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Genetic Structuralism Analysis in “Go Set A Watchman” by Harper Lee

Análisis del Estructuralismo Genético en Go Set a Watchman por Harper Lee

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to create a literature sociological analysis of the novel *Go Set a Watchman*. This study aims to reveal the worldview of the author by using Genetic Structuralism theory. The focus of the research is as follows; 1) Analyzing the literary structure of the novel 2) The social background of Harper Lee in relation with the novel 3) The historical events and condition of the society 4) The author's world view in the novel. The result of the analysis shows that Harper Lee sees the conditions of the society, at the time the novel was written.

Keywords: Problematic character, racism, social conflict, world view.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es crear un análisis sociológico de la novela *Go Set a Watchman*. Este estudio tiene como objetivo revelar la cosmovisión del autor mediante el uso de la teoría del estructuralismo genético. El foco de la investigación es el siguiente; 1) Análisis de la estructura literaria de la novela 2) El trasfondo social de Harper Lee en relación con la novela 3) Los acontecimientos históricos y la condición de la sociedad 4) La visión del mundo del autor en la novela. El resultado del análisis muestra que Harper Lee ve las condiciones de la sociedad, en el momento en que se escribió la novela.

Palabras clave: Carácter problemático, conflicto social, racismo, visión del mundo

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of racism is a very familiar name in many field of study. America in particular, have been the most notably known as the source material for a study about racism. Unfortunately, as popular as it is, research and study about racism are always to some extent sugarcoated due to concerns of political correctness (Sirait, N. N., 2013). In a recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, David Reich, a Harvard geneticist, argued that scientists are unwilling to do research on—or, in some cases, even discuss—genetic variation between human populations, despite the fact that genetic variations do exist (Reich 2018). This piece received mixed reactions, drawing condemnation from social scientists because of its implication and praise from people approving the argument that discussion of racial differences has become taboo.

Although, justice is for all human kind (Rosmalinda, & Arif., 2018), this could not be helped at a time when white supremacists are openly marching in the streets of America. Perhaps, any writing that invokes the notion of racial study will inevitably sparks cultural war and political debate due to its sensitivity. However, it is not always the case, "*To Kill a Mockingbird*" and "*Go Set a Watchman*" is an American classic novelette by Harper Lee that has endured almost six decade maintaining its success and popularity.

It is not like corruption and security issues (Putra, A. M., Pagalung, G., & Habbe, A. H., 2018; Putra, B. A., Darwis, & Burhanuddin, 2019), it is to be an argument anymore that racism exists, it is truly one of the oldest truism around. Albeit that, it is still important to highlight social issues that is still relevant to date. Hence, there will always be significance in reading and discussing literature written about racial relation. In accordance, this study seeks to critically read and discuss *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee using Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism theory in order to see how the text could be seen as a reflection of the society through the work of the author.

Difference with real character (Gunawan, D., Arisandi, D., Ginting, F. M., Rahmat, R. F., & Amalia, A., 2017), according to Luxemburg, a fictional world is a world that is not a part of reality, but in some aspects it is also similar with reality. When an author expresses their imagination, to create an imaginary universe filled with imaginary characters that does not exist in our reality, there is still a particular relatability with the characters and their journey that we could relate with our own experiences (Luxemburg, et al. 1989, 20).

It is not a coincidence that we could relate to those fictional characters. That is because literature is a product of human activity, born from human desire to understand, express, and to share their experiences with others (Pickering and Hoepfer 1981). In addition, according to Eagleton, these experiences are the product of their interaction with their society (Bressler 1999, 218), in other word the society shapes the form of literature that the author wrote, and the author wrote the ideas that he acquired from the society. In addition, Glickberg said that a literary work, does not matter how nihilistic it seems, was born because of a profound social concerns (Endraswara 2011, 77).

It is already established that in the novel *Go Set a Watchman*, historical event and social condition of the author do influence the text in a major way. In accordance, it opens up the possibility of *Go Set a Watchman* to be researched by using approach of sociology of literature, which in this study will be conducted by using by using Lucien Goldmann genetic structuralism theory. This theory was chosen because this theory was deemed to be appropriate in this situation, in a way that this theory does not only focus on the text for its analysis, but also on the historical and social conditions that produced the text.

