

Educative Value of the Novel, “Lembata”, by F. Rahardi

Yohanes Orong

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Katolik Ledalero, Maumere 86152, Flores, NTT, Indonesia

Abstract: - This text describes and explains the educative value of the novel, “Lembata”, by F. Rahardi. The method used is descriptive & qualitative. The data of this study is in the form of words, phrases and sentences, found in the novel. The study highlights notes using descriptive sentences which are detailed, complete and deep. They portray a real situation to support the presentation of data. As a literary style, a descriptive method is used to describe facts which are then analysed. The primary source of this study is the novel, “Lembata”, by F. Rahardi. Based on the results of the study, in this novel can be found five educative values: religious, moral, cultural, social and the value of heroism.

Keywords: - Novel, Literature; Religious, Moral, Cultural, Social, Heroism Values

Introduction

The educative values are closely linked to literature. According to Herman J. Waluyo (1990:27), educative values which are embedded in literature, have a positive influence on the reader. Educative values can appear in different ways, as being means to an end, goals, cultural values, moral values or religious values. More specifically, Ahmadi and Uhbiyati (1991:69), were of the opinion the values in literature can be a guide for what is naturally good, especially in children, so that as human beings and as members of society they can achieve salvation and happiness in the highest form.

In connection with the concept of educative values being embedded in literature, Mudji Sutrisno (1997:63) has said that the values in a work of literature can be pictured via grand themes, such as the place of humanity in the world and matters that embrace this. This proposition is based on the assumption that although literature may be imaginative and fictional, it is more than just this. Through a work of literature, the writer shares, thoughts, opinions, and certain suggestions, with the reader.

In his novel, “Lembata”, F. Rahardi focusses on a problem which had impacted the life of the community on the island of Lembata, NTT. “Lembata” was published by Lamalera Press in 2008. The title was taken from the setting of the

novel, on the island of Lembata which is across a strait from Solor. The author follows the footsteps of a group of people on the island, as they struggle with issues such as isolation, with a particular focus on a Catholic religious who “lifts the lid” on the capitalism of Eucharistic bread & wine.

Behind these goings-on there was another educative value which the writer wished to voice. This is the focal point of this article. Specifically, this article endeavours to answer the question, “What educative value can be found in the novel, “Lembata”, by F. Rahardi?”

A critical review of this book was once made by Gloria Fransisca. In an article entitled, “Lembata, a Challenge for the Church and Capitalism”, Gloria Fransisca objectively evaluated Rahardi, as he showed himself to be opposed to capitalism in this book. This issue, according to her, should be discussed and reflected upon prior to being concerned about economic imbalance.

Paul Budi Kleden also reviewed “Lembata”. In broad terms, Kleden described how in the narrative the proclamation of renewal by the author was symbolised by the deconstruction of the Eucharistic bread and wine in the liturgy of the Catholic Church. This point is clarified by Kleden in his text, “Concerning the Eucharistic Bread & Wine. A View of the Novel, ‘Lembata’.” See <http://novel->

cerita-indonesia.blogspot.com. What makes this review special is its elaboration of 5 educative values that can be found in the novel, "Lembata".

I am using a descriptive/qualitative methodology in this article. Data presented is in the form of words, phrases and sentences which are found in "Lembata". The primary source of the data is the book itself, while other sources include readings from earlier studies of literary values. I have used a non-interactive technique to collect the data, which includes content analysis of documents and archive material. I have analysed the data in a fluid way, beginning with the collection of data, then editing it, displaying it and then finally drawing conclusions. I have used the triangulation technique of validating the data. Triangulation of data was done by taking the information from the primary source, namely "Lembata", then observing several opinions of reviewers of several texts which are connected with the element of deconstruction and display the educative value of a novel.

Results & Discussion

A serious reading of "Lembata" reveals five educative values in this novel. They are as follows:

Educative Value of Religion:

Romo Pedro is bound by his obligation to carry-out his religious duties. This is the primary task of a priest. This is what makes him different from a Catholic lay-person. Even though he no longer carries-out his religious duties as devoutly as he did when he was young, Father Pedro still kneels before the cross when he says his rosary. He has known the rosary by heart since he was 3 years old. Rahardi writes:

.... He rises, takes his rosary, kneels before the cross, and then he begins to recite the prayer that he has known by heart since he was 3 years old. It's quiet. But it's hard for Pedro to really pray. He hears the distant sound of a motorboat. Maybe it's a fishing boat, or maybe it's a boat taking cargo to Solor.

