

A Study on the Character Building and Messages of “Lady Windermere’s Fan” Drama by Oscar Wilde

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ABSTRACT

This research figures out the characters and the messages or moral values of a play namely Lady Windermere’s Fan. The drama was designed based on Heathcote’s (1984) understanding of drama in education in order to cultivate creative pedagogy and ‘character’ building. The data was gained by reading the drama script based on existing documents. The result showed that every character has various characters and each of them is related to others. The main character has fundamentally strengthened the plot and has important effects to other characters. The moral values that can be seen from this play are that all humankind is far from the word “perfect” even if they are considered themselves as good, kind, and wise people. They still tend to have a shortage.

Keywords: Drama; Characters; Messages

INTRODUCTION

Drama comes from Greek, meaning action, play, or deed. This meaning carries forward to our modern usage as it bears the connotation of a story to be acted out. Dramas revolve around conflict or contrasts of character. All three of the plays that you have the option of researching, though from separate time periods, are well-known dramas rich with symbolism and often social commentary by the playwright. (Elaine Patton, Elaine.M.Patton@lonestar.edu).

According to Abrams (1988), drama is designed for performance in the theater in which actors take the roles of characters, perform indicated action, and utter the written dialogue. In other hand, Reaske (1966) stated that drama is a literature work which describes human life and their activities by means of presenting various actions and dialogue between characters. Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that drama is a genre of literature which the purpose is to be performed in front of audiences. It explores human conflict representation through dialogue and performance. Analyzing the language of drama texts stylistically can be

somehow challenging, due to the fact, dialogues need certain tools and techniques to be used. Therefore, the fundamental purpose of conducting this work is to show how to analyze plays stylistically. This research focuses on one play, namely, Lady Windermere's Fan.

The drama of Lady Windermere's Fan by Oscar Wilde is one of well-known dramas in the end of nineteenth century. It was written in 1891 and published for the first time in London on February 20th, 1892. It portrays the marriage life of Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere. They are a happy and young couple married with a six month old child. This drama focuses on the gossip, social statues, and gender politics based on the reflection of Victorian era. There are some reasons for the writers choosing this drama to be analyzed. One of which is the writer, Oscar Wilde, who is a famous novelist, playwright, and poet. Although he is an Irish, but he is well-known and popular in England because of his masterpiece. Second, this drama is a satire comedy which reflects upon the Victorian society, mostly marriage. The story has played on roller coaster emotions, intrigue, jealousy, angry and sacrifice. Then, from the title, we can assume that it has multiple meaning such as the words "fan" in Lady Windermere's fan. It can be interpreted as equipment that is use to move the air like what Lady Windermere has been given by her husband and also it can be a person who admires and fall in love with Lady Windermere that is Lord Darlington. Thus, in this research, the writers focused on analyzing the character building of each character and its explicit or implicit message found in Lady Windermere's Fan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character Building

In the Cambridge dictionary, there are two meanings of the word "character". *first*, character is a noun defined as the unique combination of qualities that distinguishes one person or place from others. *Second*, character is a person or figure represented in a movie, drama, or story. This research refers to the first definition which means personality or human character. It suits the quotes from John wooden (1910-2010) "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are". Based on this quote, a human character should be built early to create a strong character. Therefore, character-building becomes an important topic studied in parenting, education, and nations' culture.

In Indonesia, the government really concerns about character building in education. Literary works are a part of language education in Indonesia. It means characters built in the literature of Indonesian schools and universities are very important. The goal of character building in Indonesia are; 1) to develop the students' ability to become better individuals while also representing the nation's culture and characters, 2) to accelerate the advancement of National Education, and to be in charge of helping students achieve their full potential. and 3) to filter the elements

of one's own and other nations' cultures that are incompatible with dignified moral values and national characters.

Based on Pusat kurikulum dan Perbukuan (2010), the Indonesian Ministry of National Education states that there are eighteen values of character building in Indonesian national character and cultural education or PBKB (Pendidikan Budaya Karakter Bangsa) namely; religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard-working, creative, independent, democratic, curious, nationalistic, patriotic, sportive and respective, inclusive and communicative, peace-loving, studious, caring and compassion, empathetic, and responsible.

Analyzing the Message

How to Analyze Drama by Christopher Reaske provided the theory that can be used to analyze the message. According to Reaske (1966), readers should be concerned not only with analyzing any aspect of a play (character, theme, plot, etc.) but also with what the play proposes to tell to the world. He divides several relationships that can be used to understand a play's meaning, they are:

a. Man and Nature

Due to the man-nature relationship, people are sometimes confronted with a problem caused by nature. Nature's confusion will devastate people's lives, demonstrating that they are only small human beings. (Reaske, 1966).

b. Man Society

Human beings' fears about their survival within society can also become a source of concern for society. They often consider society as a force that limits their ability to do what they want in life. (Reaske, 1966)

c. Universal Theme of an Abstract Nature

The term "abstract" refers to something that cannot be seen clearly. When readers address "man between society and man between nature," the situation is different. As an example, Reaske uses death. He claims that thinking of death as a definite word is difficult. Aside from death, there are several abstract topics such as morality, love, hate, revenge, jealousy, and so on. (Reaske, 1966).

d. Family Relation

Many plays, he says, use family connections to form the story's concept at times. By following this pattern, readers/audiences would be able to form their own opinions on what the play means. (Reaske, 1966).

e. Interpretation as Audience Conception

We have our own version to share our thoughts on a play's content. When we watch or read a play, we will learn a lot from it. When anyone else inquires about our thoughts on the play, we may share our interpretation. That is the meaning of the audience conception of interpretation. (Reaske, 1966)

From the theories above, the writers, on the other hand, only employs two of these divisions in their study. They are "Man and Society" and "Interpretation as Audience Conception".

METHOD

Design and Samples

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. Creswell (in Raco, 2010) defines the qualitative method as an approach to search or explore and understand a central phenomenon, while the data are taken through interviews, field observations, or existing documents. The researcher analyzed the drama namely Lady Windermere's Fan.

Instrument and Procedures

The researcher is the critical instrument in collecting data. In this research, the data collection techniques were based on existing documents.

Data Analysis

According to Patton (2001), content analysis usually refers to analyzing text (interview transcripts, diaries, or documents) rather than observation-based fields notes. After the data collected, the researcher read the drama for many times to get the meaning of the poeties. While reading the drama, the words or sentences that indicate the characters and message are analyzed. As a result, the characters found in the drama and message are explained descriptively in the result and discussion section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the written drama, it is obtained that the characters played on the drama are (1) Lord Windermere plays a major role in the play. Society sees him as the perfect man and great husband. He is the center of the conflict because there are rumors being spread about him. The rumors are he is sleeping with Mrs. Erlynne. The whole play the reader is left wondering if they are true or not. (2) Lady Windermere is the wife of Lord Windermere and the mother of his child. She tends to forget her duties as a mother and starts to think of leaving her husband because of the rumors going around the town. She is the daughter of Mrs. Erlynne but never actually finds out about that herself. The play takes place during her twenty-first birthday party. (3) Lord Darlington is good friends with Lord and Lady Windermere. He is a charming bachelor in society. He has feelings for Lady Windermere. He goes along with the rumors to try to get Lady Windermere to leave with him. (4) Lord Augustus Lorton is a sweet, older man. He is in love with Mrs. Erlynne. He allows her to tell him what to do and he doesn't mind it one bit. He just wants to have a woman by his side and spend the rest of his life with someone. (5) Mr. Dumby is a minor

character. He is the typical Englishman of high society. (6) Mr. Cecil Graham is a supporting character. He is very eccentric. He is part of high society but he is not like the other men. He has a witty sense of humor. (7) Mr. Hopper Parker is an Australian businessman in high society. He is in love with the Duchess of Berwick's daughter Lady Agatha. He is an outsider in the London high society because he is Australian. (8) Duchess of Berwick is considered a noblewoman by high society. She is a talkative person and highly interested in scandal and drama. (9) Lady Agatha Carlisle is the Duchess of Berwick's daughter, who throughout the whole play only says two words: "Yes Mamma." She is in love with Mr. Hopper. (10) Lady Plymdale is the typical London woman of high society. She thinks highly of herself and behaves in an acceptable manner. (11) Lady Stutfield is a minor character who says a few lines. She is a typical representation of a woman of high society. (12) Lady Jedburgh is a minor character in high society who says a few witty lines. She is always in the background of scenes during the party talking incessantly. (13) Mrs. Cowper-Cowper flutters around during the play. She doesn't say much as a very minor character. She does what she needs to do to stay a part of high society. (14) Mrs. Erlynne Rosalie is a woman in her forties who left her husband years ago. The town knows her as a loose woman. They all judge her and have labeled her as a woman who sleeps with married men. The conflict in the movie is Lord Windermere is paying her off but for what purpose? The reader doesn't find out until the very end that she is the mother of Lady Windermere. Lord Windermere pays her off so she doesn't come out and ruin Lady Windermere's reputation. She starts out the play as a conniving woman but towards the end redeems herself and helps out her daughter.

Besides character building, this study also focuses on analyzing the messages of Lady Windermere's fan play. The messages found in this play still can be related to nowadays society. They are gossiping and provocation, judging someone and human shortage. From the first plot, it begins with the rumor being spread among society that Lord Windermere, the husband of Lady Windermere is adulterer and he has an affair with the character named Mrs. Erlynne. Moreover, Lord Darlington, a best friend of Windermere's family tries to provoke Lady Windermere because he is in love with her and wants her to be his. The message we can learn from this is that we should be careful to our society especially if we are a stand first. People should not start and spread misleading news that can harm someone or even destroy their family relationship. For others, since we live in nowadays era, where issues can spread in a second especially through social media, we should not believe easily to any gossip and rumor spreading around us without knowing the truth.

Through the gossiping and provocation around her, it leads Lady Windermere to judge Mrs. Erlynne as a temptress and sinful woman because of her dark past life. Lady Windermere thinks that Mrs. Erlynne does not deserve to be her follow party member. From this case, we, as human being should not judge other for whatever he/she did in the past. The past is part of someone experiences in shaping their future life. Also, someone's past cannot be the only thing to measure someone's current life because people can change. They can turn to be good and conversely.

In addition, it also can be found that all humankind are far from the word “perfect” even if they are consider themselves as good, kind and wise people. They still tend to have shortage. Lady Windermere calls herself as a pure woman who never does bad deeds and sins. However, the action of her leaving her husband and son becomes a big issue that can lead her to the disgraceful life. From this we can conclude that even though he/she is called as a good person, but he/she still has weakness to do errors.

CONCLUSION

Drama is designed for performance in the theater in which actors take the roles of characters, perform indicated action, and utter the written dialogue. Analyzing the language of drama texts stylistically can be somehow challenging, due to the fact, dialogues need certain tools and techniques to be used. The drama of Lady Windermere’s Fan by Oscar Wilde is one of well-known dramas in the end of nineteenth century. It portrays the marriage life of Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere. This drama focuses on the gossip, social statues, and gender politics based on the reflection of Victorian era. Various characters are played in here. Each character has different values. The messages found in this play still can be related to nowadays society.

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