Genetic structuralism theory aims to reveal the author's worldview expressed in the literary text that could only be seen after doing an analysis on the intrinsic element of the literary work, the author's social background, and the sociological and historical background influence at the time the work was written (Faruk 1986, 2). Genetic structuralism believes that understanding only the structure, or the intrinsic element of the novel, without considering the author's presence would not produce a meaningful and coherent analysis (Goldmann 1975, 7).

Author's world view is a concept introduced in genetic structuralism theory referring to the ideas, aspirations, and feelings that unite a particular group, which is expressed in the novel by the author as a

collective subject. Genetic structuralism method to reveal the author's world view is called as "whole-part" and "comprehension-explanation" method. In brief, "whole-part" method means understanding the structure of the novel, while "comprehension-explanation" method means we must relate the structure of the novel with the author's social structure.

Theoretical Framework

Although *Go Set a Watchman* was published in 2015, four year later this year in 2019 the novel has not been gaining much attention from the scholars. Despite that, the existing research and study that has been done by some scholars on this novel was quite diverse and interesting. One of the more common topic to be found on this novel was discussion about racial prejudice against black American. As seen in Abielah and Rahayuningsih study that covers similar topic, which are the prejudice in economic, politic, and law. The content and conclusion on both study was quite similar in which both are pointing out prejudices happened in the novel (Abielah 2016) (Rahayuningsih 2017). Other scholars studying this novel were Krol and Yuliani, whose research focused on the characterization in the novel. Yuliani focused on the characterization of mainstream American in the novel, and reached a conclusion that their character was heavily influenced by individualism ideology (Yuliani 2018). On the other hand, Krol study focused on one character instead, which is Jean Louise, and reached a conclusion that Jean Louise was influenced mostly by her father rather than her society (Krol 2016).

Reference regarding the application of genetic structuralism theory could be seen in the thesis by Gustaf Sitepu titled "Strukturalisme Genetik *Asmaraloka*", which used Goldmann's genetic structuralism theory on *Asmaraloka* novel. Gustaf thesis is interesting because his analysis does not stop on the novel *Asmaraloka*, but also continued on the author's other various work, in relation to the author's social context. In addition, Gustaf also added extra step using linguistic theory to analyze the most frequent word that is used in the novel by the author as a supporting claim. The thesis conclusion was drawn from the combination of genetic structuralism theory and linguistic theory, resulting in the conclusion that *Asmaraloka* novel was highly influenced by the conflicts surrounding Indonesia's government (Rahayuningsih, 2019) and religious group (Sitepu 2009).

Next is a journal article by Jennifer Jee-Lyn Garcia, PhD, and Mienah Zulfacar Sharif, MPH titled "Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Racism and Public Health". This article focused on racism and its consequences from the perspective of its everyday effects. This study aims to explain how dangerous it is to be black people in America, even in the present day, because black people are more likely to be the victim of racism (Garcia and Sharif 2015). This article has no similarity to the study that are conducted, however this article is relevant because it shows how a bad racial relation could lead into a dangerous living conditions for the participants involved.

Lastly is also a journal article by Mark C. J. Stoddart titled "Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A Critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power". This article discussed about the theory of ideology, hegemony, and discourse from a Marxist perspective. This article elaborates how ideology and discourse functions as a tool of hegemony, and how society could be aware and resistance against unequal relations of social power (Stoddart 2007). This article is relevant to this study since the study conducted also concerned about social relations and unequal power in society. Understanding how ideology and discourse affects the society would in turn provide more knowledge on how a society works, thus led to better understanding regarding the objective of this study.

Unfortunately, there are limited discussion on the novel using genetic structuralism theory. Therefore, one of the goals of this study is to fill in the gap and by doing an analysis on the novel using genetic structuralism theory, consequently would contribute something new to the discussion. The difference between these studies with the existing one is that this discussion will focus more on the ideological aspect in the novel by relating the structure of the literary work with the structure of the author's society, while the existing discussions are focused more on the literary aspect of the novel.

