

Realism and the Symbol of Cafe in Ernest Hemingway's *A Well-Lighted Place*

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Abstract

*This study aims to identify the elements of realism contained in the short story entitled *A Clean Well Lighted Place* by Ernest Hemingway. This study uses qualitative research method. The approach used is literary sociology using structuralism theory focusing on the analysis of intrinsic elements, namely character and setting. The analysis shows that this short story represents Ernest Hemingway's realism. This can be seen from the appearing characters and settings which are part of the middle or lower class society. In addition, the cafe in this short story also shows the author's desire for a peaceful social situation; the opposite of industrialization which is full of greed.*

Keywords: *realism, cafe, structuralism, character, and setting.*

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway has a sensitivity in capturing issues in the community. This is because he has an interest in the field of journalism. Since he was a teenager, he had a great desire in the world of writing. This led him to become a journalist.

In addition, his involvement in social community sharpens his sensitivity to social problems. In this case, Hemingway poured his ideas and opinions into several literary works. Until now, he is greatly admired in the world of literature.

In some of his literary works, Hemingway tells more about social facts of ordinary people. Some of the topics which become the contents of his works are issues that developed in society at that time. This is inseparable from the understanding of realism that was embraced by writers at that time. This made him a figure of realism in literature.

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place is one of the literary works that is full of the nuances of realism. This short story, which was published in 1926, is an ordinary story but has philosophical meaning.

In this essay, the research will reveal two things in the short story entitled *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. The first is to show realism; to uncover it, the

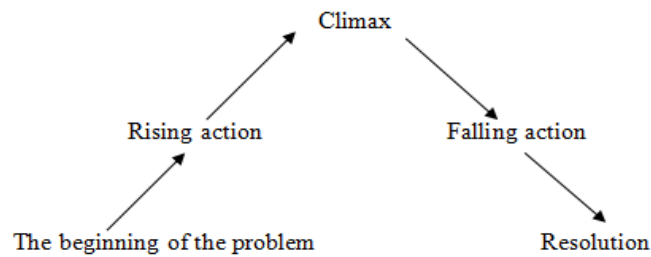
research begins by explaining the basic concepts of realism in literature. This concept is then used as a reference to show that this short story is a literary work of realism. The second is to explain the big theme that the author wants to convey by comprehending the author's biography to know his tendencies or interests in certain themes or issues during his life.

Literary Review

Theory of Structuralism

Etymologically the structure comes from the word *structura* which means shape or building (Ratna, 2010: 88). According to Faruk, structuralism is an understanding, a belief, that everything in this world has a structure, works structurally (2012: 173). Because structuralism is focused on the intrinsic aspect of a literary work, the elements forming the literary work, in this case the structure of the novel *Vanity Fair*, will be examined in terms of plot, character, characterization and storytelling viewpoint.

Boulton said that "*the plot is important to a novel as much as the skeleton is human body A plot is a story, a selection of events is set in time A true plot has causality; one thing leads to another ...*" (1975: 45). According to Boulton the plot has a beginning that will guide the reader towards the middle of the story then knowing the end of the story. The plot also has a pattern and contains motives, effects and relationships (1975: 46). Plots relate to the time of telling. Plots commonly encountered are those that move forward where all the events that occur in the novel occur in their order. Then flashback is a plot whose storytelling technique is backward, recounting events that happened in the past. The next is a plot that combines the two techniques (1975: 61). Furthermore Boulton mentioned that the plot is divided into main plot and sub plot. The main plot tells the main plot of the novel while the sub plot is a plot that supports the main plot (1975: 64-65). Wardoyo stated about the structural scheme that can also be used to analyze the plot of a literary work both novel and poem (2004). The scheme is as follows:



The beginning of the problem or incentive moment is an explanation of the initial situation. Then the situation begins to rise towards raising action where the problem or conflict begins. The peak of the conflict that occurs is called climax. The shooting action is the state when the conflict begins to subside. The last stage is resolution that is conflict resolution and the conflict is resolved.

Characterization can be identified from two methods, according to Pickering and Hoeper, namely the telling or direct method or and the showing method or indirect method (through Minderop, 2005: 4-6). The direct method includes characterization through the use of the names, appearance, and authorization (characterization by the author). The indirect method ignores the presence of the author, so that the characters in literary works can present themselves directly through their behavior (Minderop, 2005: 8-22).

