

M.H ABRAMS' LITERARY THEORIES IN JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA

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ABSTRACT

Literary theory is one of the significant literature aspects that must be understood well by the researchers in conducting the analysis of literary works. This research aims to analyze what literary theories and approaches that can be applied in Jane Austen's works, which is one of her novels entitled Emma. This novel does indeed succeed, loved by the reader until this age, because the issue or social phenomena reflected by Jane Austen was excellent, the portrayal of the characters are universally human, and the moral values remains toward the behaviors and feelings that represented very well by Jane Austen as the author. This research employed descriptive qualitative method and in this research, the researcher delivered the types of literary approaches by M.H Abrams, such as 'Expressive Theory', 'Objective Theory', 'Mimetic Theory', and 'Pragmatic Theory'; in order to see the connection of the existence of literature and society in this novel written by Jane Austen. The data consist of both primary data and supporting data. The primary data were mainly from Austen's novels entitled Emma (1816). The supporting data were obtained from the reference books, journals, articles that related to the research. The research shows that all types of the Abram's literary theories could be applied in analyzing Austen's Emma by determining the issues or topics which must be reflected by the author; and the research also shows in getting the connection of the existence of literature and society, the expressive and mimetic theories are significantly conducted by seeing the relationship between author's biography and experience of life toward the works they created (expressive) and what social phenomena reflected in a society (mimetic).

Keywords: *Jane Austen, M.H.Abrams, Literary Theories, Emma.*

ABSTRAK

Teori kesusasteraan merupakan salah satu aspek kesusasteraan penting yang harus diperhatikan dengan baik oleh para peneliti dalam melakukan penelitian yang berhubungan dengan karya sastra. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa teori-teori dan pendekatan-pendekatan kesusasteraan apa saja yang dapat diaplikasikan dalam karya-karya Jane Austen, yaitu salah satu novel yang berjudul *Emma*. Novel ini sukses, dicintai oleh pembaca sampai saat ini, karena isu atau fenomena sosial yang digambarkan oleh Jane Austen sangat baik, penggambaran karakter-karakternya secara universal, dan nilai-nilai moral bertautan kembali dengan perilaku dan perasaan yang direpresentasikan dengan sangat baik oleh Jane Austen sebagai seorang pengarang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dan dalam penelitian ini peneliti menyajikan tipe-tipe teori dan pendekatan kesusasteraan oleh M.H. Abrams, yaitu 'teori ekspresif', 'teori objektif', 'teori mimetik', dan 'teori pragmatik'; untuk melihat adanya hubungan antara eksistensi karya sastra dan masyarakat yang terdapat dalam novel karya Jane Austen. Sumber data yang digunakan berupa data primer dan data pendukung. Data primer yaitu berasal dari novel Austen berjudul *Emma* (1816). Data pendukung diperoleh dari beberapa buku referensi, jurnal, artikel yang berhubungan dengan penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa semua tipe teori kesusasteraan Abrams dapat diaplikasikan dalam menganalisa novel *Emma* karya Jane Austen dengan cara menentukan isu-isu atau topik-topik yang telah digambarkan oleh pengarang dalam novel tersebut; dan hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa untuk memperoleh adanya keterkaitan atau hubungan antara eksistensi karya sastra dan masyarakat, maka pendekatan atau teori yang signifikan diaplikasikan adalah *teori ekspresif dan teori mimetik*, yaitu dengan cara

melihat adanya hubungan antara biografi dan pengalaman hidup pengarang terhadap karya-karya yang mereka ciptakan (ekspresif) dan terhadap fenomena social apa yang digambarkan dalam masyarakat (mimetic).

Kata Kunci : Jane Austen, M.H.Abrams, Teori Literatur, Kesusasteraan, Emma.

1. Introduction

Literature is the study about the phenomena in society created and portrayed by the author, using the creativity and imagination. In Portraying what social phenomena happened in society, the author uses the language to describe it and deliver it into the writing text based on what the author's experiences, observation and completed by his or her feeling to make the story exists in an aesthetic values.

Through literature people may interpret the author's message and the intention of the author in writing the literary work. Here, an interpretation of a text is justified with the claim that the author intended us to make such an interpretation (Montgomery et.al, 1992 : 283). Therefore, People read literature in an intention not only to find the entertainment in it but also they would like to analyze the literature based on some theories as the guidance.

