebabnya adalah anak mempunyai saudara yang berbakat, orang tua yang meng-anak emas-kan salah satu anak, anak bergantung pada perhatian dan kasih sayang dari orang tua, dan anak yang menolak kehadiran saudaranya.*

**Kata kunci:** Psikolog, Sibling Rivalry, Jandy Nelson, "I'll Give You the Sun"

## A. INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, many researches have focused on disharmonious relationship in a family caused by sibling rivalry. The relationship between siblings is a complex relationship, because it can be a source of harmony and support, while it also can be a source of disharmony and hostility. This issue is reflected in literary works. One of them is found in a research entitled "Now Misery has Come Home: Sibling Rivalry in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" by William Crisman. Crisman finds the sibling rivalry has as much place as it focuses so plainly on the murder of siblings and near siblings in the story. He states that Victor's character is an ideal candidate for sibling rivalry. Victor is a child who receives so much love from his parents. Then Victor is brought into a situation of multiple siblings, and he has to share his parents' love. The research shows how many sibling rivalry functions as the motive of the murder in the novel (Crisman 39).

One of Jandy Nelson's works, *I'll Give You the Sun* novel, portrays the harmonious and disharmonious relationship between twins of the opposite gender. The two main characters, Jude and Noah Sweetwine, are incredibly close and know each other's feelings and thoughts. They are best friends until Jude becomes jealous of their mother's interest in Noah's art. The jealousy begins when Jude, Noah, and their mother are visiting a museum. Their mother, Diana Sweetwine, makes a drawing competition in that museum. The first one who has finished his drawing is Noah. He shows it to their mother, and she is so amazed by it, she forgets about Jude's drawing. When they walk out of the museum, Diana and Noah do not realize Jude is not with them. This event leads the jealousy of Jude toward Noah and resents her brother. One time she mocks Noah by saying his drawings are lame, and Noah says, "You're just jealous Jude" (Nelson 96). After a long pause with shining eyes, Jude says, "She's my mom too. Why can't you share?" (Nelson 97)

Those statements represented the indication of sibling rivalry, which are the jealousy and resentment toward sibling due to parental favoritism. The relationship between Jude and Noah changes to a disharmonious relationship since then. Therefore, to identify Jude and Noah's psyche deeply, the researcher uses psychological theory, especially sibling rivalry theory.

Literature and psychology are two different fields, but they have a strong relation because both of them "deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts and reconciliations; individual and social concerns, by means of varied concepts, methods, and approaches" (Aras 251). Thus, psychological criticism is formed to interpret the psyche of characters in literary works (Barry 92). Psychological criticism can enlighten us about every reason characters behave as well as explain

the growth, development, and structure of the character's personality. Furthermore, sibling rivalry helps the researcher identify the causes of children experience rivalry.

A better way to understand sibling rivalry is through literary works. David Lodge stated "we will always learn more about human life and personality from novels than from scientific psychology" (10). It is also stated by Lodge that literary works provide human experiences in a specific way (10). In addition, according to Walter E. Sawyer in his book, *Growing Up with Literature*, realistic fiction helps children confront the good and bad human feelings and recognize that all people share the same human emotions and thoughts (129). When children read stories that resemble real life, they will understand more about human problems and relationships. Realistic fiction stories make children experience a world or culture or lifestyle, and as they experience these stories, they may begin to filter out some meaning for their own lives. When the story illuminates an experience that children have not yet had, it may be served as a preparation for their life. Therefore, it is relevant to use the theory of sibling rivalry as an approach to analyze the characters in literary works.

The purpose of this study is to indicate the aspects and the causes of sibling rivalry in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* novel. By analyzing the main characters, Jude and Noah Sweetwine, the researcher tries to find the relationship between the main characters with other characters to discover the aspects and causes of sibling rivalry that appear in the novel. To analyze the aspects of sibling rivalry, this study uses the theory of sibling rivalry stated by Papalia and Olds (335). And to analyze the causes, this study uses the theory of sibling rivalry stated by Schaefer and Milman (250).