The perspective of storytelling also takes an important role in the structure of the novel. Hick and Hutching said that "*Point of view is the position in which the narrator stands in relation to the story; the standpoint from which events are narrated*" (in Minderop, 2005: 89). According to Boulton "*Most mainstream novels are written from the point of view of an omniscient, or at least very well informed, narrator, who follows either one character, or several*" (1975: 31). "*This omniscient narrator can comment on anything he likes to comment on; he can analyze motives more objectively than a character can; he can describe things no other person could really see ...*" (Boulton, 1975: 39). Minderop added that narrators who were outside the story and reported events involving the characters ... knew various things about the characters, events and actions referred to *third person omniscient point of view* (2005: 97).

Realism

Realism is a flow that prioritizes the reality of life. Realist literature itself is opposite imaginary literature. What realist authors reveal are real things, that have happened, not merely imaginative. Biographies, autobiographies, true-stories, true story albums, historical romances, are examples of realist works. Realist literature is also different from newspaper news or incident reports, because it is not merely realistic. As a literary work, it was brought to life by an incandescent imagination and an enticing plastic language.

M.H. Abrams in his dictionary "*Glossary of Literary Terms*" states that realism is used in two senses:

- a. to identify literary movements in the nineteenth century, specifically fiction prose.
- b. to show ways of describing life in literature. Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction. In the romantic world life is presented more beautiful, more daring to take risks, and more heroic, than the real one.

The reality of life that is often displayed in realism literary works makes some literary works with this flow are analyzed using the approach of sociological literature. The plural theory used to analyze it is the theory of structuralism. This is because structuralism is an understanding which believes that everything exists in this world has a structure, works structurally as happens to society.

Discussion and Findings

Historical Social Background

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place is closely related to the realism of the author, Earnest Hemingway. Although he lived not in an era where realism in literary works emerged and developed, the characteristics of realism in his work is very bold.

Basically, this realism emerged in America around 1861-1865. That period coincided with a period of civil war (Barrish, 2011: 2). This period is the starting point for modernity in America. Although the United States formally declared itself as a state in 1776, at that time stretching progress in the economic, social or cultural sector was not yet seen. However, when understanding this realism emerged, developments in various aspects began to be felt especially in the

economic field. This is proven by the progress of industrialization in the United States.

Industrialization began to develop at this time. This has its own consequences on the social level. With massive industrialization, the phenomenon of urbanization from villages to cities was inevitable. In the end, the city became a magnet where people came to make a living. In addition, immigration is also another phenomenon. Lots of immigrants such as the ones from Mexico came to America. They wanted to find work in cities in the United States. (Gray, 2004: 341)

This phenomenon makes a very significant social change. With industrialization, uneducated people (workers) began to be displaced by educated people. In addition, social strata are formed based on the status of each person.

In this case, the authors of literary works could not avoid this social situation. Many literary works came up with the theme of everyday problems at that time. In this case, literary works were indirectly affected by social conditions. Thus, literary works began to talk about social facts. This is a characteristic of realism literary in which a literary work usually deals with the subject everyday life (Barrish, 2011: 5)

When literary works are positioned as creations that raise problems every day, the authors of literary works are seen as observers who have high objectivity in seeing problems in society. Therefore, the realist author is considered as a professional who is able to view social problems accurately and in detail.

More than that, literary works are no longer something enjoyed by some people with a certain social status. However, literary works can also be enjoyed by the middle and lower classes. This cannot be separated from industrialization where literary works can be mass produced. With paper factory and publisher, everyone can enjoy literature. Because the readers of literary works are the wider community, realist authors raise more social themes in daily life.

Ernest Hemingway did not live in an era where this understanding of realism developed. However, this understanding was still shared by authors in America during the Hemingway's era. More than that, American authors at this time still have an understanding of realism.

Novel Analysis

This short story will be analyzed using structuralism theory. Structuralists believe that the main idea in a literary work can be identified by connecting all elements in a literary work (Hawkes, 1977: 16). Therefore, each element of literary work cannot stand alone. The elements to be analyzed are characters and settings.

a. Character

This short story tells about a deaf old man who spends time lingering in a cafe. This old man is the main character in the short story. This figure does not tell nor speak much, but other figures (two waiters) who tell the story of the main character. One of the main characters' habits is staying in the cafe until late. He will spend the night with brandy. He is told as a drunk old man

"He's drunk now," he said.

