

## **Cultural Phenomenon And Moral Value In Short Story *The Gift Of The Magi* By O Henry**

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### **Abstract**

*Literature is an imaginative works of an author. Literature is also part of culture. In a fiction or story there are some norms, values, attitude, and behavior that reflects the society in which the writer live in. There are normative function of literature in a society . So literature can also influence social change. Fiction can change economic, family, lifestyle, or attitude of a community. Society as the reader will identify themselves as the characters in the story. They will tend to feel what the characters feel and do what the characters do. One -or maybe two - values contained in the short story entitled *The Gift of the Magi* are social and moral values. The explanation of social and moral values itself is well known. Where social is interaction and moral is an assessment of the good and bad of a particular thing. It can be seen that moral and social values are bound to each other. It seems that reader live in the story and imagine themselves as fictional actors. Even though a fiction is an author works, it doesn't mean that story is only an individual imaginative writer. It is the product of a society. So literature and culture of society is a unity. They influence for each other.*

**Keywords:** *culture, literature, moral, value, Magi, society*

### **Introduction**

A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and direction, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and through them the nature of culture. Culture is both the 'arts' and the values, norms and symbolic goods of everyday life. While culture is concerned with tradition and social reproduction, it is also a matter of creativity and change ( Barker, 2000).

The story *The Gift of The Magi* by O Henry contains some norms and values in a society. The story describes some attitude, behavior in a social life. The characters represent people in the social community. The characters also symbolize religious facts in the bible. There is an ideology that becomes the background of the characters. What will the characters do and what they think reflects social norms and values at the social life. What the characters do in the story describe deep love and strong faith among a family. The greatness of social and family norms is the most interesting of story *The Gift of The Magi*.

Short story is an acronym for short story. Having a language style that is usually simple and light, is the cause of the many fans from various groups. Although short stories are usually wrapped in a very simple way, we can get a lot of meaning in them. Not only in terms of writing, but also in the meaning of life. Like a short story, *The Gift of Magi* we chose as this analysis. This short story tells the story of a husband and wife who have a low standard of living. It is even said that their stake is bigger than the stake. This short story conflict began when this small family was faced with Christmas. The wife, who has almost no money, tries to give her husband a gift. This is where the resolution of the characters and the values contained are clearly visible.

One -or maybe two - values contained in the short story entitled The Gift of the Magi are social and moral values. The explanation of social and moral values itself is well known. Where social is interaction and moral is the assessment of the good and bad of a particular thing. It can be seen that moral and social values are definitely related to each other.

If anyone asks why we chose this short story specifically, then we have 2 reasons. One is subjective and the other is objective. The subjective reason is clear because we don't have short stories anymore. If not. Yes, it can't be helped. For the second reason, which is objective, we see a uniqueness and how interesting this short story is. I am sure that this short story contains many meanings of life and also beautiful art. For those who understand.

### **Language and literature**

Literature is prototype of social role and social attitude. Relation between fiction and society is to be a social tools. Literature is the product of society, not only individual imagination of the writer. Literature has influences on social change. Two types information about society in literature are :

( Rockwell, 1994)

1. Descriptive way

That is facts about technology, law, custom, social structure and social institution.

2. Information about values and attitude.

The first become most visible when they are brought to the surface as the themes of literature in nodal period when great changes are taking place in the basic institution of society.

There is economic and family change that cause conflicts of values in literature. Social and historical reality always presents itself as an extremely complex mixture not of structures but of processes of structure and destruction, the study of which will not have a scientific character until the day when the chief processes have been made clear with a sufficient degree of rigour.

Greek drama has stable, permanent, and original value. Poet also has influence on social behavior. Poet is society teacher. Content and manner of literature is decided by society. So literature has normative function. Fiction gives pattern on social behavior. That is the source of information and normative power in society.

