

## **Darkness of Love as Portrayed in Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephant***

**Article history**  
Accepted  
12 August 2017

Fifit Rizkiyani<sup>a\*</sup>, Faza Lutfiyana<sup>a</sup>

Published online  
9 September 2017

<sup>a</sup> Semarang State University

\*Corresponding author  
rizkiyanififit@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

In this paper, the writers tried to analyze a 'message' that is delivered by the author. The purpose of this writing is to investigate how the author portrays 'darkness of love' through literary works. This research uses formulaic literature approach as the theory and methodology. It contains the description, analysis, and interpretation of these data supported by theories. By doing depth analysis of 'hills like white elephant's' stories and its figurative language, the result showed that the phrase 'darkness of love' caused by forbidden love.

**Keywords:** *darkness of love, ernesthemingwa; formulaic literature; hills like white elephant*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature is writing that is considered to be an art form, or any single writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value, often due to deploying language in ways that differ from ordinary usage. Literature is a way or a media to demonstrate what actually happened on the authors' life through literary works (as cited in Nurgiyantoro, 2010). Lukens (1999) stated that literature is not only focus on entertainment, but also focus on delivering moral values to the readers. Based on those three statements, it can be concluded that literature have depth message for readers to change something. That perspective leads to the statement that each person has different way to actualize themselves, relate to what happened in life (Kenney, 1966).

Most of the authors of literary works spread out their true story through their works. And this happens to Ernest Hemingway. **Ernest Hemingway** (1899-1961), born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois, started his career as a writer in a newspaper office in Kansas City at the age of seventeen. After the United States entered the First World War, he joined a volunteer ambulance unit in the Italian army. Serving at the front, he was wounded, was decorated by the Italian Government, and spent considerable time in hospitals. After his return to the United States, he became a reporter for Canadian and American newspapers and was soon sent back to Europe to cover such events as the

Greek Revolution.

During the twenties, Hemingway became a member of the group of expatriate Americans in Paris, which he described in his first important work, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Equally successful was *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), the study of an American ambulance officer's disillusionment in the war and his role as a deserter. Hemingway used his experiences as a reporter during the civil war in Spain as the background for his most ambitious novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Among his later works, the most outstanding is the short novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), the story of an old fisherman's journey, his long and lonely struggle with a fish and the sea, and his victory in defeat.

Hemingway - himself a great sportsman - liked to portray soldiers, hunters, bullfighters - tough, at times primitive people whose courage and honesty are set against the brutal ways of modern society, and who in this confrontation lose hope and faith. His straightforward prose, his spare dialogue, and his predilection for understatement are particularly effective in his short stories, some of which are collected in *Men Without Women* (1927) and *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938). Hemingway died in Idaho in 1961.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There are some theories that we used in our research. They are figurative language and formulaic literature.

Figurative language is used to describe an object, person, or situation by comparing it to or with something else (Spivey, 2011). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that figurative language is embedded within and intimately connected to our cultures, behaviors, and models of the world. Based on those statements, it can be concluded that the use of figurative language is for an aesthetic reason. In literary works, figurative language is mostly used by the authors or the writers to beautify the work itself. Figurative language also a tool that an author uses to help readers visualize what is happening in the story.

According to Spivey (2011), there are several types of figurative language in literary works. They are simile, metaphor, personification,

onomatopoeia, hyperbole, idiom, and clichés. Below is the explanation of each type.

### **Simile**

Simile– a simile (sim-uh-lee) uses the words “like” or “as” to compare two explicitly unlike things as being similar. The sentence “Mom is as busy as a bee” paints a mental picture of Mom swarming around like a bee when she’s busy (Spivey, 2011).

### **Metaphor**

Metaphor– a metaphor (met-uh-fawr, -fer) suggests something or someone actually becomes or is something else (Spivey, 2011). “Dad is a bear when he’s mad.” Metaphors use more specific words like is, are, was, or were to paint a mental picture of Dad actually being a mad bear. There is no “like” or “as” in comparing the two.

### **Personification**

Personification– personification (per-son-uh-fi-kay-shuh-n) gives animals or inanimate objects human-like characteristics (Spivey, 2011). “The soft voice of the waterfall serenaded me to sleep.” In this sentence, the waterfall has been given the human characteristic of having a “soft voice” that “serenades” or sings the writer to sleep.

