

## HISTORICAL EVENTS OF SECOND WORLD WAR IN FRANCE IN HANNAH'S *THE NIGHTINGALE* NOVEL: HISTORICISM APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The Second World War is a big event that happened in the past which involved almost all countries in the world and was recorded in the history of human life. *The Nightingale* is a novel set in the Second World War in France, written by Kristin Hannah. This research aims to find out and explain about historical events of the Second World War in France portrayed in *The Nightingale* novel using historicism. It is an approach that relates to the historical contexts themselves in understanding the history that exists in a literary work. In addition, this research also used a qualitative method was employed to fulfill the objectives of this research. The results showed that *The Nightingale* novel portrayed the historical events of the Second World War in France. Those descriptions of historical events were the Fall of France, Vichy in the persecution of the Jews, French resistance, and the liberation of France. In this case, the descriptions of these historical events were mostly portrayed in narration by Kristin Hannah.

**Keywords:** *The Nightingale* novel, literary criticism, and historicism

### ABSTRAK

Perang Dunia Kedua merupakan sebuah peristiwa besar yang pernah terjadi di masa lalu dimana hampir melibatkan seluruh negara di dunia dan tercatat dalam sejarah kehidupan manusia. *The Nightingale* adalah sebuah novel yang berlatar Perang Dunia Kedua di Perancis yang ditulis oleh Kristin Hannah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan dan menjelaskan peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah dari Perang Dunia Kedua di Perancis yang tergambarkan dalam novel *The Nightingale* menggunakan historisisme. Historisisme adalah sebuah pendekatan sejarah yang mengaitkannya dengan konteks sejarah itu sendiri dalam memahami sejarah yang ada dalam sebuah karya sastra. Sebagai tambahan, penelitian ini juga menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk memenuhi tujuan penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa novel *The*

*Nightingale menggambarkan peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah Perang Dunia Kedua di Perancis. Gambaran peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah tersebut adalah Jatuhnya Perancis, Vichy dalam persekusi orang-orang Yahudi, perlawanan orang-orang Perancis dan pembebasan Perancis. Dalam hal ini, gambaran-gambaran peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah tersebut paling sering digambarkan dalam bentuk narasi oleh Kristin Hannah.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** *Novel The Nightingale, kritik sastra dan historisisme.*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Second World War is a big event that happened in the past that involved almost all the countries in the world and is recorded in the history of human life. This war lasted for approximately six years, starting from 1939 to 1945. In this case, France is one of the countries that also declared war against Germany in September 1939. But only some months later, Germans successfully invaded and occupied France. Tells about history we can know it by reading historical books, watching historical news or something else. But now we can also know about history through literary works. One of the literary works that tell about history is The Nightingale novel written by Kristin Hannah.

This novel is set in the Second World War in France and tells the story of the life of French civilians during Second World War. At that time, France joins in declaring war but finally, it gives up on German. France becomes a country that is successfully controlled by the Nazi Germany occupation. As a result of the occupation of the Nazis, the lives of French citizens become worse day by day. Apart from French citizens, Jews living in France cities also experience many painful events. Even at that time, Jewish citizens are arrested and executed by Nazi Germany. The atrocities committed by Nazi Germany against the France state make French citizens try and fight against Nazi occupation during the Second World War. When the Second World War ends, French citizens who save people's lives are awarded the honor of being a hero. Based on the reading of the novel, describes the historical events that occurred during Second World War. Then, to understand the historical events the researcher used historicism which requires need historical context to help to understand and explain the historical events of the Second World War in France.

In this case, this research focused to analyze the historical events of the Second World War in France portrayed in The Nightingale novel. The objectives of this research were to explain and find out historical events of the Second World War in France portrayed in Hannah's The Nightingale novel. This research is expected can describe and give an understanding of the historicism approach in literature and how it is applied in the novel. Hopefully, this research can be an inspiration and reference for future researchers.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **1. Novel**

Novel is a part of literary work which has a long story. It is a long fictional narrative written in prose, which is developed from the novella and other early forms of narrative (Bonn 111). Furthermore, Taylor also added that novel is a literary work that describes the general structure, and then it will be identified based on the historical fact or condition from human experiences (39). It can be concluded that a novel is a form of literary work that has a long story told in a narrative form and it is usually based on history from human experiences.