## **B. RELATED LITERATURE**

### **1. Psychological Criticism**

Psychological criticism is applied in this study because it can enlighten the reason characters behave as well as explain the growth, development, and structure of the character's personality. The term of psychological criticism was deployed by Sigmund Freud. He developed a language that described a theory that covers human psychology. He also sought to describe and explain a lot of the elements of psychology that present in the literary works, which can make readers appreciate literature on a new level.

All of Sigmund Freud's theories depend upon the notion of the *unconscious*, "which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our actions" (Barry 92). Then, Freud stated there are three models of the psyche, which are the *id*, the *ego*, and the *super-ego*. The *id* is the unconscious part, which does not care about reality, and only care about its own satisfaction (pleasure principle). The *ego* is based on the reality principle that considering the reality of the situation, or in other words, the conscious part. The *superego* is the moral part and develops due to the moral and ethical restraints. The *superego* is the conscience part as it dictates the belief of right and wrong.

## **2. Sibling Rivalry**

According to Papalia and Old, sibling rivalry is the conflict, jealousy, or resentment between brothers and sisters (335). Then Tyson stated sibling rivalry is “competition with siblings for the attention and affection of parents” (14). From these definitions, the researcher concluded that sibling rivalry is the feeling of jealousy, anger, competition, and conflict between birth brother and sister, step-brother and sister, and adoptive brother and sister that happen to get the parents’ affection and attention.

### **a. Aspects of Sibling Rivalry**

Papalia and Olds (335) stated that there are three aspects of sibling rivalry, which are the jealousy, resentment, and conflict.

#### **1. Jealousy**

Gordon Clanton (in Stets and Turner) stated that jealousy is defined as a protective reaction to a perceived threat to a valued relationship or to its quality (421). The term jealousy in sibling rivalry is “the repository for part of the murderous wish to get rid of the sibling” (Mitchell 30). This feeling may appear when one child assumes he will be abandoned by the parents because of his sibling.

#### **2. Resentment**

Resentment is defined as a reactive feeling of bitterness, indignation, displeasure, or ill will towards some conditions, behavior, individual, group, or other agent (Tenhouten 50). The form of resentment in children also can be the act of rebellion.

#### **3. Conflict**

Carl E. Pickhardt in his article entitled *Sibling Conflict in Adolescence* said, “Conflict from sibling rivalry is built into family life for children as soon as they start to compete for dominance, parental attention, parental support, and household resources.” To sum up, a conflict between siblings is the situation when they have a contest to get their parents’ attention and affection, or they are incompatibilities in interests or beliefs.

### **b. Causes of Sibling Rivalry**

In a book entitled *How to Help Children with Common Problems*, Schaefer and Millman said the causes of sibling rivalry are: children depend on parents’ attention and affection, parents favor a child, children reject their sibling, and children have a talented sibling (250).

#### **1. Children depend on parents’ attention and affection**

“Children depend so much on their parents for love, and fulfillment of their needs that they do not like to share their parents with anyone” (Schaefer and Millman 250). When a child feels so loved by his parents and comfortable with the situation, and he is afraid by having a sibling, the parents’ attention and affection will decrease, or worse, he thinks he will not get the attention and affection at all from his parents. With these thoughts, he wishes he did not have siblings, so he will have all the parents’ love.

## 2. Parents favor a child

A father shows his affection only to one child in the family and defends the child when in some conflicts or fights with other children. A mother has all her attention to a certain child and loves him or her the most among other siblings. These kinds of situation make other siblings, that are not the favorite child of their parents, feel jealous and angry to the favorite child. Patricia Cook in her work said that favouritism leads to sibling rivalry (21).

## 3. Children reject their sibling

A firstborn child wishes the newborn child does not exist, so he gets all the attention and affection from parents. A twin may hates that he always has to share almost everything with his twin sibling, and hope he does not have a twin at all.