### **Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia– onomatopoeia (on-uh-mat-uh-pee-uh) is a word that describes a natural sound or the sound made by an object or a certain action (Spivey, 2011). Dad lit the fuse, and “POW!” the firecracker exploded. A horrible “Crash!” sounded as the vase hit the floor. Remember the “Zoom!” “Zap!” “Pow!” on the old TV shows? These are onomatopoeias.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole– a hyperbole (hy-pur-buh-lee) is a statement so exaggerated that no one believes it to be true (Spivey, 2011). “Dad drank a million gallons of water after his run.” We all know that this is not possible. The exaggeration of a million gallons is simply for emphasis to describe the large quantity of water Dad actually drank.

### **Idiom**

Idiom– an idiom (id-ee-uh-m) is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of the words that make it up, as in “He’s

a couch potato" or "Hold your horses." Idioms do not present "like" characteristics to other things as in other forms of figurative language. One needs the context of the sentence to help understand the idiom (Spivey, 2011).

### **Cliches**

Clichés– clichés are statements that have been heard so often that their once colorful play on words has become expected and stale (Spivey, 2011). For example, "Birds of a feather flock together."

The *formula* is defined specifically by predictable narrative structure. Formulaic literature according to Cawelti, as quoted by Rosyidi (2010), is a structure of narrative or dramatic conventions that are used in a lot of individual work. The use of this formula is to signify a conventional way to treat some specific things. Another use is that the formula refers to the types of grooves that represent the types of stories. While Cawelti (1976), one of the pioneers in establishing an academic respectability to the study of popular culture, defined a formula as a conventional system for structuring cultural products. It can be distinguished from form which is an invented system of organization.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Documentation was collected by doing internet research. The technique of collecting data consists of two steps. The first step was examining the data by reading the data source extensively and other documentation such as articles, journals, etc. The second step was note-taking by relating the literary element of the story to the theory of formulaic literature. Since the study is analyzing about human behavior, qualitative method was used in this study. The technique of analyzing data was divided in two steps. The first step was identifying the literary elements of the data by selecting and focusing on the important features linked with the study. The second step was analyzing the data and making conclusion. The analysis was presented descriptively.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Ernest's story, "Hills like White Elephant", Ernest tries affect the reader in several ways. This story uses in the morning when the sun rises **as the time setting** proves with the sentence "*Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building*". **For the setting of place**, the author uses at the train station in Spain. Proves with the sentence "*On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies*". Especially, at the outside of bar where the man and the girl are drinking beers while waiting the Express train from Barcelona.

**The tone and atmosphere** in the story of "Hills like White Elephant" is full of crisis. Why? Because as long as the story happened is full of the sarcastically conversation between the American man and the girl. The topic they are talking about is the operation. The tone and atmosphere of each character are that as same in the uncontrolled emotion because among of them happened different idea and arguments. It looks in the way they speak. **The conflict** happened in the story is that about the American man wants the girl has the operation. He says that the operation is the best way for them to have a whole life, better life in the future without having a burden, and they can go everywhere they want. But, the girl disagrees with his desire. And because she was stressed to have an annoying speaking of the American man, she tries to shout loudly to make the American man stops talking. **The resolution** of the conflict is the American man start getting hopeless. He says to the girl no to do the operation if she doesn't want to do it. Then he takes the heavy bags to the other tracks. The end of the story is so hung.

**In this story, there are three characters.** They are the American man, the girl "Jig", and the woman. The main characters in the story are the American man and the girl. **The characterization** of the main characters related to other characters is: for the American man, he is a selfish man. He never thinks about the girl's condition and feeling. For the girl, she is too easy

to accept the offering, means that she doesn't has a principle of herself. Not to mentioned, she doesn't speak Spanish so that she just receives the American man's talking. And she also gets easy to depressed and sarcastically.

**There are three main symbols** in the story. They are the hills, white elephants, and the railroad station. And they represent an abstract idea of moral qualities. The author used those symbols **because they can develop the theme of the story**. In the beginning of the story, the girl similes herself with the hills, and she says that the hills like white elephant. Her talking has a meaning. That is she thinks that she herself doesn't have a precious thing anymore in her life. Those are the symbols of thing which isn't precious anymore.

