



**BOOK REVIEW OF SUSAN WICKS *DRIVING MY FATHER***

**A FINAL PROJECT**

In partial Fulfillment of the requirement  
for S-1 Degree in Literature  
in the English Department, Faculty of Humanities  
Diponegoro University

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**SEMARANG**

**2015**

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

I state truthfully that this project is compiled by me without taking the result from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In Addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, 26 August 2015

Vininda Putri A

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

Love your Parents. We are so busy growing up; we often forget they are also growing old.

(Anonymous)

Everyone deserves a happy ending.

(Jodi Picoult)

*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family especially for my late father*

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I believe that this paper is far from perfect. However, I would be glad to receive any criticism and recommendation from reader to make this paper better.

Finally, I expect that this paper will be useful to anyone who wishes to learn something about literature in contact and its effect for the society.

Semarang, 26 August 2015

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

PRONOUNCEMENT .....	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION .....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
VALIDATION .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK.....	2
3. REVIEW .....	4
4. CONCLUSION .....	10
REFERENCES	
APPENDIX	



## **BOOK REVIEW OF SUSAN WICKS *DRIVING MY FATHER***

### **1. Introduction**

Love is an essential thing in human life. Everybody needs to love and be loved. There are kinds of love such as love between parents and their children, two lovers, and even human and God. However, people have a different way of interpreting and have an own definition about love. Most people assume that when they love someone, the loving one also must repay what they have been given to them.

Some others believe when they love someone, the loving one does not have to return their favor to them. They consider that it is not what they gain, but what they give in a relationship. This kind of love is called unconditional love. According to that definition, people believe that unconditional love is the purest love. Mostly, unconditional love occurs in a relationship between children and parents.

Susan Wicks' *Driving My Father* is a memoir about unconditional love which happens in Susan Wicks' family life. This story centered on her struggle to nurse her broken father after her mother's death. Eventually, this event reinforces her relationship with her father. Although this memoir does not contain a special story, but this story really occurs in people's daily life so it can inspire people to be more care to their parents especially when they are getting older.

The reason why this paper reviews Susan Wicks' *Driving My Father* because it has a very touching story and many moral values when they read this. With the theme of unconditional love, the author gives an example to the how powerful unconditional love is so it can change people's condition much better. This memoir was written by Susan Wicks' herself based on her true story and published in 1995. This paper will review about the strength and weakness in Susan Wicks' *Driving My Father*.

## **2. Summary of the Book**

Susan was shocked when her father called and told her that her mother passed away. She could not imagine how her father could survive without her mother in his side. When her mother (Joe) was alive, she was the only person who could make her father (Eric) calm down whenever he was sad or angry. One day after her mother's death, she came to her parent's house and found her father cried and wailed. He felt that he lost half of his soul.

Since her mom's death, Susan has taken care her father and made him breakfast and also did his laundry. She tried not to make her father felt lonely. One day, the Ashdown Social Services employee called Susan and told the incident that just happened to Eric. They said they invited Eric to the lunch club on Tuesday. When Eric went home, they saw Eric had a trouble in walking. Soon, Ashdown's employee offered Eric to join with them. After that, Susan rang him, but she pretended not to know that incident.

The first year after her mother's death, Susan and her family took Eric on holiday to France. She wanted Eric to forget about his loss for a moment. However, it was not going well. Through the journey, Eric was only quiet and did not enjoy it. She felt confused about how to make her father happy again. Then she remembered when she was in junior high school, she had difficulty associated with her friend and Eric amused him and said that everything would be okay. She promised not to give up on her father.

After that holiday, Susan called his father, but he did not answer it. An hour later, her aunt called her and said that Eric felt and fainted. Susan soon came over and saw Eric. She decided to stay in Eric's house with her children until his condition is recovered. As the time goes by, Eric's health was getting worse and could not do anything without help from other people. He was very slowly in doing anything. He was diagnosed with Parkinson.

Susan realized that her father needed more treatment. She decided to take Eric in a nursing home called Green house. At the first, Eric refused it because he knew that treatment spent much money. Susan persuaded him if it was not a big thing and finally he agreed. After they came to that nursing home, she realized if Eric tried to be happy even his heart was not. Susan kept believing her father would enjoy this place and began to forget about his sadness.

After Eric moved to the Green house, Susan paid him a visit. Eric looked happy and his condition was better than before. There was a big difference that

Susan felt after Eric stayed in that place. Whenever he remembered about his wife, he felt sad and cried. At this time, he smiled.