## 4. Children have a talented sibling

“When one sibling is clearly inferior in talent to another sibling who is close in age and of the same sex, the less we-endowed child tends to show more hostility toward the other” (Schaefer and Millman 250). For example: one sibling has to live in the shadow of the achievements of a talented sibling. This situation makes the child tends to feel robbed of his individuality and feels that all of his actions and accomplishments are being compared with those of the other siblings.

### **3. Character and Characterization**

Characters have an important role in bringing the meaning of literary works. These characters can be created in the form of human, animals, or other things. There are several classifications in character. According to Arp and Johnson, character is divided into two kinds, round and flat character. Round character is defined as a three-dimensional character that has a contradictory personality or complex personality. And on the contrary, flat character is defined as a character that has even personality (105). Then, according to Altenbernd and Lewis, there are two kinds of character, protagonist (major character) and antagonist (minor character) (59). The protagonist is the central figure of the story, a character with whom we generally sympathize, whereas the antagonist is a figure that follows the existence of the protagonist. The antagonist is generally not sympathetic.

Furthermore, there are two ways in analyzing the characterization, those are direct and indirect. Direct characterization is a way to conclude the appearance and personality of the character by directly telling so (Gordon & Kuehner 97). Indirect characterization is a way of making conclusion by the narrator's description through the character's action, thought, and gesture (Gordon & Kuehner 97). Action is what does the character do, and how does the character behave. Thought is what is revealed through the character's private thoughts and feelings. Gesture is how characters communicate without spoken words. To sum up, in analyzing character and characterization in literary works, we should classify the character (if it is round or flat character, protagonist or antagonist character), and conclude what personality the character has by analyzing the direct and indirect characterization.

### **C. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used a qualitative descriptive as a method. Since the analysis was to indicate the aspects and causes of sibling rivalry in the main characters, the theory of sibling rivalry according to psychology were really important to be used. The data in this study are the information that is taken from a novel by Jandy Nelson entitled *I'll Give You the Sun*.

## D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are drawn from the data source of *I'll Give You the Sun* novel. In each character, the three aspects of sibling rivalry (jealousy, resentment, and conflict) are discussed with the causes found in each aspect. The causes of sibling rivalry according to Schaefer and Milman (250) are: The causes of sibling rivalry are children have a talented sibling, parents favor a child, children depend on parents' attention and affection, and children reject their sibling.

### 1. Sibling Rivalry in Jude's Character

Jude Sweetwine is Noah's sister. They are the main characters in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* novel because they are the central figures of the story. In Jude's childhood, before her mother picks side, she is really close to her sibling, Noah. They were best friends. Then, their relationship changed to a disharmonious one. It started when Jude was jealous of Noah and her mother's relationship when the three of them were visiting a museum. Diana made a drawing competition. She asked them to draw something in that museum. Noah has finished first and showed it to their mother, and she was so amazed by it, she forgot Jude's drawing. When Noah and Diana walked out of the museum, they did not realize Jude was not with them. Noah said, "Truth is: I think Mom and I had gotten used to not noticing her [Jude] when the three of us were together." (Nelson 93)

The data above, the narration from Noah, is a proof that Noah and their mother have forgotten Jude in the museum. They have forgotten Jude was with them because they "had gotten used not noticing her" when Noah and their mother went to museums. They did not pay much attention to Jude's whereabouts since they were too busied talking and thinking of paintings. To conclude, the cause of the jealousy in Jude's character is children depend on parents' attention and affection.

There are events in the story that show the resentment in Jude's character toward her brother. The following data indicated the bitterness feeling in Jude's character.