In analyzing the literary work, there are four significant elements that must be a focus. These elements are concerned by M.H Abrams (1953), which consists of *Mimetic Theory*, *Pragmatic Theory*, *Expressive Theory*, and *Objective Theory*. Each literary theory of Abrams' has been divided to help the literary researcher in what aspect that the researcher will be focus on the analysis of literary work.

The literary theories were divided by M.H. Abrams and it will be used by the literary researchers when they start to write the academic writing that concerns on the literature. The students of English Literature Department in University of Science and Technology Jayapura are also conducting this literary research analysis. However, in starting to analyze it the main problem that usually appears is the lack of understanding about the literary theories that they need to analyze the literary work. In this case, the researcher finds this problem also happened in English Literature Department students in University of Science and Technology Jayapura.

Furthermore, the researcher attempts to analyze what kinds of Abram's literary theories that could be applied in literary works by the English literature students. The researcher also aims to increase the students' understanding of analyzing the literary work by contributing one of the literary genres, in this case the researcher provided a novel written by Jane Austen, an English author that mostly dominant appears as the examples to be analyzed by the students using the literary theories.

As one of the literary genres, a novel; being the significant subject of analysis by some scholars of literature through the author's presentation of human situations, the description and explaining

the characters in detail as they are in real life. Therefore, the literary researcher in this case find that a novel could be an interesting study to be analyzed within those aspects and it also could be a medium for criticizing the society in general. In this research, the researcher would like to explain that novel is one of the effective tools to present certain problems or ideas. Novel can also bring certain messages from the author or certain social situation. Here literature can be seen as a picture or sketch of life. However, since literary work is a product human creation, it can be said that in there are many opinions and views of the author within the works.

Jane Austen is one of the English authors who always reminds people about a fault in something or in the way it has been made which means that the life is not perfect or what we call as the people's *shortcomings* through the characters she created in one of her novels; *Emma* (1816). Jane Austen is not a person who works to achieve political or social change (where it is usually used as her theme of writing), but she is very enthusiastic about a social activity and its idea. She is well-known as the keen social observer through her writings in the novel and showing the particular issues in her age by a faithful observation.

In this research, the researcher would like to focus on analyzing what literary theories and approaches that can be applied in Austen's literary work, which is novel entitled *Emma*. This novel does indeed succeed, loved by the reader

until this age, because the issue or social phenomena reflected by Austen was excellent, the portrayal of the characters are universally human, and the morality remains toward the behaviors and feelings that represented very well by Austen as the author.

Emma is the Austen's novel published in 1816 was also set in nineteenth century England. As the Austen's focus well is about the woman character *Emma Woodhouse*. Austen portraits the different character of Emma and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Where Fanny in *Mansfield Park* belongs to the lower class so she tends to focus on changing her social status through marriage and education, while for Emma Woodhouse belongs to upper class in this novel she prefers to be single in order to be always in a high social rank and gets respect by others. Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* are two different women characters reflected by Austen in order to persuade people in seeing how marriage life was appeared in Victorian Era.

This research is conducted by the researcher in order to see the connection between each literary theory and approach in this novel written by Jane Austen. Most of the issue that described by Austen in her novels are about the condition of woman life, marriage and social status. These phenomena can be found in real life by people. That is the reason why literature is a study of human life in a society though it is presented in an imaginative way. This is the focus of this

analysis in finding, showing and describing the connection of literature and human life in a reality through the literary theories and approaches. Furthermore, the researcher decides the title of this research is '*M.H.Abram's Literary Theories in Jane Austen's Emma*'.

2. Literature Review (Theoretical Background)

Mimetic theory is the literary theory that has been described by M.H. Abrams in his book *The Mirror and the Lamp* where this theory as the approach which focuses on the relationship between the text and universe. The term of *mimetic* originally means as imitation in Greek. That means what the author describes in a literary work is a mirror that reflects the world. Therefore, the *mimetic* theory could be meant as the imitation, image, reflection, feigning, counterfeiting, copy, portrayal and representation.

Pragmatic theory is the literary theory which is concerned with the relation between text and audience or the reader. According to Abrams, these theories have constituted the dominant mode of analysis from Horace to the early 19th century, and much of its terminology is borrowed from ancient rhetoric. In a literary work, the author deliberately uses *mimetic* as the contents of what she or he describe in poetry, prose or in a drama where it is purposed to achieve certain effects in the reader. The author of the literary work expects that the effects of

the literary work views can be such as the aesthetic pleasure, instruction, or kinds of emotion. According to Fard (2016), *the pragmatic* theory which largely dominated literary discussion from the versified *Art of Poetry* by the Roman Horace (first century B.C.) through the eighteenth century, has been revived in recent *rhetorical criticism*, which emphasizes the artistic strategies by which an author engages and influences the responses of readers to the matters represented in a literary work.