METHODOLOGY

This study will implement qualitative approach to process the collected data of words, phrases, and dialogues from the novel *Go Set a Watchman*. As cited from Creswell qualitative approach frequently used in an interpretative research, in other word a research that emphasize on the process of producing meaning and understanding the data collected (Creswell 1994, 145).

This approach is relevant for the study because in this study we will be applying dialectical method to analyze the data that we have acquired from the novel *Go Set a Watchman*. This method is frequently applied in a study that implements genetic structuralism theory for its research. The basis of this method is that the part and structure of the text would be meaningless if it is not unified with the text larger elements or structure, in other word it aims for the coherence of meaning (Endraswara 2011, 61).

On the account that this research was conducted by using qualitative approach and dialectical method, the data analyzed in this study consists of words, sentences, and dialogues from the novel *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee. In other word, the primary source of data for the study was acquired from Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman* published by Harper Collins Publisher, New York in 2015. The literary work contains 278 pages, consisting of 7 parts and 19 chapters.

This research also used secondary data in the form of books, articles, e-books, and website that will be referenced throughout this study to support the discussion in this research. The secondary data that was referenced in this study followed a certain criteria to keep it relevant with the analysis. For example, the biography of Harper Lee the author of the novel, the historical events around the time the novel was written, and works that are relevant to Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism theory.

The data collection in this study will refers back to the statement of the problem and the objective of the study that deal with Harper Lee's world view as portrayed through the novel *Go Set a Watchman*. To achieve the aim of the study accurately, the data collected will be following these 3 aspects: 1) The structure of the novel, 2) The author's biography, and 3) Historical events surrounding the birth of the novel. To analyze the structure of the novel, the data will be collected through a close reading method of *Go Set a Watchman* to gain relevant information based on the theoretical framework. The second section, the author's biography, will be collected from written documents, interviews, and internet sources documenting the life of the author, Harper Lee, and collecting information relevant to *Go Set a Watchman* novel. The last section, Historical events surrounding the birth of the novel, will be collected from various sources and references found on the biography of the author and on the internet, may it be in a form of audio or video recording, or written document. Even though the source of data is rarely used in scientific research, we will assume its validity and reliability because the likelihood of data to be forged is very slim.

As previously mentioned in the research approach, this study will implement dialectical method to process the data, which aims to seek the coherence of meaning. Goldmann introduced this method as whole part and comprehension-explanation concept, which means that each part is only meaningful when it is placed in a whole structure, and the structure could only be understood when we could comprehend each part that construct the structure.

Therefore, this study first step of data analysis will be to take apart the structure of the novel *Go Set a Watchman*, following the concept mentioned before. Then the second step will be interpreting parts of the novel, such as the characterization, plot, and theme. The next step of the analysis then will be to relate the elements of the novel with the social structure and the social group represented by the author. After the coherence of meaning have been achieved, then the world view of the author could be established.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As has been explained before, to understand the author's world view first we must understand the structure of the novel and its relation to the author's real world social context. This process is called as "whole-part" and "explanation-comprehension" approach. By understanding the part of the structure of the novel and what it means as a whole, the next process was understanding the real world social context of the author, and then finally relating the real world social context to the novel.

Go Set a Watchman novel tells a narrative that revolves around the theme of class conflict. Harper Lee used the theme of class conflict to express her perspective or worldview in her novel *Go Set a Watchman*. Understanding the structure of the novel is an important step in a study using genetic structuralism theory. The worldview of Harper Lee in the novel *Go Set a Watchman* then will be elaborated as follows.

From this novel, we could see how much Harper Lee felt uneasy with the worsening racial relation in the America, especially at the south, at the time the novel was written. This uneasiness stemmed from the fact that at the time America tends to make a decision that worsens the already bad racial relation. The Reconstruction period that happened at around 1865 through 1877 was a right step toward the bettering of racial relation in America, with the 14th and 15th amendment that allows blacks to vote and protected equally under the law. However, all the progress from the Reconstruction period would be erased by the collection of anti-black policy that was effective only in the southern states of America, known as "Jim Crow" laws.