At the end of the story, it was not clearly described the continuity of the story, but from the narrative that Susan told it seemed that Eric's health was getting better. Susan and her father were getting used to live without her mother's presence and their new lives went well and it was a happy ending.

### **3. Review of Susan Wicks *Driving My Father***

Susan Wicks' *Driving My Father* clearly describes about unconditional love between parents and their daughter. This memoir has a number of strengths and weaknesses. The review will be divided into four strengths and three weaknesses. The Strength of this memoir includes theme, moral value, point of view and the end of the story. While for the weakness, the memoirs include complicated plot, unnecessary sub-plot and unexplained character. They are described as following.

#### **3.1 The Strengths of the Memoir**

Strength in this memoir lies on four things which are theme, moral value, point of view and the end of the story.

### 3.1.1 Theme

Family is the main theme of this memoir. Family values in this memoir are not shown with words, but are reflected in the actions that Susan does to her father. Mostly in a family when their parents are getting old, children choose to hire someone to care for their parent. Different from that most family, this memoir teaches us that when children have grown up and married, it does not mean they are no longer having a relationship with their parents. They still have a responsibility to take care of their parents. At least, in the middle of their activities they have to set aside a time to nurse their parent. Although in the end of the story Susan entrusts his father to a nursing home, she keep paying him a visit.

One day I shall come and bath him. I shall fill the bath with warm water and lean over it to test it with my elbow, as if it were for a baby. I shall help him undress. (Wicks, 1995: 47)

I leave him and go upstairs to change the sheets on his bed. I pull the covers off and throw them into a heap on the floor with his darned bedsocks and patched pajamas. His sheets are pieced with ugly, irregular seems, botched on my mother's unresponsive, badly converted treadle. In my hurry I almost get tangled in them as I reach over for the folded clean ones. (Wicks, 1995:16)

From the quotation above people can see family value through what Susan has done to her father. Cooking her father meal, taking him to the bath and tidying his bedroom are examples of what children are supposed to do for their parents. Actually, there are just little things and nothing special about that. However, Susan's sincerity in caring for his father makes readers realize that affection and attention from children are the most things that parents are needed especially when they are in an old age.

### **3.1.2 Moral Value of the Story**

Moral values in this memoir become a reason why this memoir could be a reflection to readers. There are many moral values that people can get after reading this memoir. One of them is how strong the main character in maintaining her problems. The strength of this memoir lies in this way. Actually, this memoir tells the story of sadness and loss of a daughter who is desperate about her father's health and her lost in her mother's sudden death. Instead of becoming depressed and blamed the current situation, she chooses to show her maturity in solving all her problems. In addition, her strong heart also reflects in how she remembers her mother when she was alive.

My mother was always slicing beans. That is how I remember our summers. Sitting on a child's wooden in the back garden, or on the caravan step with her little knife, the paper-thin blade stained almost black, the chipped bone handle streaking. (Wicks, 1995:5)

This first year they are brave enough, or silly enough, to take my father on holiday with us to France. They are highly organized. They help him to pick his case and bring him back to our house, to be ready for an early start the next morning. (Wicks, 1995:21)

From the quotation above people can see how strong of main character in the way Susan's struggle to rise and shine her father after her mother's death. She also tries to only remember beautiful thing about what happen in the past between her mother and herself. It indicates that she has been genuine to let her mother go in a better place. Besides that, she also tries to amuse her father with inviting him on

holiday in France. She hopes that the holiday will help his father to forget about his sadness and begin to live his life as usual.

### **3.1.3 Point of View**

This memoir uses first person 'I' as point of view to tell readers how this story occurs. As this story based on a true story, 'I' that the author means is herself, Susan Wicks. Readers may feel interested in the story because it raises the same theme with their daily life. On the other hand, Susan also has much information and understands the story so that she can describe the setting or memory that she experiences in the past with very detail.

In addition, the use of 'I' as a point view in this memoir makes readers feel that they are involved in that story. They may feel if this is their own experiences which is making them quickly in understanding the content or the message that the memoir tries to convey.

### **3.1.4 The End of the Story**

The end of the story holds the important things to decide whether the story is interesting or not. The strength of this memoir lies in this way. A happy ending that occurs in this memoir makes readers feel amused and give motivation that how heavy their load or burden which happen to them, if they can manage it well

it will end up with a good thing. Readers can feel that motivation when they read Susan's monologue on the last pages.