### **2. Setting**

The setting tells about the time, place, also atmosphere. According to Chatman “place” is called a setting (63). In this case, the setting is an intrinsic element that interprets the place or background of the events and describes how the events happened. Setting in a literary work consists of three major components. They are the setting of time, place, and atmosphere.

### **3. Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism is the study, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of literature. The word "criticism" comes from the ancient Greek noun "Krites", which has the meaning "judge" (Habib 10). Lund also explained that “everyone who expresses an opinion about a book, a song, a play, or a movie is a critic, but not everyone's opinion is based upon a thought, reflection, analysis, or consistently articulated principles” (96). Based on the definition, literary criticism refers to the analysis and judgment of works of literature. Besides, literary criticism helps readers to develop their critical thinking skills, because it is a way of human response to literature.

Literary criticism has an important function in the study of literature. It improves the reader's general reading skill and has functioned as a tool to help solve problems of understanding what we read too (Gillespie 2). Otherwise, literary criticism supports the development of critical thinking skills. Through literary criticism, the readers know and understand literary works more deeply. There are many theories in literary criticism study. A theory is a specific approach or method that the reader has understood to apply in explaining literature (Gillespie 3). In this case, one of the theories in literary criticism is historicism.

### **4. Historicism**

The term ‘historicism’ was coined by German philosopher Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel in 1797. He was usually called Friedrich Schlegel who was a German poet, critic, and scholar and the younger brother of [August Wilhelm Schlegel](#) (Wells 38). Historicism exists to offer and refer to a philosophy that stresses discussion, criticism, or study of the importance of

history (Rosen 2). Based on the explanation above, historicism refers to discussions about events that happened in the past that people usually called with history.

In literature theory, “historicism (or ‘historicism’ in this translation of Curtius’ *Historismus*) is a critical movement insisting on the prime importance of historical context to the interpretation of texts of all kinds” (Hamilton 2). It means that historicism can be applied to all text kinds including literary text. The term ‘historicism’ is usually reserved for that approach to literature that sets it in the context of the ideas and attitudes of the period in which a work was written. Historicism aims to make works of different periods more accessible to the modern reader by understanding and reconstructing the historically appropriate background. It affects an understanding and judgment of the work concerned (Fowler 108). In addition, Hamilton explained that “pursuit of the logic of historical explanation suggests that understanding the past is much more like the literary or critical activity of interpreting a text than that of discovering a new object of science” (Hamilton 17). It means that understanding the history of historicism can not be separated from its interpretation of a text. Historicism is concerned with the role of historical context in interpreting literary text and the role of literature in interpreting history.

## **5. Historical Events Of Second World War in France**

In historical memory, the Second World War lasted approximately six years from 1939 to 1945. According to McNeese in his book *World War II* that the Second World War began on September 1, 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland (39). Then, two days after the invasion, France also declared war on Germany (40). But only a few months later, France also became a country that was successfully invaded by the Germans. As a country involved in Second World War, France experienced many events in its war with Germany. These events include the following.

### **a. The Fall of France**

The fall of France occurred in June 1940. This event was marked by the success of the Germans entering to Paris area on 14 June 1940 (McNeese 44). Then, some days later, Petain as a French Prime Minister broadcasted via radio announcing that France had to stop fighting the Germans (Julian 143). Finally, the fall of France was officially marked by the armistice agreement between Germany and France. In the armistice agreement, France agreed to the division of two areas, namely the free zone and the occupation zone (Julian 232).

