

# THE ANALYSIS OF EGG IN ANDERSON'S THE EGG

By  
**Bagus Putu Darmawan**  
Jurusan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas Sastra Universitas Udayana

## Abstrak

*Dalam studi ini cerita karangan penulis Amerika Sherwood Anderson yang berjudul The Egg dipilih untuk dianalisis. Tokoh utama dalam cerita ini adalah seorang anak sebagai narrator yang menceritakan kenangan kehidupannya yang suram. Ia menyalahkan dirinya sendiri yang pada masa kecilnya hidup di peternakan tanpa merasakan kebahagiaan atau kehidupan yang menyenangkan. Dalam cerita ini si Narator menceritakan bagaimana perjuangan hidup orang tuanya untuk mencapai apa yang dikenal dengan Impian Amerika.*

*Cerita ini terjadi di dua tempat yaitu di suatu peternakan dipedesaan sampai di sebuah restoran disebelah stasiun kereta api di Bidwell, negara bagian Ohio. Di Kedua tempat ini si Narator menunjukkan bagaimana ia merasa tidak bahagia hidup di peternakan ayam di desanya. Keluarga ini gagal dalam usaha peternakan ayam sehingga memutuskan pindah usaha dengan membuka sebuah restoran di seberang stasiun kereta api yang mereka anggap pasti akan banyak orang yang bepergian dan akan makan di restoran tersebut. Sang ayah telah berusaha membuat hiburan dengan menunjukkan telur yang bisa berdiri atau memasukkan telur ke dalam botol dengan merendamkan telur tersebut dilarutan cairan cuka, tetapi tetap saja tidak ada pengunjung yang makan di restorannya.*

*Cerita The Egg ini menggambarkan betapa sulitnya suatu perjuangan hidup sebuah keluarga. Sang ayah yang tidak berhasil dalam usahanya karena disebabkan ambisi yang terlalu besar pada dirinya. Kehidupan keluarga ini bisa dibandingkan dengan sebutir telur yang tidak bisa bertahan tanpa memecahkan kulit telur tersebut.*

*Ciri-ciri dari cerita ini adalah personifikasi di mana banyak kata-kata yang berfungsi bagaikan kehidupan manusia. Peristiwa yang paling penting di dalam cerita ini adalah ketika sang ayah menjadi frustrasi berat bahkan hampir seperti orang gila datang menghampiri istri dan anaknya, lalu menangis meraung-raung. Hal ini menunjukkan betapa beratnya perjuangan hidup ini.*

*Metode menganalisis data dalam studi ini adalah deskriptif. Data yang dikumpulkan dari sumber data dianalisis berdasarkan teori William Kenney dalam bukunya How to Analyze Fiction, teori Warren dan Wellek dengan bukunya Theory of Literature, dan sebagai penunjang ditambah teori Knickerbocker dan Reninger dalam Interpreting Literature.*

*Kata kunci: egg, grotesque, failure*

## 1. Background of Study

Literature influences the culture and social reality because it contains ideas, feelings, desires, hopes, moralities and emotions. As Wellek and Warren explain:

Literature is one of the art form that is always present in human life in the world since along time ago. Its presence could not be denied because literature has influential culture and social reality. Literature could not be seen as an art but is also contains ideas, feelings, desires, hopes, moralities and emotions in it. It is a fiction; it is a verbal imitation of social life. (Wellek and Warren, 1977: 122)

Literary works can be divided into three types and novel is one of them which is very imaginative literary work. DiYanni (2001: 7) states that there are three major types of literary work available that can be observed, interpreted and evaluated; such as poetry, drama and fiction. Among those types of imaginative literature, novel has been the most favorite of both the writer and the reader. A novel is a picture of real life and manners and of the time in which it is written.

