

## **The Application of Literary Theories in Literary Texts**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research mainly focused on discovering the application of literary theory in literary texts. Literary theories and literary texts were the same as two sides of a coin. They could not be separated or segregated. In addition, they both also helped people or the readers understand the application of them. However, even though literary theory and literary texts were interrelated or interconnected, they both shared different concept. Literary theory referred to on this basis, a set of assumptions or principles in which they could be used to explain, criticize, and interpret particular aspects, situations, or conditions in literary texts. Whereas, literary text, to some extent, referred to a created story in which it was based on people's experience such as novels, poems, and many others.

The method used in this research was the library research or library studies in which the data were gathered through reading literatures and taking important notes. The primary and secondary data were used to analyze the study. The primary source was some of the literary theories in the literary works such as novel and short stories. The secondary source was gathered through reading journals, articles, and books.

The findings of the study referred to four main theories, namely, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and psychoanalysis. The application of structuralism theory in literary texts gave some insights which showed that although a thing had its structure that shape or form, it is still standing a single unity. It also happened to the literary works. Even though a literary work had its structure, it was still seen as a unity eventually. The application of post-structuralism theory showed that in reading a literary text, one might had different interpretation toward it. One might say A, but the other would probably say B. However, it was rather difficult to have the same interpretation as what the author of the texts really wanted to say without referring it to another related source to help people understand and be able to do certain analysis. The application of post-colonialism theory in literary text showed that the post-colonial theorist entered the literary texts or works through a specific critical lens, or a specific way of reading them. That critical lens, post-colonial theory or post-colonialism, asked the reader to analyze and explain the effects that colonization and imperialism, or the extension of power into other nations, had on people and nations. The last theory, the application of psychoanalysis theory in literary text showed that this theory was not the only theory that people could use to analyze or criticize the characters in literary works or texts. It might be possible if one wanted to use this theory to reveal what is intended by the author or what the characters' motivations were.

**Key words:** Literary theory, literary text.

## A. Introduction

Literature and theory are two things which are interrelated and connected. They both help people understand the application of both. Some people might say that literature is about imagination or something which is not real, this is also stated in Terry Eagleton's book entitled *Literary Theory* (1996, p. 1) that literature can be defined as an imaginative writing in the sense of fiction which writing literally is not true. Although Eagleton's definition regarding literature can be accepted, it can be also defeated by the appearance of theory. The theory helps readers see the world of literature in a form of another thing.

Despite of the fact that the literature and the theory are like two sides of a coin, Bertens (2008, p. vii) states different thing. He states that there is a time when the interpretation of literature and theory is seen as two different and almost unrelated things. Interpretation, according to him, refers to the actual or factual meaning of some literary works or literary texts, while theory is seen as an "alien" to what literature is really about and is seen as a threat to the reading of the literary texts or works.

Bertens, then states that interpretation and theory have moved

closer and closer to each other. Thus, it can be inferred that although he, at the beginning, states that interpretation and theory are almost unrelated, but he eventually states that interpretation and literary texts cannot be separated at all. It is then supported by the opinion that when interpreting a text, a theoretical perspective then appears, whether it is realized or not, theory cannot do anything without interpretation and vice versa.

Since the literature and theory are two things which cannot be separated, then, this paper will discuss the application of literary theory in literary texts. It is better to look at literature and theory as a single unit of discussion, thus, the paper also attempts to look deeper how the theory are related to the literary texts since every literary text can be analyzed through the applicable theory.

### A.1. Research Question

This research aimed at discovering or finding out how the theories of literatures are used in literary works or texts. Referring back to the background of this in which the theories of literature and literary works cannot be separated, this paper, then, tries to discover how actually the theories of literature are applied in the literary works. That being said, in this research there was one research question

formulated *“How are the literature theories applied in literary texts?”*

## **B. Review of Related Literature**

In order to provide a better understanding of the topic discussed in this study, this section will mainly discuss the theories underlying the study which consist of literary theory and literary work. In addition, this section will also discuss the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

### **B.1. Theory of Literary Theory**

Literary theory, according to Brewton (2006) refers to a critical theory, or a theory, and now going to a transformation into cultural theory through the discipline of literary studies. In addition, it can be understood as the set of concepts and intellectual assumptions on which rests the work of explaining or interpreting literary texts. Furthermore, Brewton also emphasizes that literary theory refers to any principles come from internal analysis of literary texts or from external knowledge that can be applied in multiple interpretive situations.