But he has to concentrate on his prayer. Two geckos are running noisily across the ceiling of his room. A bit of excrement from one of the geckos falls on his

hand. "Our Father, Who art in heaven....." The excrement is small but long, black with some white flecks. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you...." The geckos quieten down, and the room becomes lonelier. There's the staring face of the bishop stays clearly in Pedro's mind. He hears his strong voice, too. "Give us this day our daily bread." (Page 7)

However, like all his fellow human beings, his prayer often falters and is far from perfect. His prayer is disturbed by his physical surroundings, but also by his internal struggles and human feelings. However, it would seem that God doesn't base God's relationship with humanity on the success or failure of a people's prayers. Father Pedro has experienced the presence of God in the hurly-burly of life. Following is a quotation that speaks about this:

....Prayer isn't a very effective way of calming his thoughts. Pedro moves to his bed. He sits cross-legged, holding his rosary. He continues to pray, controlling his breathing and trying to empty his mind of thoughts. "What did you get from Jakarta?" This question of the bishop was still ringing in his ears. Before when he was bathing, he had cleaned-out his ears with soap, over and over again, and then rinsed them with water.

He had also dried them with a towel, making sure they were truly clean. But the sounds of the geckos, the motorboat and the question of the bishop were stuck there. "Our Father Who art in heaven...." Is there really a heaven? Pedro breathed as deeply as possible. The rhythm of his breathing matched the sentences of his prayers. His ears and eyes became cleaner. But the aroma of the perfume of Ola, and the smell of her perspiration as she walked during the day, were like a kiss. That aroma stayed in his nose. Pedro took another long breath. "Hail Mary full of grace....." But does Mary really look like the woman in the paintings, or is she like Michaelangelo's Pieta?

What was the name of the Javanese girl who went with him to see the shadow-puppet play? Lastri? Larasati? Ratri? "Blessed art thou among women..." Pedro took another deep breath. The

people of the Diocese of Larantuka are certainly very poor. Yes, the bishop had sent him to Jakarta to study economics so that he could help those poor people. "...as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." His prayer was over. An imperfect prayer. But, that's life, No human beings are perfect. But this time Pedro's prayer had been blemished by the excrement of the gecko, the aroma of Ola's perfume and perspiration, and the sound of the motorboat which was like the cry of the poor of Larantuka who were a long way away. (Pages 8-9).

The relationship between humanity and God is not described in a grandiose style. Rather, F. Rahardi describes in a realistic way Father Pedro's prayer life. In a difficult situation, prayer is a way of calming his mind. This can be experienced by anyone, including a priest like Pedro. His uncertainty about the existence of heaven is very human, and is fitting for a person to consider. Even a priest is not free from temptations which can be problematic. His questioning about the face of a saint is valid, as much for a priest as anyone.

While trying to pray, Pedro doesn't stop thinking about the many issues he is dealing with. He thinks of Luciola, and he thinks of the Javanese girl whom he met briefly, but whose name he cannot remember. These all become part of his prayer. When he finishes praying, the issues troubling him remain, haunting his mind.

Pedro doesn't have a restful sleep, just as he could pray in peace, as he was still disturbed by the problems haunting him. Anxiety has become the definition of prayer for him. For Pedro, prayer is not a means of freeing humanity from anxiety about present problems, but rather it challenges humanity to live with that anxiety. Prayer is not an opiate, but rather a spirit that can give strength to humanity.

It could be that in writing this way, Rahardi wants to show his understanding of the whom he believes in, and also how he believes a person should relate to God. God is one who cannot be believed in, outside of the context of God's relationship with humanity. God is the One who is involved with and shares responsibility with the problems of

humanity. Finally, what enables a person to sleep peacefully and to pray calmly is that person's liberation from poverty.

Pedro took a deep breath. He turned-off his computer. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our Father Who art in heaven... ." Finishing praying, Pedro still can't sleep. Two things disturb his mind. Firstly, he is worried about Ola's behaviour which is becoming increasingly unbalanced.. "Am I jealous of Ola? Is it OK for e to be jealous of Ola? Who is Ola? What does she want?" The second thing that makes it impossible for him to sleep is the information about his parishioners that they, like all their fellow Indonesian citizens, must get shirts, pants, cloth for sarongs, even bras and knickers, from cotton farmers in Texas, USA. "And the Catholic Church says nothing. Possibly the Catholic Church is a part of global capitalism?" (Pages 101-102)

Belief in God isn't only revealed in carrying-out routine religious rituals, but it is also implemented in an extreme form, namely in challenging and evaluating the way the faithful live-out their religion. Religion must be able to free the faithful from the chains of oppression, and not the opposite, not oppressing them. Pious prayers have little value if that piety leads to an empty dream about being freed from real suffering. True religion doesn't use prayer as an antidote to real pain and suffering. True religion challenges all forms of wrong doing. In order to do this, religion itself must possess the possibility of evaluating, even when such an evaluation focusses on its own practices, and on a false implementation of religion.