"He's drunk every night."

Another figure in this short story tells that this old man is in an unstable condition. At one time, he had tried to commit suicide but this attempt was thwarted by his nephew. His desire to end his life by hanging himself was not due to economic problems. This old man is not poor.

"What about?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know it was nothing?"

"He has plenty of money."

This character was a representation of parents in America at that time. In the industrial era, the role of parents seemed to be absent. Industrialization only required people who had expertise. Meanwhile, this figure was not an educated person. Parents were considered as unproductive people in the industrial era. Therefore, this character spent more time in the café. He drank whiskey until he got drunk at the café every night. He did this because there was nothing else he could do. The world was no longer like the world when he was a teenager.

The period of industrialization was a period where people must be productive. They were required to work hard to earn money. People were money oriented during this period. They assumed that happiness could only be obtained when people had much money. In other words, they were happy provided they had abundant wealth.

Other characters in this story were the cafe waiters. There are two cafe waiters, the young and the old one. This young cafe waiter was told as a character who was emotional. This made the character of this young servant was unable to understand what was felt by the main character (the old man). This was seen when the young servant started be irritated by the main character when the main character stayed the café until late. His frustration is seen in the diologue below:

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleague. "I'm sleepy now. I never got into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."

In the dialogue above, the young waiter really wanted this old man to return home immediately so he could close the café and went home. To him, the house was a more comfortable place than to be outside the home. This what made the young waiter unable to understand the way the old character lived his life. To the old character, enjoying solitude was the culmination of all happiness. By drinking brandy until late at night, the old character would feel happy.

The character of this young waiter is the representation of American society in the industrial era. For people who live in the industrial era, happiness is in the form of material. Therefore, they devote their energy and time to earn money. For them, happiness is characterized by how much money they can collect. They will use their time to work. Meanwhile, they deny the happiness that can be obtained from other than work such as having fun or sightseeing.

The portrait of industrialized society is the same as the young servant character in this short story. He has no understanding of how the old character spends his time just getting drunk late into the night. For the young servant character, it is of no use. In fact, these activities are not as productive as what people in the industrial era must do.

Another character is an old cafe waiter. He is the opposite of a young waiter. The old waiter is able to understand the state of the main character who liked to stay in the cafe until late at night. For the old servant, happiness is what the old character does in which he is happy with a calm atmosphere. For young people who lived in an era before American industrialization, material was not the defining aspect of happiness. This is what is shown by the two characters of the old men in the short story.

The three characters above show that this short story is a representation of the author's understanding of realism. None of the three characters above are told as part of upper class society. The main character in this short story is deaf drunk parents. Although he was told as a person who had enough money, he was not a nobleman. This can be demonstrated by his habit of being drunk until late at night in the cafe. In this case, the cafe here is not a symbol of a place for upper class society. The cafe here is described as a peaceful place, especially for parents. In addition, the two other figures are also not people from upper class society. This can be seen from their type of work. Waiters are not jobs for the upper classes. Ernest Hemingway's realism understanding as an author is very clear as reflected by these three characters,.

b. Setting

The setting in this short story is a cafe. Just like the title of this short story, the cafe is described as a clean and illuminated place with proper light (not dim nor too bright)

It was the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You don't want music. Certainly you don't want music.

In this short story, the cafe is described as a clean and pleasant place. From the quote above, for some people, a pleasant place is a place that is equipped with the sound of music. However, this cafe does not need music to make this place comfortable and pleasant. Everything needed to make this place (the cafe) comfortable is well-lit and clean conditions.

This is the opposite of the bar which is another setting in this short story. The bar here is said to be a place illuminated by bright lights. However, the bar is not a cozy place like the cafe.

He disliked bars and bodegas. A clean, well-lighted cafe was a very different thing.

The two settings used by the author in this short story show that there are differences between the two. First, the old people (represented by the main character and the older servant) prefer the cafe rather than a bar as a comfortable place. This is the author's alignment to lead the reader that the cafe is the main

setting in the story. Meanwhile, the bar is made into a comparative cafe where the bar is not better than the cafe.