All critical practice regarding literature depends on an underlying structure of ideas in at least two ways, first, the theory provides a comparison for what constructs the subject matter of

criticism that is the literary and the specific aims of critical practice which is the act of interpretation itself. Referring back to the definition proposed by Brewton, it is then safe to conclude that interpretation and literary theory cannot be separated since they both are connected. Strictly defined, literary criticism or literary theory refers to the role of interpreting and studying literature.

Literary theory, according to Brewton (2006), is further defined as particular form of literary criticism in which particular academic, scientific, or philosophical approaches are followed in a systematic fashion while analyzing literary texts. For example, a psychoanalytic theorist might examine and interpret a literary text through the theoretical point of view of psychoanalysis and psychology and, in turn, gives an interpretation or reading of a text that focuses entirely on the psychological things of it. Traditional literary criticism tends not to focus on a particular aspect of a literary text in quite the same manner that literary theory usually does. Literary theory proposes particular, systematic approaches to literary texts that impose a particular line of intellectual reasoning to it.

Another concept of literary theory was also brought by Eagleton and Culler (1997) they stated that literary theory

could be defined as the criticism theory in which it is used to explain and to interpret the literary texts. They also asserted that literary theory was generated from assumptions or principles that can be used in any interpretive situations or conditions. Moreover, they also added that literary theory always dealt with a conception of the world outside the text itself.

In sum, it can be concluded that the literary theory, on this basis, refers to a set of assumptions or principles in which they can be used to explain, criticize, and interpret particular aspects, situations, or conditions in literary texts.

## **B.2. Literary Texts**

Anderson and Kathy (1997, p.1) asserted that literary text is defined as an original stories, stories in the movies, novels, plays, songs, lyrics, poems, and soap opera. In addition, those story provide the readers with ideas or information to show, to tell, or to persuade the readers. Furthermore, they also assert that the literary texts mainly consist of three important types, namely, narrative, drama, and poetic. On this basis, the literary texts, to some extent, can also be defined as a make-up story in which it is based on human's experience or the factual events.

As literary texts are derived from the human's experience, Gibova (2014) in her study emphasized that literary texts came into existence in which the authors aimed at transferring or delivering his or her emotions or thoughts which is enabled by his or her orientation towards his or her experience. In other words, literary texts does not merely or mainly focus on the content, but rather, they focus on the message being transferred or delivered by the author (Landers 2001, Hermans 2007 and Sánchez 2009).

## **B.3. Theoretical Framework**

This part is worth explaining in that there are reasons why the theories are needed and how they will be implemented in this study. Hence, the theory of literary theory is required in order to give a brief depiction of what the literary theories are and everything related to things being observed in this study. In addition, the theory of literary texts contribute as the basic apprehension for the analysis to answer the research question.

Additionally, in order to answer the research question, the theory of literary theories will be the main discussion on this study as it aims at finding out how they are applied in some literary texts. Further discussion will be presented in the section D, the application of literary theory in

literary texts which consists of four primary or main points, namely, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and psychoanalysis.

### **C. Research Methodology**

This research employed library study as the research method. Since it was a library study, the data were gathered through reading literatures and taking important notes. The primary and secondary data were used to analyze the study. The primary source was some of the literary theories in the literary works such as novel and short stories. The secondary source was gathered through reading journals, articles, and books.

### **D. The Application of Literary Theory in Literary Texts**

This section will mostly discuss the application of literary theory in literary texts. The writer takes four theories that are frequently used in criticizing literary texts, namely 1) structuralism, 2) post structuralism, 3) post colonialism, and 4) psychoanalysis.

#### **1. Structuralism**

In the book of Terry Eagleton (1996, p. 84) structuralism refers to an effort to apply the linguistic theory to

objects and activities other than language itself. However, in literary texts, very often we find many words that explain the story itself. The writer explicitly might say different thing regarding this definition, because it only defines the use of linguistic theory to the objects and also activities. What becomes the concern of the writer is that how can objects and also activities be analyzed by using an approach of linguistic and what is the significance of analyzing objects and activities in a literary work.