Expressive theory is the literary theory which is concerned with the text and author relationship. Fard (2016) states that, '*it defines as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet's imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or its adequacy to the poet's individual vision or state of mind; and it often seeks in the work evidences of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously has revealed himself or herself in it.*' This theory tends to an interest in the author's biography and psychology. In reading what author's writing in a prose, a drama or in a poetry, the reader tries to understand the intention of the author's writing. The reader also tries to understand the relation between the author's background of life and his or her experience into the literary works that they deliver through the experiences they have been through. As we know

together, that the literary works could not be created without an experience, therefore the author also has it in completing the works. In *expressive* theory, the focuses are about the author's expression.

Objective theory is the literary theory which deals with a literary work itself. The literary researcher focuses the analysis in the intrinsic elements or the element that build up the literary work itself. That means the literature could be defined as something which stands free from the author, the reader and the universe. In reading the prose, for instance, the reader will only read and analyze all the intrinsic elements in it. Such as, the plot, the characterization, the setting, the message, etc.

3. Methodology

3.1. Types of research

The researcher uses the descriptive and qualitative research method to gain a great and depth information that occurs in the literary work. According to Williams (2007: 70) the qualitative method allows the researcher to explore and better understand the complexity of a phenomenon. Therefore, based on this method, the researcher focused on describing, explaining and interpreting the collected data deals with the social phenomenon which reflected by the author in the analysis.

3.2. Method of Collecting Data

This research is based on the library research method where it allows the writer to

collect some data by reading textbooks, articles, and critical writings which are considered relevant to this research. In collecting data, the researcher would like to read, summarize, paraphrase and interpret by using the note taking methods to show the data clearly and completely.

3.3. Source of data

This research uses primary data and supported data. Primary data is the novel written by Jane Austen entitled *Emma* (1816) as the main data collected and analyzed as the object of the research. The supported data are taken from other relevant sources such as the author's biography, book, journals, essays, criticism articles, and some sources from internet.

3.4. Method of analyzing data

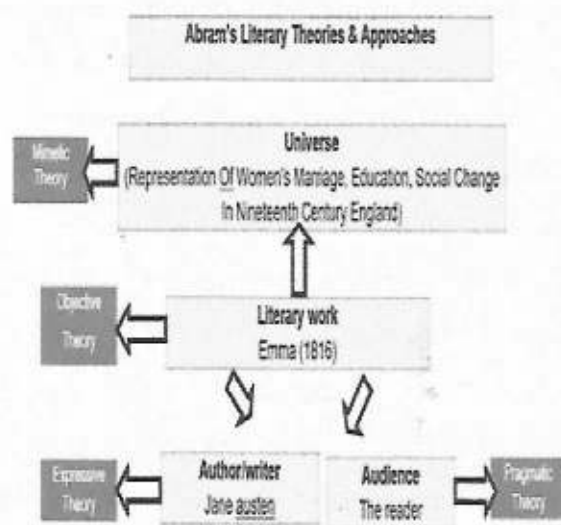
The researcher analyzes the data obtained from Jane Austen's novel entitled *Emma* by using the Abram's literary theories and approaches, which consists of *Mimetic Theory*, *Pragmatic Theory*, *Expressive Theory*, and *Objective Theory*. The result of analysis shows and describes the kinds of Abrams' literary theories and approaches that can be applied in Austen's *Emma* and how the connections between each literary theory and approach in Austen's *Emma*.

4. Findings And Discussion

As has been explained previously, the researcher attempts to analyze how could the Abrams' literary theories and approaches be

applied in Austen's *Emma*; and also to analyze how the connections between each literary theory and approach in Austen's *Emma*. After reading this novel, the researcher finds that all types of M.H.Abram's literary theories can be applied. These are the description below based on each literary theory in detail;

Picture 1. Abram's Literary Theories & Approaches



Based on the diagram above, the researcher would like to describe each of Abram's literary work that could be applied in literary work.

4.1. Mimetic theory

This theory views the literary work as an reflection, imitation, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary characteristic of this theory which applied in a literary work is through the 'truth' of its representation to the object matter that it represent or should be represented. It can be seen the representation that appears in the Austen's *Emma* is about the

representation of women's perspective of marriage. The researcher found that the perspective of marriage as reflected in Austen's *Emma* is influenced by their social condition of women; social status and social background of their family in society. The researcher found that the characters that Jane Austen portrayed in her novels are mostly dominated by practical perspective where this is influenced by the condition of women in nineteenth century England. In this part, the researcher focused to see the main women characters in *Emma* (Emma Woodhouse) who is represented by Jane Austen in showing their perspective of marriage.