It can then be concluded that the cafe is a symbol of a place for ordinary people. This cafe is not equipped with fancy equipment such as music that can be found in the bar. A cafe is just a place located on a side street. The natural impression is also seen when the shadow of the leaves is formed because of the light rays that illuminate the leaves.

Through the character of these old men, Hemingway wants to express his dream of a peaceful America. He wants America to be like a café, not a bar. America should be a beautiful place with a natural impression. For Hemingway, a developed country must not be identified with luxury. Countries with culture must blend with nature where people can live happily. They do not hurt each other. On the other hand, the relationship between society and nature is harmonious.

In other words, a cafe is a symbol of a comfortable place to live. Meanwhile, the bar is a symbol of the era of industrialism that is full of luxury. In this short story, Hemingway wants to emphasize that the luxury represented by the "bar" as a symbol of the industrial era is not the answer to prospering society. However, this industrialization actually made a gap between the rich and the mikin.

This is Hemingway's critique of the American government. After World War I was over, America turned into a mere economy-oriented country. Capitalism that began to develop made social inequalities increasingly clear. Basically, Hemingway longed for America as a country full of peace where American society can live happily.

c. Cafe as a *Clean, Well-Lighted Place*

As explained in the previous sub-chapter, one of the settings in this short story is a café which is described as a clean, well-lighted place.

The cafe is described as a clean place, though this does not mean that the café is regularly cleaned. It is described as a clean place since the old man who is a regular visitor is a clean man. Even when he is drunk, he never throws up his beer on the chair where he sits.

On the other hand a bar is viewed differently. Even though both bar and café are places where people commonly come for some beers until they get drunk, the bar is described as an *unpolished* place which is the opposite meaning of clean.

"The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished," the waiter said.

They spill beer on the table or on chairs. In this short story, the bar is identified as a dirty place because many drunk visitors spill their drinks on the table. This situation refers to the industrial era where people are only looking for pleasure without regard for others and the environment. As what has happened in America, the industrial era was very unfriendly to nature. Industrialization only focuses on production exploitation as much as possible regardless of the environment.

From the explanation above, bar visitors are different from café visitors. Even though the visitors are drunkards, there is one significant difference that becomes a big theme in this short story. This visitor's character is a symbol of both places. The drunk visitors who littered the bar were representations of people in the era of greedy American industrialization. As explained in the historical setting, Ernest Hemingway is an author living in the American industrial era. Capitalism that began to grow made industry more selfish without thinking about the environmental impact. What they do is only to fulfill their greed.

This is different from the main character who is a cafe visitor. He is a clean figure. In this case, clean is defined as people who protect the environment. Getting drunk is an act of pleasing oneself. However, he never spills his beer on a table or chair. This implies that he wants to fulfill his desires without harming others or the environment.

The young cafe waiter is described as a figure who wants to immediately close the cafe and go home. In this short story, the young cafe waiter has different opinion about cafes. For the main character (the old man) and also the old cafe waiter, the cafe is a comfortable place. In this case, the cafe is a peaceful world for humanity. Cafe (which is a symbol of a peaceful place) is a place without greed. People who are happy with this place (cafe) are the old ones. In other words, young people (as represented by the young waiter) prefer bars which are symbols of greed. Young people still want worldly things. This is in accordance with the quotation below.

"You have youth, confidence, and a job," the older waiter said. "You have everything."

On the other hand, young people do not know the importance of peace. They think more about matter than the peaceful mind

"You don't understand. This is a clean and pleasant cafe. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves."

Conclusion

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place represents the realism of Ernest Hemingway as the author. This can be seen from the characters and settings that appear in the short stories which symbolize the middle or lower class society. The social conditions shown by this short story, mainly through the description of the characters and their settings, are the real picture of the social conditions at that time.

Meanwhile, the café which is described as *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* further strengthens the impression of the author's realism. The cafe in this story serves as a natural protection from the despair felt by the characters in the story. In clean, brightly lit Cafe, despair can actually be controlled and even temporarily forgotten. In addition, the cafe in this short story also shows the author's desire for a peaceful social situation which is the opposite of industrialization that is closely related to greed at that time.

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