The day of my mother dies the honeysuckle on the fence is bristling with massed trumpets. The glare of the sun on the pages of my book is almost unsustainable. I only have to hear my father's voice on the telephone to know I have always dreamed exactly like this. (Wicks, 1995:137)

From the quotation above readers can see at the end of the story Susan feels happy after all things that she has been through her family life. Everything goes right and her father can survive from his loss and disease. She can back to her normal life without worry too much about her father. At least she believes that she and her father will be surviving together.

### **3.2 The Weakness of the Memoir**

Weakness in this memoir lies on three things which are complicated plot, unnecessary sub-plot and unexplained character.

#### **3.2.1 Unnecessary Sub-Plot**

When readers read this memoir titled *Driving My Father*, they would immediately think that the story in this memoir focuses on the struggle of a child taking care of his father. Unfortunately, there are some sub-plot of the story that is told excessively and does not relate from the main story. This thing can be one of the weaknesses of this memoir. Another story may be added aiming to give some



information in the past, make this memoir more interesting or makes readers do not get bored. Readers can see that unnecessary sub-plot from two stories. First, when Susan told about her friends experiences with her parents. Second, when she remembers about her childhood. Both of those stories tell in more than two pages but there is no correlation with the main topic. However, too much unnecessary sub-plot makes this memoir's plot goes slowly and can distract readers when they read it. Better if this memoir adds more stories that center on Susan's struggle to take care of his father or this memoir still give another sub-plot but not too detail.

### **3.2.2 Complicated Plot**

Complicated plot is another weakness in the memoir *Driving My Father*. Events in this memoir are told randomly. It is true that not all memoirs are written in a chronological plot because there are some memoirs that use flashback styles in conveying their story. This memoir should be more organize when arranging the plot because the story in this memoir uses two styles, chronological and flashback plot. Complicated plot in this memoir can be seen in some monologue that Susan tells.

I dream of the perfect, the moment of recognition you have only in dreams. I meet someone and i look at them, and they look back at me. And they know. Sometimes i think i would do anything, drive anywhere, to preserve that simple know-ledge. (Wicks, 1995:72)

My parents would joke sometimes about death. Every few years my father would change his car for new one 'to see me out'. (Wicks, 1995:72)

From the quotation above people can see the complicated plot in the paragraph above. In the first paragraph Susan tells about her perfect dream that she met someone and that someone know her. Then she concludes that it is a sign if this is all just a matter of time and in the end everything will be alright. However, in the next paragraph suddenly she tells about her parents who joke about death. This is certainly making readers difficult in interpreting what the story means.

### **3.2.3 Unexplained Minor Characters**

Instead of giving a direct explanation or giving little information about who and what characters' role in that memoir, this memoir only mentions the name of it. It can be done with the purpose to make readers curious and read the memoir continuously, but it makes readers confuse when read it and will not enjoy it. Readers only focus on searching who is the character that the named already mention in the beginning of the story. However, they forget the main story that is told in the memoir. Unexplained minor character lies on early pages when Susan came to her house with a man named John and there is no description about him.

When John and I get to my parents' house, my mother's body has already been taken away. Julia and Anne are still here, waiting for us to come. The first thing they see as they drive up to the front door is the bunch of pinks they brought, in a vase on the front window-sill. It is my mother's last gift. (Wicks, 1995:3)

Based on the quotation above, unexplained character can be seen from the first page. On this page when Susan's mother was dead, she comes to her parents' house with a man named John. Unfortunately, this memoir does not give a detail about who is John either oral or written. Therefore, readers wonder about John's roles in this memoir and his relationship with Susan after they continually read some pages or from another character's dialogue. This thing can reduce people's comfort in enjoying this memoir.

I sit in the car waiting for Bridget to come out of her dancing lesson, and I think that dying must be like this. (Wicks, 1995:7)

Emily has made a mobile of paper cranes. They hang against the light, tipping gently in the draught from the door. (Wicks, 1995:10)

I was kneeling on the floor to change Bridget's nappy, and Emily came up behind me, screaming and hitting me on my back and shoulders. And my mother ran over and scooped her up and smacked her. 'You mustn't hit Mummy like that!' (Wicks, 1995:64)

Unexplained character also can be found on some pages. In some paragraphs, the narrator mentions Emily and Bridget's names many times without giving an explanation of who and what their role is in this memoir. That name is also mentioned continually on the next pages without any information. However, readers finally find out what their role is through Susan's mother's conversation in other pages.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the review above, it can be concluded that memoir *Driving My Father* by Susan Wicks is an unconditional love story between parents and daughter which is told beautifully. Unconditional love in this memoir is not shown clearly, but it is reflected by the way her parents show their affection to her and her struggle to live up her father's spirit to live again and fight for his disease.