**Mom says Jude acts the way she does now on account of hormones, but I know it's on account of her hating me.** She stopped going to museums with us ages ago, which is probably a good thing, because when she did, her shadow kept trying to strangle mine. ... I have a good idea what she does instead of coming to the museum, though. Three times now, I've seen hickeys on her neck. (Nelson 75-76)

The data above is narrated by Noah. He stated that Jude is angry with him by directly said, "her hating me." The word "hating" indicated Jude's bitterness

feeling toward Noah. Noah believes the reason Jude acts wild because their mother forgot to look at her drawing the first day they went to the museum. Diana forgot Jude's drawing because she was so blown away by Noah's drawing, which means the resentment appeared in Jude is because she has a talented sibling.

Furthermore, the resentment in Jude character is also shown toward the mother. She does not get the equal attention and affection from her mother. While Noah gets enough affection from the mother, she barely notices Jude's existence. She once said, "I once wished for Mom to die." (Nelson 301) This data showed how much anger she feels toward her mother. This ill will toward the mother indicated the resentment in Jude's character that she does not want the mother's presence in this world. Everything considered, Jude's resentment toward the mother is caused by the act of the mother who favor a child and abandoned the other.

## **2. Sibling Rivalry in Noah's Character**

Jealousy also defines as a wish to get rid of their sibling (Mitchell 30). This wish appears in Noah's character. It is when he thought he has no chance to be a proud son to his father because Dad already has Jude as his favorite child. Then he also thought that Jude has stolen his closest friend at that moment, Brian, from him. He was so mad at Jude and pretended he does not have a sister at all. One time, he saw something amazing. Those are three enormous stone mens-monsters in someone's yard. He said, "My ex-sister Jude would freak." (Nelson 282)

The meaning of ex-sister is he stated that Jude is no longer his sister in his mind. This narration indicated that Noah pretended he does not have a sister named Jude. He wanted to get rid of his sister, thinking without Jude he will get the father's attention and will not lose his only friend, Brian. In summary, children reject their sibling is the cause of jealousy in Noah's character.

In Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* novel, there is an event where Noah shows his resentment toward his sister Jude. It is when Brian, a guy who Noah liked at that moment, knocked on his window and Jude immediately said, "I totally want to meet him." (Nelson 122) Then Noah narrated, "I do not want that. Do not. I want her to fall in a hole. I bend down and stick my head and shoulders out, spreading myself as much as I can across the windowsill so Jude can't see out and Brian in." (Nelson 122)

Here Noah felt displeasure of the idea of Brian meet with Jude by saying he does "not want that". In the narration, Noah has an ill will toward his sister that he wanted Jude to fall in a hole, that he wished of Jude would disappear from the world. As it was mentioned before, the feeling of displeasure and ill will toward an individual is counted as resentment. Also, the narration above showed that the resentment is caused by Noah rejected his sibling.

While Jude resented the mother, Noah resented the father. He hated his father for demanding him to be masculine when it is not his true personality. Noah's resentment toward Benjamin is shown in the following data.

Occasionally when no one's home, I go into his office and break his pencils. Once, after a particularly toilet-licking Noah the Broken Umbrella Talk (our version of the father-son chat), when he laughed and said if Jude weren't my twin he'd sure I'd come about from parthenogenesis (looked it up: conception without a father), I snuck into the garage while everyone was sleeping and keyed his car. (Nelson 19)

The hatred Noah felt toward his father is shown in the narration above. He did bad things (break his father pencils and keyed his car) to release his resentment after his father obviously showed his dislike toward Noah's personality, that he is not masculine enough for a boy. Noah's anger toward the father in the narration is caused by the act of the father that showed him favored Jude. The father showed affection toward Jude and he showed his disinclination toward Noah.

### **3. Conflicts between Jude and Noah**

A conflict between siblings is the situation when they have a contest to get their parents' attention and affection, or they are incompatibilities in interests or beliefs. "I'll Give You the Sun" novel portrayed the conflicts between the main characters, Jude and Noah, who are twins of opposite gender. They competed to get the mother's attention. The competition went as Noah by making arts and Jude by acting wild. Noah won the competition to get the attention of the mother. Jude was not happy with that. Therefore, she asked Noah to share the mother's attention and affection.

