CHILD ABUSE IN DOUGLAS McGRATH'S *NICHOLAS NICKLEBY*: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

RESEARCH PAPER
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by:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Nicholas Nickleby movie (2002) is a movie which depicted the England condition in 19th century. It is directed and written by Douglas McGrath and it is produced by Simon Channing Williams, John N Hart, Jeffrey Sharp. It was released in December 27, 2002 by MGM and published by United Artists presents a Hart-Sharp Entertainment production and Twentieth Century association with Cloud Nine Films. The movie is originally adapted from Charles Dickens’ Nicholas Nickleby novel.

Douglas McGrath is an American director that was born on 1958. He is a son of Beatrice and R. Searle McGrath, an independent oil producer from Midland, Texas. Douglas G. McGrath married Jane Read Martin in 1995; they have three children. He is not only a director but also a writer, an actor and a screen writer. A former columnist for The New Republic, he co-wrote the screenplay for Born Yesterday (1993), Bullets Over Broadway (1994) with Woody Allen. As an actor, he has appeared in such films as Prix Fixe (1997), Happiness (1998), Celebrity (1998), The Insider (1999), Small Time Crooks (2000), and Hollywood Ending (2002). Most recently, he wrote the screenplay for, Emma (1996), Company Man (2000) and Infamous (2006) which he also directed.
Nicholas Nickleby story concerns child abuse in Victorian era. The story begins when Nicholas Nickleby, Sr. (Andrew Havill) has just died of a broken heart, having lost all the money he has when he speculates unwisely in the relatively new form of business which we know today as capital investments. He leaves a wife (Stella Gonet), a nineteen year-old son also named Nicholas (Charlie Hunnam), and a beautiful daughter, Kate (Romola Garai). Unable to sell their home because of the poor housing market, the family travels to London to ask miserly and unethical investment advisor Uncle Ralph (Christopher Plummer) for help. Ralph gets Nicholas a job as an assistant teacher to Mr. Squeers (John Broadbent) in far away Yorkshire, and finds employment for Mrs. Nickleby and Kate, who live with a painter of miniatures, Miss Lacreevy (Sophie Thompson).

Uncle Ralph bundles Nicholas off to a teaching post in a Yorkshire boarding school, one of many whose abuse and neglect of poor youngsters was exposed by Dickens when he published his work in 1839. Here at the dank, squalid Dorthеboys Hall, Nicholas encounters the impossibly sadistic Mr. and Mrs. Wackford Squeers (Jim Broadbent and Juliet Stevenson) and a good-hearted, mistreated cripple boy named Smike (Jamie Bell).

Nicholas abhors the cruelty of Mr. Squeers’s school and runs away with the crippled orphan, Smike (Jamie Bell) for further adventures. The first comes with a theater troupe of deliciously comical characters headed by Mr. Crummles (Nathan Lane), his batty wife (Barry Humphries) and its most frustrated actor, Mr. Folair (Alan Cumming) who gives them jobs as actors.
Nicholas receives word that not all is well in London, so he and Smike leave the haven of the theater in Liverpool for London to rescue his family from the myriad machinations of Uncle Ralph, financial and otherwise. Along this journey, Nicholas does rescue his family, and finds a good job with sound investment bankers Ned Cheeryble (Gerard Horan) and Charles Cheeryble (Timothy Spall), Smike finds out what family really means, both Nicholas and Kate find their dream spouses, love and money or have no money and love.

Then, when word reaches Nicholas that Uncle Ralph is dangling his sister as fresh bait in front of rich, dirty old men he needs as investors, he and Smike rush to London, where a 19th century version of "Family Feud" breaks out. Uncle Ralph dreams up various plots designed to ruin the family, including kidnapping and an arranged marriage of the lascivious Sir Mulberry Hawk (Edward Fox) to Madeline Bray (Anne Hathaway), the last who has stolen Nicholas' heart. The film ends in happiness, Nicholas Nickleby marries Madeline Bray and Kate Nickleby married Frank Cheeryble (William Ash) a cousin of Ned Cheeryble.

Nicholas Nickleby movie has grown many comments from the people that have watched it. It is included positive and negative response about the movie. The first is positive response to the film. For example a response comes from David Ferguson from England. He says that Greetings again from the darkness. Truly exceptional adaptation of Dickens really shows how terrific writing can allow a film to work. The cast is very capable and in fact, Christopher Plummer is multilayered, pure evil; as Uncle Ralph. The Squeers...
team of veterans Jim Broadbent and Juliet Stevenson make escape from their “school” seems the only rational approach. Charlie Hunnam is gorgeous and capable as Nicholas, and herein lies the problem. While not for the youngest of kids, those 12 and up would probably enjoy the movie very much. As a way to touch Dickens, this is easily the least painful and most accessible for 7th through 12th graders. Why aren’t audiences filled with 40 and 50 something who read the novel growing up and a few brings teenagers with them.