Structuralism in the book of Rob Pope concentrates on system as a whole and on sense-making activities which means everything must be seen as whole and it cannot be separated. The writer might say this concept emphasizes that everything must be seen as a whole. Sometimes, a thing or an event has to be seen a whole system. Therefore, the meaning inside will not be left behind. Although a thing has its structure that shape or form, it is still standing a single unity. It also happens to the literary works. Even though a literary work has its structure, it is still seen as a unity eventually.

#### **2. Post Structuralism**

Post-structuralism mostly deals with the task of deconstructing the texts or

particular or accepted reading of the texts. The process of deconstructing becomes the term that seems to be understandable for this theory. This theory will mostly deal with a method of reading texts and how will people deal with the analysis of the texts or in other words it can also be said that reading the texts extraordinarily or reading against the meaning inside of the texts. As Eagleton (1983, p. 132) states that deconstruction deals with reading the text against itself. If it is then about reading extraordinarily, then it will give a meaning that one's interpretation might be very different from another person's interpretation.

In regards to the short definition about post-structuralism, the application of post-structuralism also happens when reading certain literary texts. For example in reading a poem, one might have different interpretation toward it. One might say A, but the other will probably say B. However, it is rather difficult to have the same interpretation as what the author of the texts really want to say without referring it to another related source to help people understand and be able to do certain analysis.

### **3. Post colonialism**

Peter Barry (1995, p.127) in his book emphasizes that one important effect

of postcolonial criticism is to then weaken the universalist which claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanist critics. If people claim that great literature has a timeless and universal significance people thereby demote or disregard cultural, social, regional, and national differences in experience and outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single, and universal. Referring back to the theory it can be said that actually the post colonialists want to emphasize that literature cannot be seen from universal angle since there are aspects such as cultural, social, and also national differences which need to be also considered.

However, in the writer's point of view, at one hand, this is true that readers cannot judge one thing or in this case literature from universal angle. The readers have to see another possibility to look at what is inside. On the other hand, it is hard to say that all literary works or texts are influenced by colonial influence. The post-colonial theorist enters the literary texts or works through a specific critical lens, or a specific way of reading them. That critical lens, post-colonial theory or post-colonialism, asks the reader to analyze and explain the effects that colonization and imperialism, or the extension of power into other nations, have on people and nations.

#### 4. Psychoanalysis.

Eagleton (1996, p. 138) states that psychoanalysis is not merely a theory of human mind, yet it is a practice for curing those who are considered mentally ill or disturbed. Furthermore, Eagleton emphasizes that the cure cannot be done by only explaining to the people what is wrong with them, but it is rather the unconscious motivations of the people being investigated. Theoretically, this theory wants to say that the psychoanalysis theory can be applied not only to the characters in literary texts but also to the people in a real life situation. However, it still needs to be considered that the sometimes people's motivation are not easy to be investigated. Sometimes, people will hide their motivation because they do not want other people know about it.

Unlike his previous theory, Eagleton also states that "This is not to suggest that psychoanalysis alone can provide the key to problems of literary value and pleasure" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 167). The interpretation to this theory will simply be this theory is not the only theory that people can use to analyze or criticize the characters in literary works or texts. It might be possible if one wants to use this theory to reveal what is intended by the

author or what the characters' motivations are. However, this cannot be the only threshold for anyone who wants to do a deep analysis related to the motivation or intention of the author.

#### E. Conclusion

It cannot be denied that the appearance of literature and theory are both very important. No one can understand literature without referring to the applicable theory. This also emphasizes that literary theory plays an important role when dealing with literary texts or literary works. The readers can use the theory to not only analyze the texts or works, but also to understand the interpretation of the texts. It can be then illustrated by the appearance of some literary theory such as structuralism which sees the literary texts linguistically, post structuralism which sees the literary texts as things which can be deconstructed, post colonialism which believes that literary texts cannot be seen as universal, and last but not least psychoanalysis which is closely related to the human mind.

Thus, it is then safe to be inferred that the application of literary theory in literary texts can be used as medium of investigating or discovering what is inside the texts. The readers will probably use the theory if they want to have an exact



interpretation of the texts. Apart from that, literature and theory are two things which can be separated. If one wants to analyze a literary text, he or she cannot do it just like that. He or she might need to use the literary theory to assist him or her.

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