Her big blue eyes are shining on me. All the hornet's buzzed out of her. And there's no spider to her at all. I put the pencil down. **So quietly I can barely make out the words, she says, "She's my mom too. Why can't you share?"**

The kick of guilt goes straight to my gut. I turn back to the Chagall, begging it to suck me in, please, just as Dad fills up the doorway. (Nelson 97)

The narration above demonstrated the competition in Jude and Noah's characters that is to get the mother's attention and affection. This narration also showed the victory of Noah and Jude's defeat. Noah won the mother's love that is why Jude was asking to share his victory. Even though Noah felt guilty, he still keeps the victory for himself. He did not want to share the mother's affection with his sister. It proved when he turned his back to Jude and hoping he was not in there with Jude. Noah then felt relieved when their father interrupted their exchange. Children depend on parents' attention and affection is the cause of the conflict above. Both of Jude and Noah wanted the mother's love so much they do not want to share it to the other.

The results of this study are the portrayal of sibling rivalry in the main characters in a novel entitled *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson. It was found that the sibling rivalry was portrayed in Jude and Noah's characters through the jealousy, resentment, and conflict between siblings. Sibling rivalry was revealed through Jude and Noah's narration that describe each other's personalities. Furthermore, based on the findings, the researcher found that the causes of sibling rivalry appeared in Jude and Noah's characters are children have a talented sibling,



parents favor a child, children depend on parents' attention and affection, and children reject their sibling. Although, according to Papalia and Old (335), the resentment only show toward the siblings, the researcher found that the resentments in Jude and Noah are directed not only to each other, but also toward their parents. Jude resented the mother, and Noah resented the father because of the parents did not treat them equally. The mother favored Noah and the father favored Jude. Moreover, the rivalry in Jude and Noah's characters is not associated only with the parents, but also with other people outside the family. In this case, there is an event when Jude tried to steal someone her brother likes. Noah feels the betrayal when he thought Jude has a romantic relationship with the boy he likes, Brian. According to Wallace, "the sibling bond is more powerful, long-lasting and determining than the sexual bond between men and women." (198) This statement proved that the reason Jude tried to steal Brian from Noah is that Brian is the person Noah likes the most, not because Jude has feelings toward Brian. Jude's action is determined by her sense of competition, that is who is more attractive to Brian.

Sibling relationship quality may influence the parents-child relationship. As mentioned, Jude has a disharmonious relationship with the mother, and Noah has a disharmonious relationship with the father. It is caused by the parents' treatments to their children. It seems important to understand the causes of sibling rivalry to avoid any disharmonious in the family.

Rivalry plays an important part in both the bonds between siblings and the parents. It can be an important and determining the factor of bad behavior in children's personality. However, to dismiss rivalry between siblings is we have to avoid the causes. On a whole, the results of the study suggest significant associations between the aspects (jealousy, resentment, and conflict) and the causes of sibling rivalry (children have a talented sibling, parents favor a child, children reject their sibling, and children depend on the parents' attention and affection).

## **E. CONCLUSION**

After analyzing the sibling rivalry in the main characters in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* using psychological approach, especially the theory of sibling rivalry by Papalia and Olds (335) and Schaefer and Milman (250), the researcher concludes that the aspects of sibling rivalry are reflected in the main characters, Jude and Noah Sweetwine. The researcher found jealousy, resentment, and conflict between the twins of opposite gender led to sibling rivalry in the story. Moreover, the researcher also found that the causes of rivalry in Jude's and Noah's characters were: children have a talented sibling, parents favor a child, children depend on the parents' attention and affection, and children reject their sibling.

Overall, it can be concluded that in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* novel, the existence of sibling rivalry in the main characters, Jude and Noah, is proved. Throughout the data, it is shown that most of Jude's and Noah's characters indirectly represent the issue of sibling rivalry. As a result of the rivalry in Jude and Noah's characters, they have a disharmonious sibling relationship and parents-child relationship.

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