

A Psychological Analysis of The Main Character in “Regret” Short Story by Kate Chopin

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Abstrak--This qualitative research aims to analyze psychological aspect of human motivation of the main character in “Regret” short story. The story is about Mamzelle Aurlie, fifty years old women, who refused to get married, and enjoy to live solitaire. However, she later feels pleasant for the first time on taking care her neighbor’s children. The theory of psychology of human motivation by Bernhardt (1953) were used to analyze the data that already collected using documentation method. The result found out that Mamzelle showed all aspect from theory, namely appetites (11.11%), wants (22.22%), emotion (33.33%), feeling and attitude (11.11%), also social motives (22.22%). Emotion lead as the most occurrence in the finding analysis. One of the iconic aspects that must be highlighted, which is the climax of the story, is regarding to Mamzelle’s emotion of regret when the children’s away, making her lonely.

Keywords: *psychological aspect, main character, Regret, Kate Chopin.*

Abstrak-- Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis aspek psikologis dari motivasi manusia dari karakter utama dalam cerita pendek "Regret". Cerpen ini berkisah tentang Mamzelle Aurlie, seorang wanita berusia lima puluh tahun, yang menolak untuk menikah dan lebih memilih untuk hidup menyendiri. Namun, ia kemudian merasa senang untuk pertama kalinya saat mengasuh anak tetangganya. Teori psikologi motivasi manusia dari Bernhardt (1953) digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang telah dikumpulkan dengan metode dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa Mamzelle menunjukkan semua aspek dari teori tersebut, yaitu nafsu (11,11%), keinginan (22,22%), emosi (33,33%), perasaan dan sikap (11,11%), serta motif sosial (22,22%). Emosi menjadi yang paling banyak muncul dalam analisis temuan. Salah satu aspek ikonik yang perlu disoroti adalah klimaks cerita, yaitu emosi penyesalan Mamzelle yang merasa menyesal karena kepergian anak-anaknya yang membuatnya kesepian.

Kata Kunci: *aspek psikologis, karakter utama, Regret, Kate Chopin.*

1. Introduction

Literature often incorporates ordinary speech, everyday speech has picked up many literary phrases, metaphor, and other figures of speech (Robson, 1984. p.4). Other representation regarding to the definition of literature came from Wellek and Warren (1967:1) cited in Wijayanti (2018) stated that literature represents “life” and it comes from social reality. Literature is not only a form of art, but also a reflection of human emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. In this era of various literary genres bombarding the world of entertainment, we often come across works that reflect ourselves or reality. Literary work can be divided into three kinds; such as drama, poetry, and prose (Diyanni, 2001). Short story is the kind of prose. Heri (2019) defines a short story as a written composition that depicts aspects of human life within specific settings and time frames. There are two types of elements consist in story namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements are the elements that are inherent to the story itself, such as the characters, the plot, the setting, the conflict (Klarer, 1999). While extrinsic, such as history, biography, society, psychology, ideas and arts, tend to be factor which underlined character’s background (Nurgiyantoro, 2015 cited in Andari, 2019).

Kenney (1966) stated that a character is obviously relevant to us and to our experience if he is like others whom we know. One of aspect to make a successful story is to take care of the characterization. A character is a figure or people that take part in the action. Character is important, especially main character, when we want to understand how is the situation of story running in. It is because character is the media to convey the message content in a story (Aryanti, 2022). Through character, the author’s thought is expressed, an indication that the story will not be complete without characters (Dewi, 2017). Thus, it is very important to know what influences or is influenced by the character, so that we can relate and understand the

content of the story and avoid confusion when we read it. Moreover, from reader’s viewpoint, it is really exciting that the character who will experience a significant consequence (Jose & Brewer, 1984). Good literary works will be able to have an impact on their readers. The possible impacts include that the lives of the characters can be used as a reference by readers (Putri, 2016). Some stories or books begin with a character description of the main character or what we called introduction into its conclusion, the main character is always connected to the problem and is considered the most significant figure. In addition, every character in the story has a unique soul, personality, and psychological condition, which connect with extrinsic element of the story.