### **b. Vichy in Persecution of the Jews**

Vichy is a new government formed after the armistice agreement between France and Germany which is located in the free zone area. The government system is also known as the Vichy government because it is based in the city of Vichy and is led directly by Marshal Philip Petain (Karel 3). According to Stephani, during the World War, Vichy also formed laws similar to the Nazis in treating Jews and was known as a government that had racial

and anti-Semitic values (37). In line with this, Robin also said that “Vichy government was also anti-Semitic in outlook and responsible for the identification and subsequent deportation of many French Jews. In this regard, Vichy had also been a Nazi collaborator in the movement to execute Jews (83).

### **c. French Resistance**

The French resistance movement began with de Gaulle's call asking the French to continue the resistance against the Germans even though at that time Petain had called on the French people to stop fighting again (Thomas and Michael 135). According to Davies in a book entitled *France and the Second World War: resistance, occupation, and liberation* explain that resisters came from all walks of life, acted on different motivations and originated from both north and south of the German-imposed zonal divide (38). In addition, Robin also said that the people who fought came from the community including ex-soldiers, civilians, and women (83). It can be concluded that the opponents who carried out the resistance were based on different reasons and consisted of military troops or former military troops, ordinary people, and even French women who also joined the resistance group.

### **d. Liberation of France**

After four years of occupation by the Germans, France finally moved to make liberation. It began on June 6, 1944, with the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy. As mentioned by Thomas in his journal “*France under Occupation: memory, myth, and misogyny*” on June 6, 1944, allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy in northwestern France and began the liberation of France (20). Furthermore, McNeese also explained that slowly Allied armies advanced from the beaches of Normandy until, by the end of July, the Allies managed to break through German lines (101). The battle provided many victories against the allies, these victories prompted the Germans to surrender and leave the occupied territory. Until finally on August 25, 1944, France finally broke free from the war after four years of Nazi occupation. Slowly the war began to end. By mid-September, the Allies had managed to expel almost all German troops from France (102).

## **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **1. Research Design**

The method in this research is selected by considering its appropriateness with the research object. According to Flick, qualitative research is research that analyzes the subjective meaning of a problem or event by collecting non-standard data and using text and images rather than numbers and statistics for analyzing them (472). Based on the explanation, qualitative research describes as relevant research in this research.

## **2. Data and Source of Data**

In this research, the researcher used a novel entitled *The Nightingale* as a source of data. This novel was written by Kristin Hannah and published in 2015 that consisted of 39 parts. The other sources of data in this research included books and journals which had a close relationship with the research about historical events of the Second World War in France. Furthermore, the data in this research were narrations and dialogues that relate to historical events of France in the Second World War from *The Nightingale* novel.

## **3. Research Instrument**

This research used the researcher herself as the research instrument. According to Patton's quotation in Steward, the researcher is the instrument and that is why the credibility of qualitative research findings relies to a great extent on the researcher's skill (293). For that reason, the instrument of this research was the researcher herself who had a role in collecting and analyzing the historical events portrayed in *The Nightingale* novel.

## **4. Data Collection**

The researcher applied systematic ways to collect the data. First, the researcher read comprehensively. It means that the researcher read the novel repeatedly in an effort of gaining an understanding of the meaning of the novel. Moreover, the researcher also read historical contexts related to historical events of the Second World War in France. Second, the researcher focused on Highlighting and writing all of the data. The data were related to historical events in the form of narrations and dialogues in *The Nightingale* novel.

## **5. Data Analysis**

In this analysis, the researcher used the data analysis technique from Yin which requires data analysis in five steps, compiling, disassembling, reassembling and arraying, interpreting, and concluding (177).

1. The researcher compiled the data which related to historical events of the Second World War in France in the forms of narrations and dialogues in *The Nightingale* novel
2. The researcher disassembled the data by classifying the narration and the dialogue of the novel based on the historical events of the novel.
3. The researcher arrayed the data that had been classified.
4. The researcher developed the data through description and explanation the data.
5. Finally, the researcher gave conclusions from the results of the data analysis.