In this study, the story entitled *The Egg* was chosen to be analysed. Sherwood Anderson, the writer of *The Egg* is not considered a great American writer, but during his lifetime he was thought highly of and his work was generally admired by critics. It was only after his death that people became much more critical of his work, saying that he never actually grew as a writer, and that everything he wrote was the same. In the article “Sherwood Anderson’s triumph: ‘The Egg’” the author goes so far as to say that most of Anderson’s writings were really bad, and that *The Egg* was one of his extremely few good ones.

## 2. Problem of the Study

Based on the background mentioned above, the focus of this study is limited to the study of character. The problems then appear in this story are:

1. How does the writer make the readers feel a confusing mixture of happiness and sadness?
- 2.

3. How do imagery and metaphors function in the story?

### **3. Aims of The Study**

This study was intended to fulfil three aims: the general, specific, and academic aims.

The general aim of this writing was to apply theories related to short story in order to get better understanding of Anderson's work entitled *The Egg*.

Meanwhile the specific aim of this writing was to find out the critical estimate of the story and what message the writer wants to convey.

The last is an academic aim that is to apply the theory of literature studied in the English Department to write a scientific work which gives contribution to this department, so this writing can be used as reference to help the student who write about literature.

### **4. Research Method**

There are three aspects of the research of the study; they consist of data source, data collection and data analysis.

#### **4.1. Data Source**

The data were collected from the story entitled *The Egg* by Sherwood Anderson (cited in *The Triumph of the Egg*. Page 295-304. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library).

This story tells about a poor farmhand who is slowly driven mad by his attempts to get up in the world. His father, unable to create things for himself, was reliant on fate and nature and other people to create things for him, and when none of those will cooperate, it wrecks him.

#### **4.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

The data were collected by reading the story intensively and noting down all the information relevant to the narrator and his father as the focus of

discussion and then the data were identified in accordance with their type then descriptively presented. They are several types of collecting data :

1. The story was read carefully, selecting and taking note the selected items based on the related topic
2. A confusing mixture of happiness and sadness and how the imagery and metaphors function in the story were found.

#### **4.3. Method and Technique of Analysing Data**

The analysis correlates to the problems that are formulated. The method for analyzing the data is descriptive. The data were collected from the data source and through the data collection. The data were analyzed using the theory of William Kenney. 1978. *How to Analyze Fiction*, theory of Warren and Wellek. 1962. *Theory of Literature*, and other supporting theory of Knicbocker and Reninger. 1963. *Interpreting Literature*.

#### **5. Analysis**

This chapter discusses about the study of literature, which in principle tries to find the mixture of happy and unhappy life of the narrator in the story. The concepts which are related to the features of literature such as imagery and metaphors are also presented in this chapter.

*The Egg* tells the story of a childhood memory that has in a profound way shaped its narrator's moral outlook. The tale centres on the narrator's father, a man "intended by nature to be . . . cheerful and kindly," who, through acquiring the American passion for getting up in the world, loses his happiness. The father's loss engenders in the son a sense of tragedy and irresolution and a conviction that "the egg"—the source and symbol of that loss—completely and utterly triumphs over life.

The story starts with a young boy who tells mostly about his father. His father is as a bachelor happy farmhand, but once he married and had his only son, his wife convinced him to try to "get up in the world," for the sake of the boy.

Their first attempt at wealth is a chicken farm, in which they invest 10 years and it results a desperate failure. Most of the money they have earned have been spent for remedies to cure chicken diseases, it causes the family to have sadness in life.

"Most philosophers must have been raised on chicken farms. One hopes for so much from a chicken and is so dreadfully disillusioned. Small chickens, just setting out on the journey of life, look so bright and alert and they are in fact so dreadfully stupid. They are so much like people they mix one up in one's judgments of life. If disease does not kill them they wait until your expectations are thoroughly aroused and then walk under the wheels of a wagon--to go squashed and dead back to their maker. (Page 296)

After the farm, the mother decides that they ought to run a restaurant by the train depot, and that that restaurant ought to stay open all night. It is in the late and lonely nights in the restaurant that the father's ambition runs completely afield of reality. He has brought from the farm a selection of glass jars in which he has preserved deformed chicks from his flock. He displays them at the restaurant as a form of entertainment, and eventually ends up deciding to expand upon this by becoming part of restaurant business, part entertainer by performing some tricks related to eggs.

