

Three Dimensional Aspect of a Main Character *Mathilde* in Guy De Maupassant's *THE NECKLACE*

Bambang Irawan
Universitas Pamulang
(dosen01218@unpam.ac.id)

ABSTRACT

*As other kinds of literature, prose also employs intrinsic elements in order to be considered as literature. One of intrinsic elements which is applied in prose is character. A good character is required to have three dimensions which are portrayed in prose. Those three dimensions are physiological, sociological and psychological aspects. This research is aimed to gain the understanding on three dimensional aspects that build good characters in literary works. The method which was used in this research is descriptive method. The data were taken from narration and dialogues in the short story. Then, the data were analyzed to find out the three dimensional aspects that build the main character in the short story. In the analysis, Lajos' theory about three dimensional aspects of a character was applied. As the results, in Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace*, a main character named Mathilde also has three dimensional aspects which are interesting to be discussed. Physiologically, Mathilde is described as a beautiful woman. At the ball, she is even considered as the most beautiful one although at the end of the story she is no longer beautiful. Sociologically, she comes from an average family. Her husband is a clerk who is not able to provide her luxurious life. Psychologically, she has unappreciative, materialistic and selfish tendencies. She also suffers from poverty. However, at the end of the story, her behavior changes and she starts to realize what struggle is.*

Keywords: prose, character, physiological dimension, sociological dimension, psychological dimension

INTRODUCTION

Prose is written or spoken language in its ordinary form. According to Cuddon (2013: 564), the word prose derives from the Latin *prosea* or *proversa oratio*, 'straightforward discourse'. Thus, prose is a direct unadorned form of language which is written or spoken in ordinary usage. It differs from poetry or verse in that it is not restricted in rhythm, measure, or rhyme. In line to Cuddon (2013), Abrams (1999: 247) also states that prose is an inclusive term for all discourse, spoken or written, which is not patterned into the lines either

metric verse or of free verse. Baldick (2001: 207) gives more complete definition of prose by stating that prose is the form of written language that is not organized according to the formal patterns of verse; although it will have some sort of rhythm and some devices of repetition and balance, these are not governed by a regularly sustained formal arrangement, the significant unit being the sentence rather than the line. So, it is clear that prose is a literary genre which not written

in form of verse but it is written in sentences and paragraph.

Generally, prose is divided in two subgenres and each of subgenre includes several kinds of literary works which will be discussed further in the following chapters. Two subgenres of prose are fiction and non-fiction. Fiction means prose which is written based on imagination or the story which is being told does not happen in real life. As Abrams (1990: 95) states that fiction is any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that in fact happened. Cuddon (2013: 279) also states that fiction is a vague and general term for an imaginative work, usually in prose. Some literary works sometimes are written based on event that really happened in real life but the characters or setting are not real. They are also considered as fiction. Fiction is usually applied to novel and short story and even the term fiction is now used in general of novel, short story, novella and any other related genres.

Short story as one kinds of prose features fewer characters and usually single setting because it has less complex setting. Short story usually tells an incident that happens in one setting. Those characteristics of short story differ it from novel which employs multiple characters and settings because it has complex plot and great length.

One of famous short stories is *The Necklace* written by Guy de Maupassant. According to Bloom (2004: 57), "*The Necklace*" which was published in 1884 is one of the series of short, realistic tales centered on the premise of a single object, "*The Necklace*" is a strikingly accurate depiction of a relationship between husband and wife. With an ironic surprise ending, the story illustrates how a strong sense of pride can both create opportunity and disaster in marriage. This short story is chosen as the object of the research.

Characters in a literary work convey many aspects such as physical

appearance, behavior, social life, etc. Those aspects can be seen by conducting analysis. *Mathilde* as the main character in *The Necklace* also conveys several aspects. Thus, the problem which was highlighted in this research is: what aspects reveal on *Mathilde* as the main character in *The Necklace* short story.

This research was aimed to gain understanding on three dimensional aspects that build character *Mathilde* as a main character in *The Necklace* short story. To get the result, library research was applied in this research. The method which was used in this research is descriptive method. The data were taken from the narration, dialogues and surrounding condition in the short story. Then, the data were analyzed to find out three dimensional aspects that build *Mathilde* as the main character in the short story. In the analysis, Lajos' theory about three dimensional aspects of character was applied. The results of the research were explained descriptively. This research is worthy-studying since it is able to contribute to a greater understanding on the significance of analyzing the characters in a literary work.

Intrinsic Elements of Literature

To build a literary work including prose, elements of literature both intrinsic and extrinsic are needed. According to DiYanni (2001: 44), intrinsic elements are the basic elements or characteristics of the story. Each intrinsic element has important role to build the structure of literary work so that it can stand strong as the product of ideas and imagination. DiYanni (2001: 50) states that there are seven basic elements of literature, they are: theme, plot, character, setting, point of view, language & style, and irony & symbol. This study focused on analyzing the characters especially the major character in a literary work.