## 6. Triangulation

Hales states that triangulation is the method to analyze the problems from some points of view (12). Furthermore, Denzin identified the types of triangulation into four types of triangulation such as data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Based on four types of triangulation, the researcher applied data triangulation. Because in conducting this research, the researcher used *The Nightingale* novel and historical contexts as the data sources to validate the accuracy of data findings.

## D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this point, the researcher aims to explain and find out the historical events of the Second World War in France in Hannah's *The Nightingale* novel using the historicism approach.

### 1. The Fall of France

This event was marked by the success of Germans troops entering the Paris area on June 14, 1940 (McNeese 44). In *The Nightingale* novel, this event is described through the following narration.

#### Data 1

**She heard a high whistling sound only seconds before she saw the black flotilla in the sky, like birds flying in formation. Aeroplanes. "Boches," her father whispered. Germans. German aeroplanes, flying over Paris. The whistling sound increased, became like a woman's scream, and then somewhere—maybe in the second arrondissement, she thought—a bomb exploded in a flash of eerie bright light, and something caught fire. (Hannah 35)**

Inside the apartment, Isabelle and her father were looking at the situation in the Paris area behind their apartment window. In the narration above, Isabelle heard a very loud whistle and the whistling sound turned out to be from German planes flying in the sky of Paris. At that time, Isabelle also heard the explosion of a bomb. In addition, Isabelle's father also saw German soldiers in the area. Based on the situation, showed up that in June, Germans troops had succeeded to get in Paris area.

### 2. Vichy in Persecution of the Jews

Vichy was a new form of government that stands in the city of Vichy in the free zone area and is led directly by Marshal Philip Petain (Karel 7). During his reign, Vichy was involved in the execution of Jews in France. One form of the Vichy government's involvement was to help identify Jews in France (83). In this case, one form of data in *The Nightingale* novel that describes Vichy's involvement is contained in the following conversation.

## Data 2

**“You are to separate the foreign-born Jews,” said the gendarme, who she hadn’t noticed had followed her. “Pardon?” she said, taking out another card. This one was for “Berr, Simone.” “That box there. The empty one. Separate the Jews born in France from those born elsewhere. We are only interested in foreign-born Jews. Men, women, and children.” “Why?” “They’re Jews. Who cares? Now get to work.” (Hannah 241)**

At that time, Isabelle got a new job as an administrative officer in the French police who served at night. As a new worker, Isabelle was directed by the French police to separate cards containing information on Jews born in France and those born abroad. However, Isabelle was confused, and then she asked the French Police why they did this. But without a long explanation, the French police just said that they were Jews. Based on these data, French police were collecting data on Jews in France. This was the first step taken by the French police before carrying out the deportation of Jews in France who will then be executed in camps in Germany.

## 3. French Resistance

According to Davies in a book entitled *France and the Second World War: resistance, occupation, and liberation* explain that resisters came from all walks of life, they acted on different motivations and they originated from both north and south of the German-imposed zonal divide (38). In addition, Robin also said that the people who fought came from the community including ex-soldiers, civilians, and women (83). It can be concluded that the opponents who carried out the resistance were based on different reasons and consisted of military troops or former military troops, ordinary people, and even French women who also joined the resistance group. In this case, Hannah describes the form of resistance from French society through French women, namely Isabelle. According to Bertram, French women took on many roles in the resistance, such as they helped repatriate downed pilots and other escapees, spreading secret news, gathering intelligence, leading armed forces, and so on (369). In addition, Joanna also said that women took on many important and even dangerous roles in the fight. One form of resistance was hiding Jews from the Nazis (43). In the novel, the description of the resistance carried out by the French people is contained in the following conversation.