One day, the narrator saw what his father did, as it occurred in the middle of the night with only one customer present, with the son still a child, upstairs and asleep. For some unexplainable reason the narrator knows the story as well as though he has been a witness to his father's discomfort, no customer comes to the restaurant as expected. This is a miserable scene and also this has given to the father's breakdown.

### **Imaginary and Metaphor**

Egg stands for grotesque: The egg does not only give birth to an ordinary chicken, but sometimes that has four legs, two pairs of wings, or two heads. The father as a chicken-farmer immerses in his crazy interest and fantasy, the father preserves all the little monstrous things in alcohol by putting each in its own glass

bottle and dreams of taking the wonder about to county fairs and of growing rich by exhibiting it to other farmhands.

Egg stands for the American dream: Egg is perhaps the oldest and most universal symbol of rebirth and regeneration to new life, which go back far into the distant past of humanity. It is said all life comes from an egg. A similar idea was signified in ancient Egypt by the winged egg floating above the mummy, carrying the soul to another birth. And the joy and hope of Easter Resurrection has been symbolized by the coloured egg. In traditional stories and myths, the image egg always imparts an idea that out of it hens would be hatched which again would lay eggs, speaking so clearly with its unparalleled attraction about newness,

The American Dream, as it arose in the Colonial period and developed in the nineteenth century, is based on the assumption that each person, no matter what his origins, could succeed in life on the sole basis of his or her own skill and effort. The American dream and the egg, which are supposed to promise life and success, turn out to be symbol of misfortune and failure, constantly cheat and finally almost ruin the ordinary American family.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the first part of the story, the narrator alludes to his father's single days of good cheer and calm, and adds, "He had at that time no notion of trying to rise in the world". The narrator has made himself a story out of scraps and gossip, most likely not perfectly accurate and definitely distressing, but the story he has made is something he can live with. His father, unable to create things for himself, was reliant on fate and nature and other people to create things for him, and when none of those will cooperate, it wrecks him.

Reading from the narrator's point of view makes the reader see the father as weak and stupid. Throughout the story the father works to provide for his family and to live up to his wife's ambitious expectations. He could be respected for his determination to succeed, but instead he is seen as a failure and at best, someone to be pitied. Using powerful imagery and metaphors Anderson succeeds

in making the reader feel a confusing mixture of happiness and sadness. He makes the reader feel disgusted by the father, but at the same time, to pity him

A suggestive symbol, an egg, is used to in Anderson's *The Egg*. Because an egg symbolizes birth, it can also symbolize the idea of life. Because the process of birth is concealed within a shell, an egg can also symbolize the mystery of life. Because the shell is easily broken, an egg can symbolize life's fragility. An egg then, is a potentially powerful symbol because it touches on issues that are basic of life.

## 7. Bibliography

- Forster, E. M. 1974. *Aspects of the Novel*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Kenney, William. 1966. *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monarch Press.
- Knickerbocker,, K.L. 1963. *Interpreting Literature*. USA: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Scannell, Vernon. 1984. *How to Enjoy Novels*. London: Judy Piatkus, Ltd.
- Stanford, Judith. A. 2003. *Responding to Literature; Stories, Poems, Plays, and Essays. Fourth Edition*. New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.
- Tarigan, Henry Guntur.1984. *Prinsip-prinsip Dasar Sastra*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- Webster, Roger. 1990. *Studying Literary Theory: An Introduction*. London: Edward Arnold
- Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. 1963. *Theory of Literature*. London: Cox and Wyman Ltd.
- Wiyatmi. 2006. *Pengantar Kajian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka