

THROWN AWAY AND THROUGH A FIRE OF RUDYARD KIPLING: AESTHETICS EVIDENCES OF POPULAR SHORT STORIES

Taufiqurrohman

Islamic University of Nahdlatul Ulama` Jepara

Email: ufiq1289@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This essay tries to deconstruct the thinking way of elite literary writers and readers in dominating the aesthetic claim of literary works, especially in short stories. The writer of this essay has used the content of two short stories to be explored. They are Thrown Away and Through A Fire written by Rudyard Kipling. The imitative and imaginative aesthetic aspect of both stories were analyzed to reach the finding signs of aesthetic proof. Imitative aspect uses the imitations to nature phenomena while Imaginative one uses symbols used by human. The result of analysis shows that both aspects lie in the content of both short stories. Thrown Away uses the beauty of tragic. Kipling had used both imitative and imaginative aspects to enhanced the tragic life of the main character. Through A Fire has used circle of fire in the content of its story. Whole plotting of it is full of fire either it is fire naturally or it is symbolically. The conclusion is enough to be the evidences that popular short stories also have aesthetic aspects.

Keywords: *popular short stories, imitative, imaginative, aesthetic evidence.*

INTRODUCTION

Popular literary work, as the opponent of elite literary work, is considered marginalized in beauty aspect. This assumption has been maintained in the mind of elite literary work lovers (Ashley, 1989:13). They considered that elite literary works are those which are worth-praised in all literary aspects. One of those aspects is beauty aspect. They considered that elite literary works are worth-called as the true literature because of using serious aspects in assuming the beautiful characteristics of literature.

The beauty of a literary work is important enough because literature is a language phenomenon that is close to art. Even in a limitation, it cannot be called

definition, literature is the art of language (Noor, 2009:9). Because literature is language in art domain, so the important aspect of literature is the beauty aspect. The beauty aspect is called aesthetics. That's why, in this article, what is discussed is the aesthetic aspect in popular literary works.

On the possibility about the existence of the beauty of popular literary work, Bernard Shaw, a man of letters who got Nobel prize in 1925, as quoted by Rhinelander (1973:90), talked about "a clear conception of life in the light of an intelligible theory". The phrase composition above was told by Shaw to explain the same potentials of human in having quality works. Thus, no limitations for any literary works,

as the expression form of human potentials, which have aesthetic aspect.

<< | 2

The first example for such beauty potential talked above is by taking the examples in this writing. The first one is Rudyard Kipling's short story entitled *Thrown Away*. This short story is taken from a book of short story collection by Kipling in 1988 entitled *Plain Tales from the Hills* (www.telelib.com/authors/K/KiplingRudyard/prose/Plain_Tales/throwaway.html). This short story includes in melodrama-genre because it tells life that is full of sadness. This inference is due to what has been explained as follow.

This short story tells about a British young kid (without name) that was told by his mother to go to India, to live in a boarding house and to be an employee of British soldier. Because he was a serious kid and didn't like his new life in India, so he finally frustated. He then fought with his friends and had enough debt because of gambling. He wasn't able to forget the Colonel's scorn and reprimand so that he pretended to go hunting, but actually he suicided by using a revolver in a sanctuary. He was looked for and founded by the major and his messenger (narrator) dead. Besides, there were only painful letters addressed to a friend and Major. The letter addressed to his mother too whom was falsed in which it said that the kid died because of Colera.

Meanwhile, the second short story discussed in this paper is another Kipling's short story entitled *Through A Fire*. Different from short story *Thrown Away*, this one was written by Kipling in his another collection of short story entitled *Life's Handicap* in 1891 (www.telelib.com/authors/K/Kiplingrudyard/prose/LifesHandicap/throughfire.html). This short story includes in melodrama-genre short story because it tells about life that is

full of anger and conflict. This matter is due to what had been said by Cawelty (1976:45) that one of melodrama's characteristics is in its story domain, namely in emotional circle. That story is full of anger and conflict as been explained below.

The story in this short story began with the Punjab police (character "I" narrator) with his bodyguard who were checking the flood in Donga Pa, Kodru. They then found the one behind the fire, namely charcoal burner who liked to drunk named Madu. He was Athira's husband. Athira witnessed that she felt tortured because she was treated unwell by her husband. Suket Singh, an infantry from Punjab, took Athira away for Athira's own request. Accidentally they loved each other. Then Suket was left by his wife and child after knew about this.

Madu then asked help from a magician named Juseen Daze. After fulfilling Daze's request, finally Kodru board sent his own big brother, Malak, to persuade Athira went home. Because Athira didn't want to, finally Athira got Daze's curse that his body and soul became withered. Because of being afraid of his lover's condition, finally Suket accompanied Athira in going home. Then the fact is that they didn't arrive at Madu's home, instead, they shot a letter at the trunk of pine tree at Madu's house yard which said, "Let us be burnt together because we had prayed correctly. We also have cursed Madu and Malak, who both of them are bad people. Deliver my salam to Colonel Sahib Bahadur."

Then the beauty aspects of both examples above would be discussed and found in the analysis part. Furthermore, the findings later would state clearly that popular literary work cannot be considered trivial.

METHOD

Meanwhile, the method used to discuss the short story entitled *Thrown Away* and *Through A Fire* is Aesthetic theory. As being known that in writing a beautiful literary work, a writer must pass a creative process. That creative process can be either in external or internal reality (Noor, 2009:110). Allen and Clark (1962:102) mentioned external reality as “imitation” and internal reality as “imagination”. Imitation usually is translated into form of imitations to nature while imagination comes from domain of writer’s ideas. This external reality usually is in the form of real partial story or of imitations of physical nature. Otherwise, the internal reality is in symbols.

Findings and Discussion

A. The Aesthetics of Tragic in Short Story *Thrown Away*

In line with the title, *Thrown Away* and its meaning, this story indeed uses expression of tragic, either mimetic or imaginative. This short story is begun with three sentences of second paragraph which describes imitation and imagination, namely;

“Let a puppy eat the soap in the bathroom or chew a newly-blacked boot. He chews and chuckles until, by and by, he finds out that blacking and Old Brown Windsor make him very sick; so he argues that soap and boots are not wholesome. Any old dog about the house will soon show him the unwisdom of biting big dogs’ ears.”

In the quotation above is explained about describing the kid’s condition with the way of describing dogs which ate soap and chewed polished boat shoes but cannot. This is the way how Kipling described the kid’s condition (*The Boy*). The kid cannot live his new life because it is not very worthy for

him. Thus, the description above uses imitation to nature, namely dog, at the same time to be the imagination result of the writer’s idea.

The second imagination is in the first sentence third line, “... and the theory killed him dead.” The theory meant above is about life hated by the kid even though he had to do it so that the life made him depressed. Word “dead” above doesn’t mean real death but dead in mind or very oppressed. Word “dead” in this short story is mentioned sixteen times. This fact indicates that the story in this short story tells about tragic, it is either on the kid’s death or on the kid’s life pattern. Besides, imaginative sentence about death can be seen in two similar sentences, namely “We were dead-tired” and “... but though we were dead-tired.”. Here the writer uses word “dead” to explain tiredness. By using word “dead”, the writer shows the image of deep tragic and sadness in this short story.

“... just as seriously as he took the ‘head’ ...” is a sentence means when drunk, the kid seemed had lost ‘head’. This thing indicates that the kid is so favor in drinking alcoholic drinking because of hard-depression.

Imitation is also found in the ninth paragraph. This paragraph is signed with the thing attacked the kid’s mind after being derided hard by a woman. The sentence is in connotative imagination by using “The thing that kicked the beam in *The Boy*’s mind ...”.

The next imagination is in the 31st paragraph, namely “... as I choked as I read it.” The word “choked” is imaginative. Truly, reading doesn’t make choked. That’s why word “choked” must have significance or second meaning.

Imagination in the 34th paragraph says “Then began one of the most grimly

comic scenes ...". Imagination that is used in that sentence is in phrase "grimly comic scenes". This phrase uses setting of comic.

concluded that the description of fire cause is also enclosed with the writer's imagination about the fire itself.

<< | 4

B. Aesthetics of Fire in Novel *Through A Fire*

In accordance with the title, *Through A Fire*, this short story uses the expression of fire, either it is lexically or symbolically. The following is the detail explanation.

The writer's expression on fire is also encompassed in Madu's status. His status as charcoal-burner emphasized the beauty series of fire cycle described in this short story. The simple series are as follow: the guzzler anglo at that time was burning the charcoal while being drunken then he made a mistake so that the fire spread largely and fired the surrounding woods. This inference is in line with the quote "... and said that the charcoal-burners of Kodru were getting drunk."

This short story is begun by the writer by telling the effect of fire that is described imitatively and by the way it is. Quote "and as for them, they are, doubtless, now frying in a hotter fire than was ever made of spruce-branches." reminds the reader that both characters, namely the Police and Bhere Singh, worried very much if many victims were fried in that fire. There are three words related to just one sentence above, namely "frying", "hotter", and "fire".

Still in the paragraph, Athira actually is imagined burnt although it isn't in the true meaning, "... and Athira, a woman, burning – burning – burning." In this sentence Athira's life was described annoyed by her own husband as being mentioned in the text that she was treated hard. Here word "burning" that is repeated three times is the result of the writer's imagination as the representation of annoyed feeling.

Besides, the combination between imitative and imaginative expression is described clearly in paragraph four, that the fire came from the place of charcoal burner or *Anglo* named Madu. He was a guzzler. In this paragraph, the writer used expression as follow:

Such full-of-conflict relationship between Athira and her husband, Madu, could also be analogized with the big fire. In this short story is said, "A week after their marriage, he beat Athira with a heavy stick." A week after getting married, Athira was hit hard by Madu with a stick. Such hard treatment was a negative relationship amongst husband-wife so that it could be said that it was like fire. Madu's wife sparked fire character when she asked for Suket Singh, a police who loved her, to take her away and to beat her husband totally if he had an effort to stop them. "Never mind, said Athira, stay with me, and if Madu tries to beat me, you beat him". That was what Athira had said.

"... until they came to the charcoal-burners' clearing where the dying flames said 'whit, whit, whit' as they fluttered and whispered over white ashes. It must have been a great fire when at full height. Men had seen it at Donga Pa across the valley winking and blazing through the night, and said that the charcoal-burners of Kodru were getting drunk."

The quote above also says clearly that the writer expressed fire uniquely. It is as if the fire can talk with ashes ("... the dying flames said 'whit, whit, whit' as they fluttered and whispered over white ashes."). It can be

Thus, Madu, Athira and Suket Singh had been together to flame fire in their own

eyes. Such round story truly symbolized the flaming fire. The telling model can be said beautiful because it encloses spinning imaginary expression in fire symbol that encompasses three main characters.

“Then Juseen Daze will send a curse, and you will wither away like a barked tree in the springtime, ‘ ...’ indicates that the writer’s imagination when describing Madu’s anger effect by hiring Daze who was a shaman. The quote was at the time Madu hired Daze. The shaman said that Athira’s body and soul will wither if she didn’t want to go home. Then what had been said by the shaman truly came true. But one thing for sure that helped request on this magical profile was one kind of imagination of anger that can spark anger of others too. It needs to know too that the quote above is repeated twice, namely “And she really began to wither away because her heart was dried up with fear, and those who believe in curses die from curses. You are withering away. Come back.” and “I am withering away like a barked tree in the spring,’ moaned Athira”.

Besides, word “spur” is used by the writer imitatively. This thing is seen from quote “Madu had stacked the dry wood for the next day’s charcoal-burning on the spur above his house.”. This thing reminds us that in cold areas, the fire are very important because the house needed fireplace in which the spur is for the way out for fire. This was the writer’s way in describing the setting of story. Warm or hot amongst cold is something needed very much by everyone. This philosophy was held by Rudyard Kipling in writing this short story. This was proved by the existence of binary opposition in story series, namely hot inside cold, completely fire in the middle of highlands. That was the beauty.

The letter was shot by Suket Singh was connected to fire which said, “Let us be burned together, if anything remain over, for we have made the necessary prayers. We have also cursed Madu, and Malak the brother of Athira-both evil men. Send my service to the Colonel Sahib Bahadur.” Expression “fire” that is used by the writer in this letter is the real fire or imitation to fire. While the letter actually indicated that Suket Singh took Athira to suicide by burning their bodies.

Expression about imaginative fire became this short story’s closing, namely “WHE-W, WHEW, OUIOU,’ said the little flames.”. It was described that little fire flame could say such above tone. It meant that fire that was used by the writer was the imagination result for reminding that no fire could talk. Besides, “little flame” above can be conflict symbol that can be the rest in this short story’s story. This was proved in the last sentence indicating Madu’s confusement, namely “But who will pay me those four rupees?” said Madu.”.

Anger and conflict between three main characters, namely Madu, Suket Singh and Athira actually can be symbolized by the big fire. Big fire means destroying. This is the character as what had been shown by the three characters. Suket Singh who had been abandoned by his wife and child then did suicide. While Athira who fell at the command of a hard infantry (Suket Singh) also did suicide together with him. Beside that, Madu finally must live alone with the case left for him. Those three characters gave the fire pattern or conflict in their own life. Such telling plot is the combination of imitative creativity with the writer’s imagination.

In other words, this full-of-conflict short story from the beginning to the end actually didn’t give a single cool space in it.

This story is so full of heat that, in description, it is like ring of fire where the characters felt hard in getting peace or in acting peaceful characters. Although the setting of this story is in cool or cold areas, this story is full of heat. It is such a unique and beautiful writing because it succeeds in giving circle of anger fire in a cool setting of story.

That's why this story can be categorized as a story which has full of fire description, either it is imitatively or symbolically. Both descriptions have combined the story of fire lexically and symbolically. In conclusion, this story can be categorized as an aesthetic short story.

CONCLUSION

The melodrama, as popular literature in genre, shown in *Thrown Away* and *Through A Fire* has presented unique circle of emotion. The first one gives one emotion and fact of story, namely sadness and tragic of life had been felt by the kid. While the second focuses the story at fire.

The creative process told aesthetically in short story *Thrown Away* is the combination of imitation to nature and symbolic imagination in telling the kid's life tragic. Therefore, the aesthetics built in that short story is the aesthetics of tragic. Meanwhile, the aesthetics of fire is the conclusion can be taken from short story *Through A Fire*. This conclusion is proved from the using of fire description in the whole parts of story, either it is fire lexically or it is fire symbolically.

That's why, it can be concluded that Rudyard Kipling has succeeded in presenting the beauty of telling story by the proof of the short stories' content imaginatively and imitatively. Both short stories above are the proofs. Perhaps this is in harmony with what Ambrossini (2008:719-721) that Kipling was

very good at being humane in telling stories. One of humane characteristics is that the story is beautiful. Both stories in this essay is in Ambrossini's conclusion above.

Thus, popular literary works, represented by short story *Thrown Away* and *Through A Fire*, actually has their own beauty aspects. The aspects potentially could be explored if a reader or a critician read the works in detail. In turn, popular literary works can be positioned equal to elite literary works.

References

Allen, Gay Wilson and Clark, Harry Hayden. 1962. *Literary Criticism, Pope to Croce*. Michigan: Wayne State University Press.

Ambrossini, Richard. (2008). A Review of "Politics and Awe in Rudyard Kipling's Fiction" by Peter Havholm. *Victorian Studies*, 51(4): 719-721.

Ashley, Bob. 1989. *The Study of Popular Fiction: A Source Book*. London: Pinter Publishers Limited.

Cawelty, John G. 1976. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Noor, Redyanto. 2009. *Pengantar Pengkajian Sastra*. Semarang: FASindo.

Rhineland, Philip H. 1973. *Is Man Incomprehensible to Man?* USA: Stanford Alumni Association.

<http://www.telelib.com/authors/K/KiplingRudyard/prose/LifesHandicap/throughfire.html>

<http://www.telelib.com/authors/K/KiplingRudyard/prose/PlainTales/throwaway.html>