Psychological aspect in literature is connected to an individual's character and behavior, playing a significant role in shaping personality and influencing actions and motives. As Freud (1920:7) stated the aspect of human psychology is a mental part of human that is derived from consciousness and unconsciousness that become the derivation of the basic part of mind. In social situations, people's actions are driven by self-motives, such as committing a crime, doing good deeds, or achieving success, as they aim to fulfill their needs. Even Charles Dickens in his writing of *Oliver Twist* put so many psychological backgrounds to the character, like trauma, abandoned, violence, which lead Oliver’s motive of want, emotion, or feeling. Psychology in literature is a fascinating topic that explores how writers use psychological concepts, methods, and approaches to create realistic and engaging characters, stories, and themes. Thus far, this research’s paper focused to analyze psychological aspect of the main character using the theory proposed by Bernhardt (1953) about psychology in human motivation. By analyzing it, we can gain a deeper understanding of the characters, the plot, and of course the story.

2. Methods

This research applied qualitative research data. The method is suitable for analyzing the phenomena happened in a conversation, as in this topic will be about psychological aspect. According to Creswell (2010, p.48) qualitative approach seeks to establish the meaning of phenomenon from the views of participants.

The data were taken from the short story entitled "Regret" by Kate Chopin, an Americans' 19 century linguist. It is a story about woman named Mamzelle Aurlie who lives alone in her farm, decided for not getting married until in her age of fifty. Her life is lonely but she enjoys it. But not after the narrative takes turn when she is asked to take care of her neighbor's children, which she enjoyed it. But after their mom came back, Mamzelle realizes her loneliness and 'regret' it.

The documentation method and note-taking technique used to collect the data. The technique started by reading intensively the story to understand the story, followed by taking a note of every narrative which is possibly contain the data needed. The data were downloaded from <https://americanliterature.com/>. Each data was analyzed based on the theory by Bernhardt (1953) in his book of Practical Psychology. He proposed that there are five aspects initiate human motivation, namely Appetite, Want, Emotions as Motives, Feelings and Attitudes as Motives, and The Social Motives.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

According to Bernhardt (1953) the psychological aspects of human motivation that were found in this short story, as follows:

Types of Psychological Aspect of Human Motivation	Occurrence	Percentage (%)
Appetites	1	11.11%
Wants	2	22.22%
Emotion	3	33.33%
Feeling and Attitude	1	11.11%
Social Motive	2	22.22%
Total	9	99.99%

3.2. Discussion

a. Appetites

Bernhardt (1953) posits that humans are inherently designed to have certain needs essential for survival. These needs, ranging from basic physiological requirements to more complex emotional desires, trigger activities aimed at their fulfillment. If these needs, also referred to as appetites, are not met, humans instinctively strive to satisfy them. These appetites, which include hunger, thirst, sleep, love, and the avoidance of pain, often manifest as repeated actions or habits, forming part of their daily routines and survival strategies.

Data 1

"At the age of twenty she had received a proposal, which she had promptly declined, and at the age of fifty she had not yet lived to regret it."

Take a focus of the last phrase of this data. Living solitaire and independent, in general, can make a person feel lonely and isolated. However, Mamzelle shows an avoidance of pain regarding to her situation. She just live, 'had not yet regret it' and enjoy her daily life. Thus, Mamzelle's appetite here is avoidance of pain in feeling lonely.

b. Wants

According to Aryanti et al., (2022) Wants is a fundamental aspect for all humans, each human being has a different universal desire.

Data 2

"So she was quite alone in the world, except for her dog Ponto, and the negroes who lived in her cabins and worked her crops, and the fowls, a few cows, a couple of mules, her gun (with which she shot chicken-hawks), and her religion."

In the first place, Mamzelle's wants is living a peaceful life, maintaining her routine, and managing her farm with her companies. However, as the story progresses, she obtains a subtle transformation when she unexpectedly finds herself caring the neighbors' children. When their parents came back and the children away from her house, she felt loss of companionship and sense of family, even though she may not have been consciously aware of it before, making her regret what situation she is in right now.

Data 3

"She gave one slow glance through the room, into which the evening shadows were creeping and deepening around her solitary figure. She let her head fall down upon her bended arm, and began to cry. Oh, but she cried! Not softly, as women often do. She cried like a man, with sobs that seemed to tear her very soul."

Her regret indicates that she might want more human connection and warmth in her life than she had previously acknowledged.

c. Emotion

Emotion serves as a form of human expression and a driving force behind actions. The experience of emotion can guide behavior. As Benhardt (1953:50) illustrates, fear can lead individuals to behave in ways they typically wouldn't. For example, if someone proofed lying, he/she will try to deny but usually there will be feelings of nervousness. In this story, Mamzelle had developed several emotions, both implicitly and explicitly.

Data 4

"One morning Mamzelle Aurlie stood upon her gallery, contemplating, with arms akimbo, a small band of very small children who, to all intents and purposes, might have fallen from the clouds, so unexpected and bewildering was their coming, and so unwelcome. They were the children of her nearest neighbor, Odile, who was not such a near neighbor, after all."

This data shows Mamzelle's action of putting hand on her waist. Followed by the narrative brings a depiction of the atmosphere that implied rejection of her neighbor's arrival, such as 'fallen from the clouds', 'unexpected', 'unwelcome'. Through the action and the negative narration shows Mazmelle's emotion of annoyed or slightly angry to her neighbors who will throw responsibilities in her.

Data 5

"But this coming, unannounced and unexpected, threw Mamzelle Aurlie into a flutter that was almost agitation. ... THE excitement was all over, and they were gone."

In this data, the emotion of sadness is not explicitly stated, but it can be implied through the use of words like 'flutter' and 'agitation' when describing Mamzelle Aurlie's reaction to the unannounced and unexpected Odile's coming. The phrase 'the excitement was all over, and they were gone' further suggests a change in the emotional atmosphere, possibly shifting from the initial surprise to a sense of emptiness or loss.

Data 6

"She let her head fall down upon her bended arm, and began to cry. Oh, but she cried! Not softly, as women often do. She cried like a man, with sobs that seemed to tear her very soul."

Speaking in the aspect of emotion, this data provides clear explanation of emotion showed by Mamzelle in her regret after being lonely when the children already away. She is crying out loud, the narrative even tells a deep emotion from the experience she felt. As it is said Mamzelle cried like a man to the very soul she has.

d. Feeling and Attitude

Bernhardt defined in his book (p.51-52) about feeling and attitude that every time we go through something or do something, we decide if it feels good or bad. Imagine a scale from really happy to really unhappy. Well, everything we experience falls somewhere on this scale, ranging from things that make us super happy to things that make us feel really unhappy. There is one feeling found in the story, when Mamzelle was taking care of Odile's children.

Data 7

"She was, indeed, very inapt in her management of Odile's children during the first few days. How could she know that Marquette always wept when spoken to in a loud and commanding tone of voice? But at the end of two weeks Mamzelle Aurlie had grown

quite used to these things, and she no longer complained."

Mamzelle, in the first place, showed her unwillingness to accept these four children. However, through the time they build a cobweb connection that raise Mamzelle's feeling of attachment or bound to the children. Mamzelle started to know each of the child's like and behavior, change her into women who enjoy the existence of the children, taking care them as well as giving attention.

e. Social motives

The story of what drives people isn't just about basic needs and feelings; it's also about how being part of a social group shapes the things people want and how they act (Bernhardt, 1953). People are naturally social and can't be separated from the people around them. Being part of a social group affects how a person acts and thinks. The way someone acts, whether it's something they were born with or something they learned from habits and society, often involves wanting to do well, be successful, and outshine others. This desire for doing well, which we can call self-assertion, shows up in many things a person does.

Data 8

"Mamzelle Aurlie had never thought of marrying. She had never been in love. At the age of twenty she had received a proposal, which she had promptly declined, and at the age of fifty she had not yet lived to regret it."

The social motive that strongly we can capture from this story was her decision for not getting married until late of her age, refusing a proposal, which break the norms in social expectation that a person need to get married and have a family. This analysis may implicitly be supported by the following data showed in a

narrative where her neighbor, Odile, a young woman even already has a big family consists of four kids.

Data 9

“The young woman had appeared but five minutes before, accompanied by these four children.”

These social motive data lead into societal norms and expectations that contribute to her chosen lifestyle, where she did all the thing by herself, independent and solitaire, as a form of social isolation.

4. Conclusion

Based on finding and discussion above, it can conclude that the action of the main character, Mamzelle Aurlie was oftenly affected by psychological aspect of human motivation. Mamzelle, fifty years old women, who refused to get married, and live solitaire. Mamzelle’s appetite was her avoidance of pain in loneliness, where she is not regretting it.

Her wants, at first, was her daily life, and enjoy the routines. However, at the end, it transformed into a want of human connection and warmth in her life due to her regret of her lonely situation. Mamzelle develops various emotions in the story, getting annoyed when her neighbor Odile came to her, and sadness when Odile takes her children back also the authentic or most iconic conflict is when she cries out loud when she was once again alone.

Mamzelle’s feelings showed and raised during her responsibility to take care the children, making her connected to the children. She also faced by social motive, speaking of her decision for not getting married until late of her age, break the norms in social expectation that a person need to get married and have a family. This social motive contributes to her chosen lifestyle, where she did all the thing by herself, independent and solitaire, as a form of social isolation.

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