Pedro is a Catholic priest who stands in a place where he reflects upon the responsibility of God and the Church, in relation to global capitalism which is causing the people of Lembata to live in poverty. This reflection happens just when Pedro is struggling with God in his prayer.

Educative Value of Morality:

Pedro's determination to reject the advances of Luciola is a moral value that must be held-to, at a

time when so many people are so permissive regarding shortcomings and sin. Pedro doesn't just have theoretic knowledge about the moral attitude that is held up as an ideal, but he has had first-hand experience of living it.

When he was still a priest, Pedro successfully put-off Luciola who wanted to marry him. The greatest temptation experienced by Pedro happened when at a later time he had resigned from the priesthood. He was tempted to have sex with Luciola, who was already naked. He was successful in resisting her.

Anyone in this situation, let alone a priest, would have great difficulty in resisting such a temptation. How was he able to do so? Possibly because of the vows he had taken, or maybe because his intense prayers, he was successful. He succeeded in doing this because of his positive image of Luciola. He was different from someone who might have looked on this woman as just an animal on heat. Pedro accepted Luciola as a friend who made him happy. Rahardi writes:

Even though Ola is indeed very beautiful, with her mixed race features, her fair skin and her very sensual appearance, for Pedro, she is just a good friend. Ola is really keen to submit herself to him. But why are the eyes of the bishop focused so sharply on Pedro? Has a priest sinned because he was pursued by a girl from Manado? Has he sinned because he allowed Ola to accompany him to Larantuka? Was it a sin for them to sit together on the planes from Jakarta to Denpasar, then to Maumere, and then on the chartered bus travelling on the winding roads of Flores? Who sinned? (Page 6)

With these thoughts Pedro sublimated his temptation. He didn't view Luciola negatively, and he didn't just see her physical features. Pedro dismantled the image people have about the closeness of a priest to a woman. At the same time, Pedro deconstructed the concept of sin. According to him, the essence of sin is not what appears physically, where an evaluation tends to be done a priori, and is often mistaken. Sin is intimately related to the interior concept a person has

regarding what is seen, heard, and which takes place outside that person.

Having decided to leave the priesthood, Pedro, takes responsibility for his decision and becomes a farmer. Many people are unable to accept his decision they ask, "Why isn't Father Pedro a priest any more, and why has he become a farmer? Why doesn't he at least become a teacher?" (Page 135) It seems that if he had left the priesthood, then become a teacher that would be easier to accept than him becoming a mere farmer. However, for Pedro, becoming a farmer was nothing to be ashamed of. Finally, his understanding of the meaning of life, where morality is held in high regard, isn't influenced by the choice of a profession in society. Status is unimportant. What is important is doing what can be done for the good of ones fellow women or men.

When Pedro becomes a farmer, his sensitivity to the sufferings and the fate of farmers becomes increasingly sharp. At the same time, Pedro becomes more realistic and humble. Morality is not just a matter of doing good and avoiding evil. It is rather, the ability to oppose tradition and what is customary, particularly when because of tradition or custom, people cannot find a reason to resist, but rather succumb to poverty. When Pedro becomes the same as most other poor farmers of Lembata and accepts suffering as just a part of daily life, he becomes more humble. Rahardi writes:

Pedro then tries to become more humble. "No. I am not any kind of campaigner. I am not trying to help them have better lives. I am just a failed, frustrated priest, who has taken refuge in this place, giving the impression that I am rejecting the norm. Usually, a priest who leaves his priesthood will straightaway look for a job that is appropriate. He will marry and have children, and then he will try to succeed in his new line of work. (Page 157)

However, as if he is tired of thinking about the imperfection of humanity, and after a long time of being tossed and turned in by his dreams, Pedro, is tempted to reevaluate his decision. It appears that his efforts to be consistent and to be faithful to his commitment must be taken-on in a dialectic way

through a process of purification. The purification of a moral choice sometimes must be done by reviewing a decision in reverse, and by looking at other possibilities.