### **Language function in literature**

Language has important role in human communication. Language is very important cause it is communication tools. Relation between culture and language held in evolution of tools used by human in works. Language is exist cause people work together. Only in work and through work do living beings have much to say to each other. Language came into being together with tools. Language and culture has reciprocal relation. Both of them needs each other. Words are useful and effective than gestures cause words convey the meaning. Language has function as social bond and social barrier. There is dialect on different areas. Class characteristic in language is developed by class determined cultures. In language there is class dialect, class and degree, and degree of education dialect. Norms are represented in fiction cause it is model of real facts. Within a common language there are demarcations : regional differences in intonation, nuances or special uses of words, perhaps words peculiar only to a certain area, variation in meaning, alternate syntax and alternate pronunciation- these are dialects, correct speech within a cultural territory. Didactic function

socialization is key on values on society that produce it. The purpose is to influence behavior that suitable with norms. Folk wisdom is behavior, attitude, proverbs in tales. Literature is universal in proverb, folk, wisdom, and folktales.

### **Transmission of Norms in Fiction**

Literature has effects on people. Reading serious fiction has long lasting effect on reader that effects opinion and society values that will influence social behavior. It indicates that fiction is normative. Moral attitude and behavior are effected so there is general decline in moral and manner. Literature is a good example. Literature can influence people's attitude cause there is censorship which filter unsuitable things. In bourgeois class, money is natural common that will be privilege and honor. Literature protest will expose social change. Literature can influence cultural revolution. Fictional narrative has power to mobilize public opinion, change values and norms, and a force a change in social relations.

Normative effect in fiction or literature influences people's vision and selective values. Censor institution and literature protest is a proof that literature has normative effect on society. Some indications that literature or fiction can influence its consumer as to provoke the whole system of sanction are :

1. Participation

In reading, people participate psychologically. Reader feels to live in the story. Great writer will create a world where we love to live in. We have pleasure of this participation.

2. Personification

Personification is a process where norms and values are made in clear with presenting as fiction characters. Action of the characters legitimate norms that will be accepted.

Money same with sexual attraction. Dominant status same with sexual attraction. Characters in literature personify social norms and values they set pattern for imitation. Television can also be a main factor in effecting values and standards of moral society.

3. Identification

Reader identify themselves with characters in the story. Modern readers will identify themselves as Emma, Lizzy Bennet that are bossy, independent, witty, mentally, and physically active heroines.

There must be enough cultural similarity to make sympathy and understanding possible. Identification with a literary characters be quite decisive in transmitting norms and influencing personal behavior. Consumption of fiction is important in modern education in human relationship.

### **The so- called Realism of the novel**

Modernism is indicated with money. Modern literature oriented of having love and money. Modern novels allows in changing partners and not too elevate marriage. Characteristics of realism is impersonal, industrialization, and present life as it is.

Traditional literature emphasizes on individual experience, based on past history or fable. Presenting a true account of actual lives. In realism there is no supernatural and replace with science. Writer's norms and values are brought in the novel. In modern Europe literature, individual choice in marriage is the main theme. Arranged marriage is not exist in realism. Protestant ethic are work, venture, and succeed. There is a struggling of main character from working class into rich person. Succeed,

individualism, pragmatism, hard working, scientific truth are philosophy of realism. Devaluation of norms and personal relation are theme of present novel. Love is treated as disaster that leads on many problems. Relationship without marriage is allowed . This is very radical and oppose with social system that has been used hundreds years in past literature. There are so many arranged marriage theme in past fiction to maintain economy of family.

In realism era, family bond is loosened. Children are free to decide their lives. Tribal society doesn't expect romantic love that will end with marriage. There is no intensive emotional attachment among couple. In Renaissance era, disaster is caused by gods. In realism, trade, speculation, manufacture, are ways to get money. Middle class is critical in reading facts. Individualism is main topic in realism novel. The novel, then, like all other fiction, is concerned with social reality in a special sense. It describes and defines norms and values, and presents its characters as actors in the demonstration of them.

## Research Methods

The short story research of *The Gift of the Magi* uses qualitative methods as its method. According to Moleong (2013) qualitative approach is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perception, interaction, etc. With description as the method in the form of words in a special context that is natural and by utilizing natural methods as well. Miles and Huberman (2007) emphasize that quantitative research follows research that uses data in the form of words. Nor is it a series of numbers.