In this memoir, Susan as the main character wants to say that love and attention are the most important things that parents are needed. Gathering and spending time with them can be the best medicine to make them happy instead of giving them a luxurious house or wealth. Moreover, this memoir also changes their perception of father figure which is identical with cruel character. Fathers are parents who are very concerned about their children, although he expresses his affection in a different way.

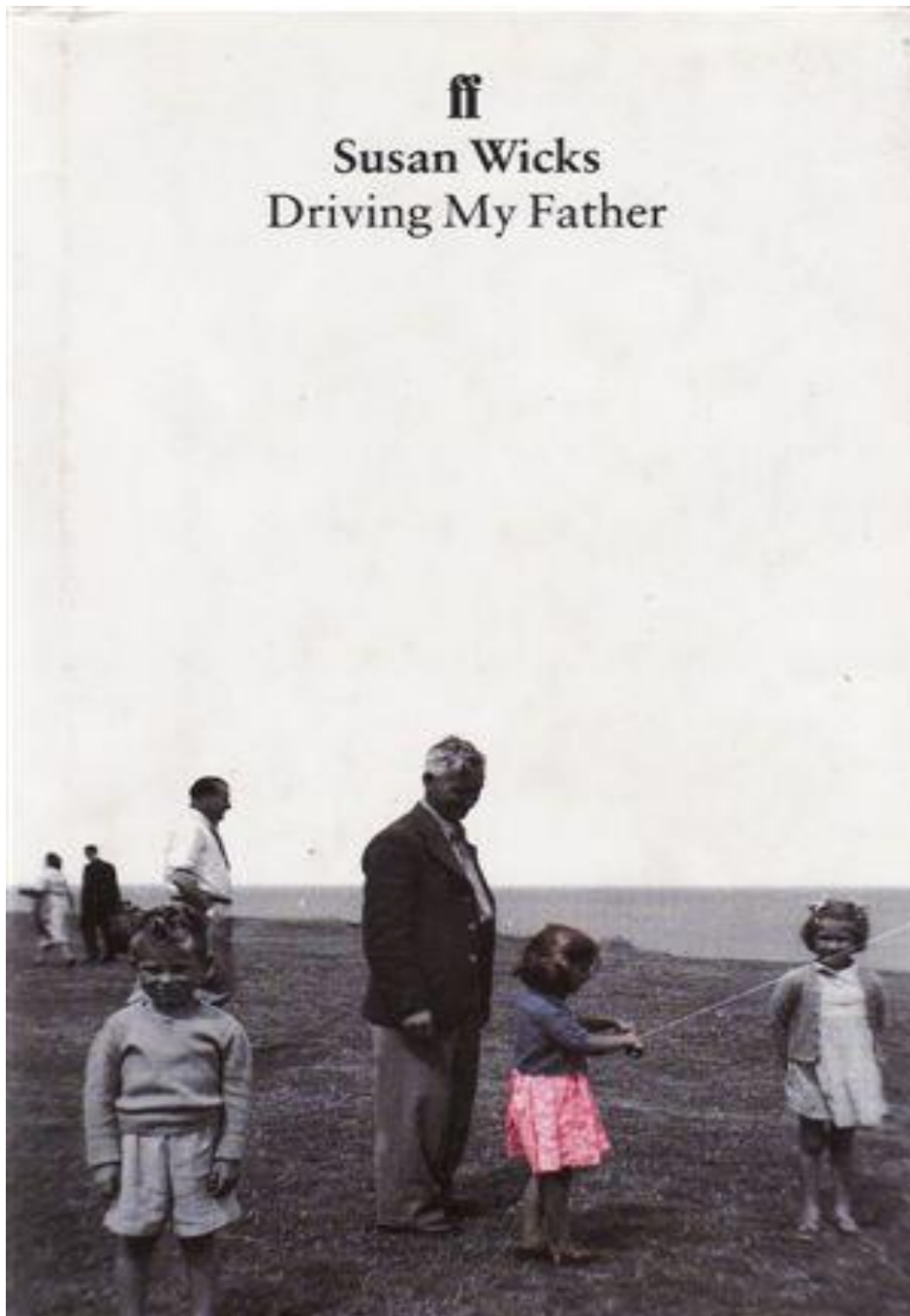
Even though there are a number of weaknesses in this memoir, such as unexplained character and complicated plot, this memoir deserve to be read by anyone because it has simple story but deep meaning and also contains of moral value that readers can learn from.

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Appendix 1

COVER



## Appendix 2

### Product Details

Author : Wicks, Susan

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Language : English

Genre : Fiction

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