Educative Value of Culture:

If culture is made-up of ideas and concepts, and is a formulization of human actions and activities that have a focus, speaking about the educative value of culture in the novel, "Lembata", can be understood as a critical reflection. It actually exceeds the shape of that culture. Even though F. Rahardi does not say much about the culture of Lembata society, the efforts of Father Pedro to overcome poverty have some correlation with the morality, the concepts, norms, and complexity of activities that are part-and-parcel of the Lembata people's lives. Culture is not understood as just things produced by human beings.

Exceeding the physical which can experience by human senses, culture includes traditions and the social system of a society. In a post-modern society, something produced locally can identify a culture. It might not have a great material value, but it has a cultural value in itself. In the end, what determines whether or not a locally made product has a general value is how it is seen in the public arena. A local product, such as idealised by Pedro in "Lembata", can be on a collision course with the dominating global market:

When he was in Jakarta, Pedro tried wearing a sarong made from "national material". He found himself in an awkward position. The cloth was wide, but short, and it was very thin. It was quite different from the cloth of Flores which is thick, narrow but long. He noted that if a Flores sarong was sewn at the bottom it would make a good sleeping bag. (Page 99)

Pedro was uncomfortable with the national cloth product. He was unhappy about the fact that local Flores cloth was of a much higher quality than the national product, but it wasn't accepted nationally. However, his idealism to make Flores cloth a national commodity, was tempered by his inferiority complex because he came from Flores.

Wanting to increase the production, he still ran into problems with the local tendency to not value highly locally made products.

F. Rahardi describes the irony of transforming a local culture, while acknowledging the dominance of the urban and global market. He realizes that local products, reflecting local culture, are increasingly brushed aside, or being transformed, by globalization. Global capitalism is all invasive:

Then he opened the web. There was a feature in "Kompas" about traditional woven Flores cloth, which was greatly praised by the journalist. At the end of the feature, the journalist said that the thread for the woven cloth needed to be imported from Surabaya. .

Pedro was curious. He started browsing for information re weaving thread and cotton. He discovered that 95% of the cotton thread used in Indonesia for weaving was imported from the USA, and a small amount from Kazakstan. Less than 5% was sourced locally. Browsing further, Pedro discovered that there are many products used to make cloth, not just cotton. China and India, each with more than a billion inhabitants, did not import cotton, because they used other locally grown products. (Page 100)

F. Rahardi reiterates the threat of the death of local products/cultures in the face of global capitalism. But even so, a culture is more than just what it produces. It is a complexity, taking in the values and social system of a given people. But it is not free from being squeezed by global capitalism.

Educative Value of Society:

In light of the big influence of global capitalism on the life of a local community, Rahardi talks in "Lembata" about the simplicity and the social relationship patterns in traditional Lembata society. In Lembata social relationships are not based on material wealth but rather they are based on functional factors. Life more or less goes along naturally. Not everything is directed from above, but rather the natural freedom of humanity is the number one factor in life. Rahardi writes:

In the home of Bertus, Ola feels cold, even though Bertus' home is made from brick. Late at night Ola wakes up Nina, and then they both go to the kitchen and sit near the oven. They chat for a while, until they both become sleepy, and they both go back to their beds, and sleep. Ola has a desire to ask Nina to sleep together with her in her bed, pretending that she is still cold, so that they could warm themselves. But she puts this thought out of her mind, saying to herself, "Nina is still a child, and she is a good girl. Sitting together with her beside the oven in the kitchen was pleasing enough." (Page 196)

In addition to portraying the simplicity of Lembata people, the above quotation indicates Rahardi's effort to oppose the egotism and superiority complex of a city person such as Ola. There would have been a certain amount of unease when a person as rich and liberal as Luciola must stay in the simple home of a poor villager. However, contrasting the different currents: city-village, rich-poor, past-modern-traditional, Rahardi in this novel shows his desire to build harmony using Luciola as his protagonist. Although she is rich and liberal, she has a good heart and she genuinely wants to help the village community.

Value of Heroism

Father Pedro, a diocesan priest from the Diocese of Larantuka, has been requested by his bishop to do further studies in economics at the Atma Jaya University. Previously, he had worked as an assistant priest in the parish of Aliuroba, an isolated place in the north of the island of Lembata. The majority of his parishioners are enslaved by poverty. Because of this Pedro made the decision to oppose the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Even though this was risky for himself, he stuck by his decision. As well as having the bravery to not be subservient to tradition, he was also spurred-on by a principle of heroism, which states, "If you always make a decision that is 'right', one that is safe, and one that is made by the majority of people, you are just the same as them."