In connection with this research, the method will be implemented to the characters and the short story itself. With things like this, there is an alignment to use qualitative methods rather than other methods.

Judging from the research conducted, the data obtained can be sourced from the short story text itself, in the original form or in the form of a translation into another language.

The type of research in this study is a type of Study Text research. Because here we only try to review the text of the short story. No more, no less.

### Data and Data Sources

The data and data sources of course come from the short story text itself. The form of the data obtained also varies. It can be in the form of dialogue fragments between characters, story fragments, or even sentences used by the author to describe a certain situation in the story. The selection of the data is also the same as the previous opinion. that the data comes from the short story itself and is used for a qualitative approach.

### Data Collection Procedure

In this study, there are two procedures for collection. Read and re-record texts that are considered important as a necessary compiler in making research results.

1. Read the scanning of the short story *The Gift of the Magi* to build a thorough understanding of the contents of the short story.
2. Reading the skimming of *The Gift of the Magi* short story to find out the implied meanings that must be understood.
3. Take notes on text fragments and dialogues used in the preparation of research results.

### Data Analysis

Analysis of the data that has been collected from the short story *The Gift of the Magi* uses a content analysis strategy to increase the efficiency of the analysis. or analyze fragments of text in short stories that have meaning or messages that must be understood to be conveyed to readers.

## **Analysis**

In the short story there is a section that describes the moral values that depend on the short story. Not only dialogue, but also in monologue fragments and each letter that is already written in the story itself. As in the following aspects:

### **Care/Love**

In this short story, we can already get an idea that the Dillingham family is a quite family. Poor even. As in the section:

“Expenses are always higher than she had calculated. They always are.”

The expenses were higher than what he had anticipated. Always

This passage explains how low the Dillingham family's finances are. The wife always tries to estimate the existing expenses. But needs always demand more.

In the hardships that live in the midst of the family, the sense of caring or even affection for the two partners does not waver in the slightest. As in:

“So now Della’s beautiful hair fell about her...once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.”

So now, Della's beautiful hair was falling... she was dumbfounded and just stood stiff for a moment as tears dripped a little on the worn red carpet.

This fragment describes When della shaved her long beautiful red hair until there was nothing left to be exchanged for money. In the continuation of the story, he managed to get 20 dollars to buy a gift for his beloved husband.

In the story Della mentions that her husband loves his watch. Until it reaches a level where the husband prefers the clock inherited from his father and grandfather rather than exchanging it for Solomon's treasure. Given this, Della can only buy a cheap watch key, because her husband's one is missing.

Della sacrificed her greatest treasure to give her husband a small gift on Christmas Eve. The same is true for husbands who have come home from work. The husband who was surprised by the loss of his wife's hair was a little funny.

Because the husband had sacrificed the watch he loved to buy a comb that his wife wanted for a long time. But the wife had no hair to comb. And the husband no longer has a watch to repair. But from there, the two couples feel a deep happiness. Knowing that they really love each other.

Of course, not only in terms of moral values, this short story also has social values. The form of social values contained in this short story is certainly closely related to the moral values above and also in the family or household environment.

### **Interactions**

In every human relationship, there must be an interaction. Where an individual meets, communicates with other individuals or groups. There are so many kinds of interactions that exist in society and the general public today. Each of these interactions also has procedures and also several factors that must be considered

We can see some examples of this from the short story *The Gift of Magi*. Shows how a wife interacts in a respectful and loving way with her husband and vice versa. We can see this in the quotes in the short story.

"Don't you like me just as well, anyway? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

"Don't you still like me like this? I'm still me even without hair?"

The reasons behind the use of non-formal language have several factors and backgrounds. One reason is of course to show how close couples are to each other. By using language that seems relaxed, it will certainly make the couple more relaxed when they are at home with their lover.

If we look at the dialogue above in English grammatical, we already know that the language used is a fairly light language. Not formal language.