## Data 3

**Henri reached into a leather bag that hung on his chair and pulled out a sheaf of papers. A headline jumped out at her: “Vive le Général de Gaulle.” The text was an open letter to Maréchal Pétain that expressed criticism of the surrender. At the end it read, “Nous sommes pour le général de Gaulle.” We support Général de Gaulle. “Well?” Henri said quietly, and in that single word, Isabelle heard the call to arms**



she'd been waiting for. "Will you distribute them?" "Me?" "We are communists and radicals," Henri said. "They are already watching us. You are a girl. And a pretty one at that. No one would suspect you." Isabelle didn't hesitate. "I'll do it." (Hannah 103)

Previously, Henri saw Isabelle destroyed a poster containing a picture of Hitler. Henri then went to Isabelle and explained who he was and why he met Isabelle. In the data of the conversation, Henri asked Isabelle to distribute paper leaflets to residents that criticized the Petain government for the surrender of France to Germany and also contained support for de Gaulle. The purpose of distributing the leaflets was so that the public could understand what was going on and realized that France had not lost the war. In addition, another purpose of distributing the paper leaflets was to invite the public to continue the resistance to the Nazi occupation as called for by de Gaulle. Without thinking, Isabelle then agreed to Henri's invitation to distribute the secret paper leaflets.

Based on these data, the situation of the first resistance is depicted by Isabelle who was a French woman. In this case, Isabelle would fight back by distributing secret paper leaflets to French citizens. It was hoped that there would be many French citizens who supported de Gaulle's resistance movement and would join and fight against the Germans. Isabelle's act of choosing to join the resistance group and distributing the secret leaflets reflected a form of resistance by the French people.

#### **4. Liberation of France**

After nearly four years of the German occupation of France, the Allied forces finally started their march for the Liberation of France. The liberation of France occurred in 1944, marked by the successes of the allied forces in conducting battles with the Germans. As for *The Nightingale* novel, the liberation of France is first described through narration below.

##### **Data 4**

**"Von Richter was getting meaner. Angrier. The Allied forces had landed in southern France and begun liberating towns. The Germans were losing the war, and Von Richter seemed hell-bent on making Vianne pay for it."** (Hannah 377)

Von Richter was the second Nazi to live with Vianne after Captain Beck. However, Von Richter's attitude was much different from that of Captain Beck, Von Richter was a Nazi who was cruel and likes to hurt Vianne. In this quote, Von Richter's attitude turned increasingly cruel and angry. It was because the war conditions have turned around, and the battle between Germany and the allies had given many victories to the allies. In the narrative, the allied forces managed to land in the South of France and began to liberate cities in France.

Based on the description of the narrative above, it is described that in August 1944, the state of war began to turn around and sided with the allies. In this case, the allies gained victory in their battle with the Germans. The victory they obtained also made the cities in France began to be liberated. It is in line with McNeese's statement that on August 15 a joint U.S.–French

invasion force landed along the coast of Southern France and began moving up the Rhône Valley against inadequate German resistance (101). One after another, the battles had brought victory to the allies. In addition, the success they got had a great influence on France. According to Ousby in Davis, slowly but it was sure that the victory had made the colonizers out by force from France (53).

## **E. CONCLUSION**

In this section, the researcher gives conclusions based on the findings of this research. In this research, the researcher found four historical events are portrayed in *The Nightingale* novel. They are the fall of France, Vichy in the persecution of the Jews, French resistance, and liberation of France. They were portrayed through narration and conversation in the novel.

The historical events of the Second World War in France are portrayed in *The Nightingale* novel beginning with the fall of France that occurred in June 1940. It was marked by the success of the Germans entering to Paris area. The second is about Vichy in the persecution of the Jews. It was marked by the actions of the French police who identified Jews in France. The third is about the French resistance. It was marked by the actions taken by the French women against the German occupation of France. The last one was the liberation of France. It is marked by the victories obtained by the allies in their battle with Germany. The victory obtained by the allies slowly managed to make the Nazis left the place they occupied.

In this case, the historical events of the Second World War in France in Hannah's *The Nightingale* novel are described according to what happened during the Second World War in France. So, through this research, the reader can know the historical events of the Second World War that happened in France by reading the novel.

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