However, truly his efforts to wipe-out poverty were not just based on some rather infantile idea such as

this. Pedro had a more substantial reason. This was the real reason why he acted bravely, without compromise.

"Mba Tanti, when you were in Yogyakarta you went against the norm and engaged in punk rock music, so doesn't be surprised when I go against the norm here in the back blocks of Lembata, at Aliuroba. I am going to celebrate Mass using moke and dried corn. Mbak Tanti, moke is liquor made from the lontar palm. It is distilled and has an alcohol content of between 30% and 60%. At 60% it is flammable. I plan to use these ingredients when I celebrate Mas. My parish priest has urged me not to do this. But, I cannot revoke my decision. What do you think?" (Page 112)

Father Pedro rebelled against the regulation requiring that a wheat-flour host and wine be used in the Eucharist. This rebellion materialised in his bravery to change the two elements of the Eucharist, and to use moke and corn. For him, the usage of wheat-flour hosts and wine in Mass was proof of the Catholic Church's involvement in global capitalism. According to Pedro, poverty in Lembata was caused to a significant degree by global capitalism, which must be opposed. Pedro was consistent in his struggle. After he had succeeded in using corn and moke at Mass in the parish church of Aliuroba, he decided to leave the priesthood. Pedro saw priests and bishops as having very important roles in the Catholic Church, which he saw as being compromised, through its tradition, in global capitalism.

Pedro then became a farmer in Kalikasa, Udak and Uruor. The local farmers in those places ridiculed his choice of a new profession. But it was as a farmer that he tried to develop wheat and wine-grape production in Lembata. In connection with this he also set-up a credit union, an economic system which was relatively new for Lembata people.

The Farmers Credit Union of Udak & Uruor deserves to be awarded. Not only do they produce wine and flour, they also provide vegetables for Lewoleba, Waiwerang, Menanga and Larantuka. Pedro used the remains of an old shed that had

been burnt-down, the credit union built a winery, and then a drying area, a mill, a silo, and an office, a workers' dormitory, and a guesthouse. A hill which had been a virtual wasteland became a vineyard. A valley became a fertile wheat field. On a hillside was built a building for the credit union. (Pages 135-136)

The credit union set-up by Pedro received an award, and the farmers of Udak and Uruor were able to compete at local and regional markets.

Conclusion

Having reflected upon the novel, "Lembata", I have identified five educative values. Firstly, is the educative value of religion? This value is connected with a redefinition of the Divine. In this novel God is redefined as one who must be concerned for the suffering of humanity. God cannot be believed in without a connection with humanity. God is involved in, and shares responsibility for, the problems experienced by humanity. Religion as an institution must explain this image of God to the people. Secondly, the educative value of morality. Being true to his heart, Pedro stands by his choices. F. Rahardi shows evidence that the way to develop consistency and to strengthen commitment must be pursued in a dialectical way in a process of purification. Purification is a moral choice, by which a decision is reviewed in light of other choices. Thirdly, the educative value of culture. In this novel, Rahardi stresses the irony of transforming a local society and the paradoxical evidence of the destruction of local cultures because of urban and global influences. Local products & cultures are increasingly diminished by global capitalism. Fourthly, the educative value of society. The currents that run side by side, city-village, rich-poor, postmodern-traditional are seen in this novel in the person of the rich and liberal Luciola, who still has a good heart and wants to be an instrument of harmony, genuinely helping the village people. Fifthly, the educative value of heroism. What Father Pedro does reflects his bravery and also his heroism, which enables him to go forward,

following his own Way of the Cross, Via Dolorosa, as he strives to alleviate the poverty of his people.

Resources:

1. Ahmadi dan Uhbiyati. 1991. Ilmu Pendidikan. Jakarta: Rineke Cipta.
2. Burhan Nurgiyantoro. 2007. Teori Pengkajian Fiksi. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
3. F. Rahardi. 2008. Lembata, Sebuah Novel. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Lamalera.
4. Herman J. Waluyo. 1990. Pengkajian Cerita Fiksi. Surakarta: Sebelas Maret Press.
5. Mudji Sutrisno. 1997. Sari-sari Pencerahan. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
6. Paul Budi Kleden. 2009. "Menggugat Roti dan Anggur. Tinjauan Terhadap Novel Lembata". <http://novel-cerita-indonesia.blogspot.com>.