Harper Lee was a southerner herself, but she felt uneasy with the social conflicts that is created by "Jim Crow" laws. "Jim Crow" laws control many aspects of social life, it prohibits blacks from using the same public facilities, such as public transportation and public school, as the whites, and voting was made harder, and even prohibited in some states, for black people because many could not pass the voter literary tests, and prohibition of interracial marriage, and clauses that made it possible for a business to separate their white and black costumers. It was made worse because of "separate but equal" ruling on *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which later allows for segregated restaurant, public restroom, and even water fountain.

Harper Lee's perspective on these laws is that the white supremacist would do anything to preserve segregation in the south. The laws was made to protect the people of power, whose mostly a white person, at the time, by making interaction between the whites and blacks impossible because of the segregation, and by prohibiting the blacks to vote worrying that the blacks would took their position. Harper Lee's response toward this policies could be seen from this quotation.

The white supremacists are really pretty smart. If they can't scare us with the essential inferiority line, they'll wrap it in a miasma of sex, because that's the one thing they know is feared in our fundamentalist hearts down here. They try to strike terror in Southern mothers, lest their children grow up to fall in love with Negroes. If they didn't make an issue of it, the issue would rarely arise. (Lee 2015, 270)

Knowing the facts that the policies tends to only benefit those who are already in power, by limiting black people to vote so that the position of power would only be filled with white people, and spreading irrational fear by creating an issue that would not likely to happen at all. In *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper Lee as a southerner and as an individual provides us with two perspective.

As a southerner, the court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* was upsetting, because the court was canceling one whole amendment just to satisfy the small portion of the black community in the southern states of America. This is upsetting for the southern states because this decision could affect the vast majority of people. Although, as an individual this decision does not affects her that much so she does not think about it. In this two quotations from the novel, we could see how as an individual and as a southerner she felt about the court decision.

We missed the boat, Atticus. We sat back and let the NAACP come in because we were so furious at what we knew the Court was going to do, so furious at what it did, we naturally started shouting nigger. Took it out on them, because we resented the government. When it came we didn't give an inch, we just ran instead. When we should have tried to help 'em live with the decision. --- I'm trying to say that I don't approve of the

way they did it, that it scares me to death when I think about the way they did it, but they had to do it. It was put under their noses and they had to do it. Atticus, the time has come when we've got to do right---" "Do right?" "Yes sir. Give `em chance" (Lee 2015, 241-245)

From the quotation above, we see that Harper Lee believes that it is time for the southerner to do the right thing, by giving the black community a chance. It might seem that what the court did was wrong, and it was, because the court broke an amendment just to satisfy a group of people. Even though what the court did was wrong, the decision need to be taken because it was time to do the right thing. Thus, the southerner needs to do the same thing, to do the right thing. Harper Lee world view could also be seen in Jean Louise exchange with Atticus as follows.

Her voice was heavy with sarcasm: "We've agreed that they're backward, that they're illiterate, that they're dirty and comical and shiftless and no good, they're infants and they're stupid, some of them, but we haven't agreed on one thing and we never will. You deny that they're human." "How so?" "You deny them hope. Any man in this world, Atticus, any man who has a head and arms and legs, was born with hope in his heart. You won't find that in the Constitution, I picked that up in church somewhere. They are simple people, most of them, but that doesn't make them subhuman. (Lee 2015, 251)

Based on the quotation, it shows that as a southerner believed that the black people is not as intelligent and advanced as the white people, but they are still human beings and thus should be treated as such. Harper Lee believes that as a southerner, by accepting changes and doing the right thing and treating others regardless of race indifferently, would be a good step to take to better the racial relations in the southern states of America.

Harper Lee sees how important it is that people starts treating everyone indifferently, because every single one of them is different entity, as expressed from this quotation from the novel that says "every man's watchman, is his conscience. There is no such thing as a collective conscious." Harper Lee believes that people need to be their own entity, rather than thinking as a hive mind. In addition, this passage taken from the novel also shows the importance of developing own conscience.