Emma Woodhouse, the main woman character in Austen's *Emma*, the heroine who sees the woman's position in choosing the right man as being the partner of life. Emma is portrayed by Austen as the woman who has a strong perspective about marriage, where she keeps in her belief to not marry because she always thinks that a woman should consider to marry to gentleman, so they will get respect from society and through that marriage the woman will not be entreated disrespectfully by man.

" a woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked, or because he is attached to her and can write tolerable letter". (Austen, 1994 : 41)"

In this novel, Emma has a perspective of marriage not only for herself, but also she cares more about this to the woman who is not as lucky

as herself who was born as a rich woman, where Emma is the woman who is coming from the upper class and inherited property and estates from her father. Therefore, she prefers to sustain her position as the independent woman with all of her own property freely and she does not want to leave her father who lives with her.

"I promise you to make none for myself, papa; but I must, indeed, for other people. It is the greatest amusement in the world! And after such success, you know!" (Austen, 1994: 6)

Based on Emma's statement above, the researcher could see how Emma has an idealistic perspective in which she observes marriage toward her economical background which is she thinks that she will never marry due to her disposition socially and economically is independent. The statements below support her perspective of marriage, where she emphasizes she will not change her position by marriage, except if she finds herself in love, but to have a relationship or love some man who has a same position in a upper class society as her, for her it is need more preparation to marry.

"My being charming, Harriet, is not quiet enough to induce me to marry; I must find other people charming- one another person at least. And I am not only going to be married at present, but have very little intention of ever marrying at all"

"I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed it would be a different thing; but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's" (Austen, 1994:67)

The researcher could find how Emma observes the marriage in idealistic perspective when she thinks that if one day she will marry, she needs a man who can treat her well, give an opportunity for her in making decision of life. She does not need to marry a man who just can let her to be a mistress. She believes that a married woman will have the same destiny as her sister Isabella who becomes a dutiful wife for her husband and always busy with the domestic sphere and also accomplish her husband whenever she goes.

"the destiny of poor Isabella-which poor Isabella, passing her life with those she doted on, full of their merits, blind to their faults, and always innocently busy, might have been

a mode of right feminine happiness".
(Austen, 1994:112)

However, Emma's perspective of marriage will also actually be realized to the women she meets in her life. She does not want to marry because she thinks she has what nineteenth century England women need to get in their lives. She is an Upper class society, has a pride in a society, has an own property that she will never worry about. In this case, Jane Austen draws her character Emma of not viewing and observing the marriage in a love perspective, but in an idealistic perspective where Marriage for England Woman in 19th century is not just about love, however. Questions of love are complicated by money, family, land and social status. Austen emphasizes the social aspects of marriage in order to expose the economic and class dynamics of romantic love. Therefore, in this novel Emma tends to be a matchmaker for women in that society to get married with the best man who can help the women from the lower or middle class to come up the level of their ranks in society. It happens in this novel, because Jane Austen as the author would like to show the condition of women in her time that marriage was one of the only ways of changing social status.

4.2. Objective theory

This is Abram's theory which deals with a literary work as something which stands for free from what is called as 'extrinsic element'. The objective theory is the 'intrinsic element' of

the literary work. It is the element that builds the literary work itself without relating it to the author or writer, or to the audience or the reader or to the universe (world). It is analyzed more on the complexity of the works with its coherence and integrity.

In Jane Austen's *Emma*, the objective theory or the intrinsic elements could be found by the researcher starting from the characters, setting, theme, and plot. However, the researcher would like to show only one of these intrinsic elements which could be a representative. It is about the characters element that becomes the author's focus.

Character is one of important things in prose; it is one of the basic elements of it. It can be said that if there is no character, it would be no play or story. There are some characters presented by Jane Austen. They are *Emma Woodhouse, Miss Taylor, Miss Churchill, Jane Fairfax, Miss Augusta Hawkins and Harriet.*

All those women characters above are presented by Jane Austen in different characterization and different perspective of marriage in order to gain the understanding of the reader that in the character development is the key element in a story's creation, and in most pieces of fiction, a close identification to the character is a crucial thing in understanding the story.