"My daughter and her friends loved it. Very frustrating that studio will sink millions into drawing crowds for trash like Planet of Apes, XXX, Blue Crush, etc but almost nothing into this. Of course, this offers an education in story structure and the supporting casting was inspired. In addition to Hunnam, Anne Hathaway (Princess Diaries), Jamie Bell (Billy Elliot), Nathan Lane and Alan Cumming were all excellent. Tom Courtenay was funny and pitiful at the same time. Yes, the story is like much of Dickens, it provides hope for those who seem to have little. Good prevails over evil. Personally, I like that approach”(Ferguson, 2003: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer Reviews of Nicholas Nickleby).

The second is negative response to this movie. For example, it is from Anne Knunn from Middlesex, England.

“I saw the movie today and was totally unimpressed by it. The direction was clumsy and lacked finesse. Charlie Hunnam gave little to the role of Nicholas Nickleby, and his accent was peculiar to say the least. There are many young English actors who could have made a much better first of it. Jamie Bell as Smike did his best but had to act opposite Hunnam most of the time. Acting is about ‘re-acting’ and as Hunnam gave him nothing to react to, he was in a no-win situation. Nathan Lane was brilliant as Mr. Crumles, but Barry Humphries may as well have phoned his part in for all he has to do as Mrs. Noggs was the best thing in the whole film. All in all, an unsatisfactory way to spend an afternoon” (Knunn, 2003: http://IMDbPro/Customers_Review).
Nicholas Nickleby movie had been nominated in four kinds of awards. For the first it won in National Board of Review Awards 2002 as best acting by an ensemble category that went to Christopher Plummer. The second it was nominated in Golden Globe Awards 2003 as best motion picture-musical or comedy category. The third it was nominated in European Awards 2003 as best actress category that went to Romola Garai (Kate Nickleby). And the last it was nominated in Young artist Awards 2003 as best family feature film-drama and best performance in a feature film leading young actor category that went to Jamie Bell that acts as Smike (Schwartz, 2003: www.IMDbPro.com).

Nicholas Nickleby movie is an interesting movie. It can be looked from the setting of the movie, major character, and dominant issue or real condition in the setting of time in that film, 19th century in England (Victorian era). For the first interesting one is setting of the film that shows revolution industries in Victorian era which mainly influences to the social condition of England in that time. The industrial revolution is a radical change in mechanization of industry and agriculture, the great development of industry, factory system and transportation (Samekto, 1976: 60). Industrial revolution affects the society’s behavior and thought. They become cruel and money oriented. The word cruel means disposed to inflict suffering; indifferent to or talking pleasure in another’s pain or distress, destitute of kindness or compassion, merciless, pitiless, and hardhearted. The change of economical system drives people to think of their own business and the way to fulfill their own needs.
Furthermore, they fulfill their need by using children and youth without giving good payment and facilities to them. Consequently, the children and youth have to do some effort in order to survive in this world and there is no place for weak people. The setting of place of the film shows the difference between London and Devonshire. London is an industrial city and modern in that time. It can be looked at the modern building and there are many factories in there. In contrast, Devonshire is a small village of England which still have green yard, clean and cool.

The second is the major character of the movie. Nicholas Nickleby is the major character of this movie as an idealistic young man whose life changes when his father dies and leaves him to support the rest of the family. He is not only a handsome man, but also down to earth, smart, honest, kind man and lover. It can be looked at during his journeys, he stops various mistakes, saves Smike, defends his sister's honor, falls for Madeleine and sets out to avenge the dishonor uncle.

The third is dominant issues in the film. In that era, Victorian parish, the British local government unit is responsible for administering to the neighborhood's poor. The Victorian attitude toward the poor is largely to blame for this legal, harsh treatment of society's downtrodden. Nicholas Nickleby movie shows how the poor laws, introduced in 1834, influences society: the upper class and the middle class develop and began to exploit the lower classes. Mr. Squeers and Mrs. Squeers are examples of middle class people who abuse the members of lower class. And Smike is example of upper
class. So, the effects of industrialism upon 19th century in England are child abuses, children labor, poor laws (social injustice), England class system, the workhouse, and the harsh and unforgiving society. And it also shows the corrupt system and Victorian morals.

The dominant issues in this movie are very terrible. The social injustice for poor peoples, children labor, child abuse, workhouse, class system, corrupt system, and Victorian morals are the cruelty symbols of Victorian era.

One of the dominant issues that is most reflected in Nicholas Nickleby movie is about child abuse. It shows that child abuse is the effect of industrialism in Victorian era that makes social problems, such as generally higher levels unemployment and poverty. Child abuse is the physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment or neglect of children by parents, guardians, or others. While most child abuse happens in the child's home. Large numbers of cases of child abuse have been identified within some organizations involving children, such as churches, schools, child care businesses, and in particular native residential schools, or in government agencies. It also sometimes occurs almost anywhere. For examples: kidnappings, random murders etc. (Howard, 1987: http://en.wikipedia.org/child abuse).