The story *The Gift of The Magi* contains some cultural phenomenon that represents the social norms, values, and behavior. Between Dela and Jim has strong love and great faith for each other. They sacrifice the most valuable things they have to give a present for their couple. The sacrification they do implies or symbolizes Jesus's sacrification for people. In this case there is intertekstual from bible to a story. The redemption of Jesus Christ for human shows the great love of God to His people in the world. Jesus gave His life to redeem human's sin. It same with Dela who sold her beautiful hair to buy a chain for Jim's watch and the other hand Jim sold his watch to buy a comb for Dela's hair. Although the sacrification is useless but it shows how big their love. It emphasizes the deep love among them.

The poorness of Dela and Jim' life is not an obstacle for them to live together. They still keep in faith although their life lack of money. The faith between Jim and Dela is a religious ideology of Christianity that we have to keep faith only for one person in a marriage. In protestant principle of marriage, the couple who are united by God can not be separated by human. There is no divorce in a family. Just death will separate husband and wife. The story contains Christian ideology to keep faith between Dela and Jim in any conditions.

The simplicity of Jim and Dela's family also personify of Maria's family in the bible. Maria can not afford to rent a house to bear Jesus. It same with Dela and Jim who are very poor to buy Christmas gift. The simplicity is a condition where Maria give her pure love to her child, Jesus Christ. It was same with Dela and Jim who give their pure love for each other in simplicity. In this story Jim and Dela identify themselves as Maria and Jesus in a simplicity. In the bible there is a chapter that says the poor people will have highest position in heaven. I think Dela and Jim is representation of poor people who will have majesty in God's kingdom cause of their simplicity, sincerity, and faith.

*The Gift of the Magi* shows the ethic protestant. That is working hard. One of the ethic protestant is work. In the story Dela and Jim is the characters who work hard to be exist in life. Working hard is one of realism philosophy. In realism, people have to work hard to make life better. They want to be succeed in everything they do. Beside work, succeed is also the protestant ethic in the story *The Gift of The Magi*.

The story also contains aspect of modernism, that consider money as the important element in a life. In modern world money is symbol of privilege and honor. People tend to work hard to get much money. Having enough money indicates of success. So money is personification of high status in social community. In modern society, everything is measured with money. In Dela and Jim's society, money has high position in life. They worked hard and struggle to get money and try to make prosperity in their family. So modern value about the important of money is presented in the story to reflect the real social condition.

## Conclusion

Cultural phenomenon in a fiction shows the facts in social community. Culture is constituted by the meanings and practices of ordinary men and women. Culture is lived experience. The texts, practices and meanings of all people as they conduct their lives. Such meanings and practices are enacted on terrain not of our making even as we struggle to creatively shape our lives. Culture does not float free of the material condition of life; on the contrary, whatever purposes cultural practice may serve, its means of production are always unarguably material. Thus, the meanings of lived culture are to be explored within the context of their condition of production, thus forming culture as a whole way of life. ( Barker, 2000)

From every short story or work, even though it is not a masterpiece, there must be something contained in it. Implied or written. As writers, I believe they want to convey something through their writing. It is also in the form of . Some wrote their anger. Someone wrote a nice message for people to do it. There are also those who write a tragedy so that others can sympathize with the victim. Of course this is also done so that other people do not dig and enter the same hole.

With the values of life inserted in their every series of words, of course we, as readers, can take what the author wants to convey and wants. Such as the moral and social values contained in the short story that we chose *The Gift of The Magi*. Like honesty and compassion, these two points will definitely be present in our lives. Even daily. To get which is good and which is bad, the author gives us an example. We have also been given a brain to process it.

For the same reason, the moral and social values that we present here are very important. Especially in the household. As in the story, the characters we read about are very poor. But they are happy. We all know that money cannot buy happiness. What we buy is just an auxiliary medium for that. Like we do when we buy ice when it's hot. Although we can choose to drink plain water, we will be happier drinking the iced water we want. Whereas in essence, we still drink and quench our thirst no matter what choice we choose, right?

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