Characters and Characterization

Cuddon (2013: 116) defines that character is the person portrayed in a narrative or dramatic work. Baldick (2001:

37) also defines that character is a personage in a narrative or dramatic works. So, character is a participant that appears in a story. There are several types of character that may appear in a narrative or dramatic work, two of them are major character and minor character.

Major characters are also known as main characters that are dominant in the story. Major characters commonly appear from the beginning until the end of the story. That is why they are dominant in the story. In contrast to major characters, minor characters are less prominent in the story. Although the minor characters are less prominent, they are as important as major characters to build the story.

Baldick (2001: 37) states that characterization is the representation of person in narrative and dramatic works. This may include direct methods like the attribution of qualities in description or commentary, and indirect methods inviting the readers to infer qualities from characters' action, speech or appearance. Gill (1997: 105) tries to clarify the difference between character and characterization. He states that character is a person in a literary work, whereas the characterization is the way a character is created. Characters are all the product of characterization. Kenney (1966: 34) divided characterization method into five, as follows:

1. Discursive method

It is the method in which the author presents the characters in the story directly through narrative statements.

2. Dramatic method

It is the method in which the author lets the characters describe themselves to the readers by their own words and actions.

3. Character on character method

It is the method to present one character through other characters. It means that one character or more describe or talk about another character in the story.

4. Contextual method

It is the method to present the character through certain descriptions of their surrounding condition.

5. Mixing method

It is the use of more than one method in presenting a character.

In this research, Mixing method was used to collect the data. It means that the data were taken from several aspects including narrative statement, dialogue, surrounding condition, etc.

Three Dimensional Aspects of Character

Egri Lajos (in Hamzah, 1985:107) states that a character has three dimensions as its fundamental structure. Those dimensions are physiology, sociology and psychology. They are the elements which build the characterization in a literary work and they are bound to each other.

Physiological dimension is related to the description of physical aspects of a character. It includes:

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Height and weight
4. Colour of hair, eyes, skin
5. Posture
6. Appearance
7. Defects
8. Heredity.
9. Etc

Sociological dimension is related to the description of the condition of character's environment. It includes:

1. Social Class
2. Occupation
3. Education
4. Home life
5. Religion
6. Race, nationality
7. Place in community
8. Political affiliations
9. Amusements
10. Etc

Psychological dimension deals with the psychological characteristics of the character. It includes:

1. Sex life, moral standards

2. Personal premise, ambition
3. Frustrations, chief disappointments
4. Temperament
5. Attitude towards life
6. Complexes
7. Extrovert, introvert, ambivert.
8. Abilities
9. Qualities
10. I.Q.
11. Etc

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Physiological Dimensions of Mathilde

As mentioned above that physiological aspects of a character are observed through sex, age, height, weight, colour of eyes, skin, hair, posture, appearance, defects, heredity, etc.

Data 1

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education

Data 2

The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

Data 3

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become like all the other strong, hard, coarse women of poor households. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry, her hands were red. She spoke in a shrill voice, and the water slopped all over the floor when she scrubbed it. But sometimes, when her husband was at

the office, she sat down by the window and thought of that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

Data 4

“Good day, Jeanne.”

The other astonished to be familiarly addressed by the plain good wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

“But-madame!-I don’t know- You must have mistaken.”

“No, I am Mathilde Loisel.”

Her friend uttered a cry.

“Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!”

From the data above, it is clearly described that Mathilde’s sex is female. The narrator uses pronoun “she” that refers to Mathilde. There is something interesting in this story regarding with the appearance of Mathilde because her appearance changes at the end of the story.

Both data 1 and data 2 describe that Mathilde is a beautiful woman. Even, at the ball, she is considered as the most beautiful woman there. A lot of men looked at her and asked her name because they were interested in Mathilde’s beauty. However, data 3 and 4 describe that Mathilde is no longer beautiful. He looked old and different, and even her friend does not recognize her anymore. This happens because Mathilde lost her friend’s necklace. She has to work very hard to help her husband to pay their debt which is used to replace the necklace. She does housework by herself. Even, in data 3, she is described as a woman of impoverished household who sometimes still thinks about her past time when she was still beautiful and charming.

In data 4, it is described that Mathilde’s close friend does not recognize her. It indicates that there is a great change on Mathilde’s physic. Her friend, Jeanne, is curious how she has changed and it is stated that Mathilde has changed because

she has to work very for ten years to pay her debt. She does not have money to take care herself.

2. Sociological Aspects of Mathilde

Sociological aspects are observed through social class, occupation, education, home life, religion, race, nationality, place in community, political affiliation, amusement, etc.

Data 1

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education.

Data 2

She had no clothes, no jewels, nothing. And these were the only things she loved; she felt that she was made for them. She had longed so eagerly to charm, to be desired, to be wildly attractive and sought after.