Child abuse has four categories; physical, emotional maltreatment, sexual and neglect (Charity, 1999: www.child abuse council of santaclara.com). The first is Child abuse in physical category is shaking, hitting, beating, burning, or biting a child. The second category is child abuse
in emotional. It means that constantly blaming or putting down a child, excessive yelling, shaming. The third is in sexual category. It is incest, any forced sexual activity, exposure to sexual activity, exposure to sexual stimulation not appropriate for the child’s age. And the last category is neglect. Child abuse in neglect is a pattern of failure to provide for the child's physical needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care; a pattern of failure to provide for the child's emotional needs, such as affection, attention, and supervision.

Child abuse is an interesting issue in England society at late nineteenth centuries that is showed in Nicholas Nickleby movie. Hence the researcher is interested with the way of the movie Nicholas Nickleby, which was published on December 27th 2002, portrays the child abuse. Therefore the researcher decides to conduct a research focused on the child abuse in Douglas McGrath’s Nicholas Nickleby by using sociological approach with the title CHILD ABUSE IN DOUGLAS McGrath’S NICHOLAS NICKLEBY: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.

B. Literature Review

Nicholas Nickleby the movie version or the novel version is quite interesting to be discussed. So it is not weird thing if there are some researchers interested in conducting their studies on it The previous researcher of the novel Nicholas Nickleby is Ariestya Nurina Dhari with her title “Nicholas: The Fittest Figure, An Analysis of Charles Dickens’ Nicholas Nickleby (A Study of Genetic Structuralism).
Even though, as far as the researcher knows, there is no research based on a Sociological analysis of a study of Child Abuse that is reflected in the movie *Nicholas Nickleby* conducted by researchers at least in UMS, UNS.

C. **Research problem**

The major problem of this research is how the portrait of child abuse is reflected in the movie *Nicholas Nickleby*.

D. **Limitation of The Study**

The limitation of the study is the analysis of child abuse in England society reflected in movie *Nicholas Nickleby*.

E. **Objective of The Study**

The objective of the study is as follow

1. To analyze the movie based on its structural elements.

2. To analyze the movie based on the sociological perspective, by identifying child abuse and the social background of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries England Society.

F. **Benefit of The Study**

Two kinds of benefits which can be gained from the study are as follows:

a. Theoretical Benefit
The study is expected to give additional information and contribute to the larger body of knowledge, particularly to the further studies of Douglas McGrath’s *Nicholas Nickleby* by using sociological approach.

b. Practical Benefit

The study is expected to give the writer understanding about child abuse case.

G. Research Method

The research method of this paper is broken down into five aspects: (1) Object of the study, (2) Type of Research, (3) Type of the Data and Data Source, (4) Method of the Data Collection and (5) Method of the Data Analysis.

1. **Object of the Study**

The object of the study is movie *Nicholas Nickleby* directed and written by Douglas McGrath.

2. **Type of Research**

In analyzing the data found in the movie, the researcher uses the qualitative method as the type of the research.

3. **Type of Data and Data Source**

Type of the data is in the form of a script movie entitled *Nicholas Nickleby* movie directed by Douglas McGrath. The writer divides the data and the data source into two categories: primary data source and secondary data source.
a. The primary data source is the movie itself, *Nicholas Nickleby* that is directed and written by Douglas McGrath, published by MGM and United Artists presents a Hart-Sharp Entertainment production and Twentieth Century association with Cloud Nine Films.
b. The secondary data are taken from some references and materials related to the study whether picking up from books or internet. The script is download in http://script movie.com/Nicholas Nickleby quotes and is added by the writer to reach completeness.

4. Method of the Data Collection

The method of collecting data in this study is library research. The data from both primary and secondary sources are collected and recorded in a sort of document as evidence. The methods of collecting data are as follows:

a. Watching the movie several times and determining the character that will be analyzed.
b. Reading some related books to find out the theory, data and information required.
c. Taking notes of the important part in primary and secondary data.
d. Classifying the data into some categories.
e. Drawing conclusion to get the results.

5. Method of the Data Analysis

The method employed in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis, in which the data are collected, described and then analyzed. It concerns
with the relationship between the movie and sociological theory to show how child abuse is reflected in the story.

**H. Research Paper Organization**

This paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction that describes the background of the study, literature review, research problem, limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter deals with underlying theory; it consists of Sociology of literature, the notion of sociological and the major principle of sociology of literature, structural elements of the movie and theoretical application. The third chapter includes the social background with all aspects of the social reality of English society in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. The fourth chapter includes the structural analysis of the movie which consists of characters and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, theme, mise en scene, cinematography, sound and editing and a brief discussion. The fifth chapter presents sociological analysis of the movie. The sixth chapter consists of conclusion and suggestion.