When you happened along and saw him doing something that seemed to you to be the very antithesis of his conscience---your conscience---you literally could not stand it. You had to kill yourself, or he had to kill you to get you functioning as a separate entity. (Lee 2015, 265)

By developing their own conscience people would develop their own ideas and thoughts, and consequently by exchanging thoughts people then would find that there are no correct answer to a question, there will be many. Additionally, exchanging point of view does not mean that one should agree with the other. There is no need to be forcing one's point of view to another, and there is also no reason to not holding on by your point of view. As expressed by Harper Lee in the novel, "I guess it's like an airplane: they're the drag and we're the thrust, together we make the thing fly. Too much of us and we're nose-heavy, too much of them and we're tail-heavy---it's a matter of balance. I can't beat him, and I can't join him---"

CONCLUSION

By using Genetic Structuralism to analyze the novel *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee, the study produced four main part of analysis that will be summarized below. The first one is the relationship between the problematic characters. *Go Set a Watchman* depicts the major problematic character in the novel as morally ambiguous. Jean Louise Finch in *Go Set a Watchman* is, at first glance, depicted as the moral beacon as compared with the other character, because when she is faced with the worsening race relation in Maycomb, she was the only one who wonders why it happened. Constantly faced with her aunt, Alexandria, extreme view about class, Jean Louise would always deny it because she does not submit to that belief, such as when Henry was badmouthed by Alexandria because of his parents background as a "rednecked white trash". The trash would never wash out of him, Jean became furious with her aunt and shut her up by telling

her to "go pee in your hat." In other instance, Jean Louise was also the one that took action when Frank became the victim of Atticus belief, by visiting Calpurnia, his grandmother, and telling her that if there is anything she could help with she will.

In the end, it is revealed that although it seems like Jean Louise was the moral beacon in the society filled with class conflict, it was untrue because Jean Louise belief was copied from Atticus, thus when Atticus belief was not the same as Jean Louise, her belief and morality was shaken and blurred. The way Jean handled conflict is also make her flawed, because instead of listening to what others have to say about their belief, she always ends up resorting to name calling, shutting the others, or simply flee, because she believes that the belief of others are nonsensical.

The second one is how Harper Lee's social background affects this novel. Harper Lee's social background of growing in a white family in Alabama in 1926 shows clear privilege, because at the time the social hierarchy advantages the white people more than any other racial group. She was born with parent that could be considered as progressive at the time, thus Lee was free to choose her own career and does not need to live her lives in Alabama. Thus, in 1949 she moved away from Alabama to New York to work as a clerk in an airline company. There in New York in 1954, she wrote her first draft on *Go Set a Watchman*. The social background of Harper Lee's plays a big role as the novel is written following a journey of a privileged young lady faced with a society that is degraded, while her education as a college student and her moving away to New York also helps that it provides Lee with perspective other than from Alabama.

The third is how the novel is related to the historical events and social conditions of the author. *Go Set a Watchman* was heavily influenced by the historical events happened in 1950, mainly the case of Brown v. Board of Education, which incidentally is also used as the settings in the novel itself. *Go Set a Watchman* was set after the Brown v. Board of Education decision that overturned Plessy v. Ferguson "separate but equal" doctrine in the aspect of desegregation of public education. The reactions of the citizen in Maycomb County was the major plot point of *Go Set a Watchman* that Lee's. The response of the people of Alabama against the court ruling also had a major impact in Harper Lee's work, namely the enrollment of Autherine Lucy in University of Alabama, Harper Lee's alma mater, which sparked a massive protest, although mostly not by the students, to kick her out of the university and resulting in the Board of Trustees decision to bar her out of the campus in 1956.

The fourth and the last one, Harper Lee's world view as seen through the novel depicts the importance of understanding others' belief (Christinawati & Pandin, 2019). In *Go Set a Watchman*, social conflicts was depicted as the beginning of the downfall of social, economy, and moral aspect in the society. We learnt from the novel that responding to a social conflict in the wrong light would only made the situation worse, that we need to communicate and express each other's belief to reach and understanding with one another (Pandin, et. al., 2019).

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