4.3. Expressive theory

This theory connects the literary work to the author. It describes that *Emma* is the novel which is one of the literary genres as an

expression, the utterances of feeling belongs to Jane Austen as the author. *Emma* is the product of Austen's imagination operating on her perception, thoughts, and feelings when she wrote the story of *Emma*.

Jane Austen was born on December, 16th, 1775, at the rectory in the village of Steventon, near Basingstoke, in Hampshire, England. She is famous as the author who likes to use her work as a way of criticizing a person, an idea or an institution in which she uses humour to show their faults or weakness. This type of criticism called as the *social satire* where the reader would find in reading her several novels, including *Emma* (1816). Her satirical writing is influenced by her reading that she read the books in her father's extensive library where provided material for the short satirical sketches.

Jane Austen lived in industrial revolution where that era brought some changes in social and economic situation in England. She lived in a circumstance of the minor land gentry and country clergy that she used in her writing. *Emma* and her other novels were called novel of manners. It is a work of fiction that re-creates a social world, conveying with finely detailed observation the customs, values, and mores of a highly developed and complex society is called a novel of manners (Kupler,2012:35). Then, Jane Austen confined her writing to the world she knew from first-hand experience.

According to Al-Haj (2014:46), "Jane Austen is probably best remembered for her analysis of character and conduct. Her characters have strengths and weakness, they go through times of trials and they learn lessons. They are not driven by wild passions. The strong impulses and intensely emotional states they experience are regulated controlled and brought to order by private reflection". It can be seen by the researcher in the connection of Jane Austen's life experiences that influence the existence of the characters she portrayed in *Emma*.

In *Emma*, the characters which Jane Austen reflected show their perspective in marriage where in this opportunity Jane Austen would like to describe how actually the women in nineteenth century England where the purpose of marriage is to guarantee their life economically and socially dependent on their husband. This statement is supported by the argument of Brown (1984) and Perkin (2003) who state that "*the women in nineteenth century of England did not see marriage in romantic way because of the social condition of women at that time that they don't have job and property right for their own to live, they need marriage to guarantee their life but if they prefer to married in romantic reason it possible can happen if the couple come from upper class because they have their own property to maintain their life.*"

Therefore, the content of the story in *Emma* (1816) has some connection to Jane Austen's

perspective also about marriage and her social background. Where in her active social life, she met many wanted to marry her, but she remained single all her life. On one occasion, she accepted a marriage proposal from the brother of one of her close friends, however she changed her mind the following day (Al-Haj, 2014).

4.4. Pragmatic theory

The theory focuses to the audience or the reader's effect in giving an instruction, aesthetic pleasure, or kind of emotion. The focus of the theory is on the role of the response of readers of literature. There is theory that examines how responders can understand the entire story that is read, called as the theory of reception to the literature.

The pragmatic theory could be applied by the literary researcher in conducting the analysis where the focus is to observe how the reader as the audience or the respondent of literary work understand the theme, plot, characterization, setting and the problem happened in a society that presented by the author.

In *Austen's Emma*, the pragmatic theory definitely applied when the literary researcher would like to focus on observing about the reader's response by giving some questions that need some arguments and message contained in *Emma* and it depends on how the message can be received by the reader itself.

5. Conclusion

Based on the finding that has been described above, the researcher may conclude that M.H Abrams' literary theories are related each other and cannot be separated toward the existence of literature. The kinds of M.H Abrams' literary theories are significantly divided into *mimetic theory*, *objective theory*, *expressive theory* and *pragmatic theory* where the use and the aims of each theory is different. All types of the Abram's literary theories could be applied in analyzing Austen's *Emma* by determining the issues or topics which must be reflected by the author. In *mimetic theory*, the researcher found that the perspective of marriage as reflected in Austen's *Emma* is influenced by their social condition of women; social status and social background of their family in society; in *objective theory*, the intrinsic elements of Austen's *Emma* could be found by the researcher starting from the characters, setting, theme, and plot. In *expressive theory*, *Emma* is the product of Jane Austen's imagination operating on her perception, thoughts, and feelings when she wrote the story of *Emma*. In *pragmatic theory* focuses on observing about the reader's response by giving some questions that need some arguments and message contained in *Emma* and it depends on how the message can be received by the reader itself. The researcher also concludes that in getting the connection of the existence of literature and society, the *expressive and mimetic theories* are significantly conducted by seeing

the relationship between author's biography and experience of life toward the works they created (expressive) and what social phenomena reflected in a society (mimetic).

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