Data 3

She came to know the heavy work of the house, the hateful duties of the kitchen. She washed the plates, wearing out her pink nails on the coarse pottery and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish-cloths, and hung them out to dry on a string; every morning she took the dustbin down into the street and carried up the water, stopping on each landing to get her breath. And, clad like a poor woman, she went to the fruiterer, to the grocer, to the butcher, a basket on her arm, haggling, insulted, fighting for every wretched half penny of her money.

Data 4

"I brought you another one just like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You realise it wasn't easy for us; we had no money.

Well, it's paid for at last, and I'm glad indeed."

From the data 1, Mathilde comes from an average family because she is from family of artisans. She becomes a wife of a clerk in the Ministry of Education. Her husband's position as a clerk does not provide them enough money to support their live. In data 2, it is clearly described that Mathilde even does not have clothes and jewels which are something important for a woman. So, it is concluded that Mathilde is from low income family.

From data 3, Mathilde is described just as a wife. She does not have a job. She relies her life totally on her husband. After she lost her friend's necklace, Mathilde even does housework by herself and her husband has to work much harder to earn more money to support their life and pay debt.

3. Psychological Aspects of Mathilde

Psychological aspects of a character are observed through sex live, moral standard, frustration, ambition, disappointment, attitude toward life, ability, qualities, etc.

Data 1

She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury. She suffered from the poorness of her house, from its mean walls, worn chairs, and ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class would not even have been aware, tormented and insulted her.

Data 2

She imagined vast saloons hung with antique silks, exquisite pieces of furniture supporting priceless ornaments, and small, charming, perfumed rooms, created just for little parties of intimate friends, men who were famous and sought after, whose homage roused every other woman's envious longings.

Data 3

She had a rich friend, an old school friend whom she refused to visit, because she suffered so keenly when she returned home. She would weep whole days, with grief, regret, despair, and misery.

Data 4

"The Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at the Ministry on the evening of Monday, January the 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she flung the invitation petulantly across the table, murmuring:

"What do you want me to do with this?"

Data 5

Madame Loisel came to know the ghastly life of abject poverty. From the very first she played her part heroically. This fearful debt must be paid off. She would pay it. The servant was dismissed. They changed their flat; they took a garret under the roof.

From data 1, it is described that Mathilde suffers. She is depressed because she is not able to accept her destiny as a wife of a clerk. She always feels that she must be born to live full with luxury and joy. In fact, she is a wife of a clerk who is able to provide modest life. Mathilde's inability to accept destiny also indicates that she generates materialistic. It can be seen from data 1 that she suffers from poverty and condition in her house. If she is not a materialistic woman, she might not suffer and accept the destiny. She might also do something to change her life to be better instead of suffering from poverty endlessly.

Mathilde as a materialistic woman can also be seen from data 2. She always imagine something luxurious such as vast saloons hung with antique silks, exquisite pieces of furniture supporting priceless

ornaments, etc. She never really seems happy and her lack of luxurious things makes her feel even more worthless. She is like a person who does not have purpose in her life.

From data 3, it is implied that Mathilde is full of envious resentment. She does not want to visit her close friend's house because it is a luxurious house which is much different from her house. Her materialistic obsession and envious resentment make her suffers when she returns home after visiting her friend's house.

In data 4, Mathilde generates unappreciative and selfish tendencies. Instead of being happy when her husband brings an invitation to a ball, she is getting angry because she does not have any dress and jewels. It shows that she is unappreciative to her husband effort. She is also selfish because she only thinks about herself without thinking about her husband. However, her unappreciative and selfish tendencies change at the end of the story. After losing her friend's necklace, she and her husband must pay their debt which is used to buy a new necklace to replace her friend's. In data 5, it is seen that Mathilde wants to pay their debt by working hard. She is getting realize what the struggle is.

CONCLUSION

Physiologically, Mathilde, as a major character in Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace*, is described as a very beautiful woman. In the ball, she is even considered as the most beautiful women there although at the end of the story, she is no longer beautiful. Sociologically, it is concluded that she is from an average family. Her husband is a clerk who is not able to provide her luxurious life. Psychologically, Mathilde is described as a depressed woman because she is not able to accept her fate. Moreover, she also generates materialistic, unappreciative and selfish tendencies. However, at the end of

the story, those tendencies change and she starts realizing what struggle is.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, H.M. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Term 7th Edition*. USA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Baldick, C. (2001). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Term*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bloom, H. (2004). *Bloom's Major Short Story Writers: Guy de Maupassant*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publisher.
- Cuddon, J.A. (2013). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- DiYanni, R. (2001). *Literature: Reading Poetry, Prose, and Drama, Compact Edition*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.
- Hamzah, A.A. (1985). *Perngantar Bermain Drama*. Bandung: CV Rosda.
- Kenney, W. (1966). *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monarch Press.