**The theme** of "Hills Like White Elephants" is a great portrait of how we talk at, to, and past each other; how we can go on and on and never quite get at what it is we really want to say. This story is a chance to reflect on the way we talk to our loved ones (and we're not talking about our accents), and what we might, or might not, reveal when we do open up our word holes.

**The symbol** which can be found in the story "Hills like white elephant" is white elephant like in the some part of the story that can be proved in the sentence "*They look like white elephants," she said*". Historically **white elephant** is a gift that has no usefulness to the recipient, especially when any utility in the item is overshadowed by the cost of its upkeep. For example, say someone gave you a mansion, but you couldn't pay the property taxes for it. So, in the story "Hills like White elephant" the hidden meaning is that 'The American,' presumably the girl's husband or lover, sees the pregnancy as a white elephant gift, as we can tell from his frequent and falsely supportive nudges to get her to have the procedure, or abortion.

The second symbol is the **elephant in the room**. The English expression 'avoiding the elephant in the room' colorfully indicates a situation in which someone refuses to address a typically weighty, important, or just obvious topic.

For the girl, her pregnancy is not a gift that she's unwilling to receive. However, when it comes to talking about the situation with the American, she'd rather avoid the discussion altogether, even begging at one point,

'Would you please stop talking?'

The next symbol is the **railway station**. The lonely rail station that serves as the backdrop for Hemingway's story represents an important decision to be made - much like a crossroads in other stories. Its isolation also reflects the girl's own desperate loneliness she feels in facing this situation, despite the American's constant interference.

The last symbol we will talk about is the **landscape**. Landscapes, especially rugged ones, were a favorite thematic element for Hemingway and no less so in 'Hills like White Elephants.' From the symbols which were portrayed in the story, it shows how the man and the girl expressed their love. The man seems don't wanna have the child because he want the girl to do the operation. Everything in the story indicates that the man definitely wants the girl to have an abortion. Even when the man maintains that he wants the girl to have an abortion only if she wants to have one, we question his sincerity and his honesty. When he says, "If you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to," he is not convincing. From his earlier statements, it is obvious that he does not want the responsibility that a child would entail; seemingly, he strongly wants her to have this abortion and definitely seems to be very unresponsive to the girl's feelings.

But on the conversation in the story the girl seems do not want to do the operation, she just give the answer unclearly to the man wheter she want to do the operation or not. We feel that the girl is not at all sure that she wants an abortion. She's ambivalent about the choice. We sense that she is tired of traveling, of letting the man make all the decisions, of allowing the man to talk incessantly until he convinces her that his way is the right way. He has become her guide and her guardian. He translates for her, even now: Abortion involves only a doctor allowing "a little air in." Afterward, they will be off on new travels. However, for the girl, this life of being ever in flux, living in hotels, traveling, and never settling down has become wearying. Their life of transience, of instability, is described by the girl as living on the surface: "[We] look at things and try new drinks."

When the man promises to be with the girl during the "simple" operation, we again realize his insincerity because what is "simple" to him may very well be emotionally and physically damaging to her.

The man is using his logic in order to be as persuasive as possible. Without a baby anchoring them down, they can continue to travel; they can "have everything." However, the girl contradicts him and, at that moment, seems suddenly strong and more in control of the situation. With or without the abortion, things will never be the same. She also realizes that she is not loved, at least not unconditionally.

This story show the darkness of love of the man and the girl because of forbidden love. It looks like that the man and the girl do not have pure love.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the depth analysis of the story, from its symbol and figurative language which are used in the story, it certainly shows the darkness of love which is caused by forbidden love of the girl and the man, the man strongly shows his irresponsible of the pregnancy of the girl because he want the girl to do the operation, and he said that the operation is "simple". But on the other hand the girl seems uncertain about the abortion. From all the conversation we can know that between the man and the girl have different perception about the operation of the pregnancy of the girl, and they also seem have different perception about their feeling of love. So, it looks like something hidden in their love which caused their darkness of love.

## REFERENCES

- Biography.com. *Ernest Hemingway*.  
<https://www.biography.com/people/ernest-hemingway-9334498/>  
[accessed on agustus, 8 2017]
- Biography.com. LITR323 The Life and Art of *Ernest Hemingway* | Course Guide: Books guide to online library research, for LITR323 students, at APUS. Pdf
- white-elephants* /An analysis of Ernest Hemingway's "Hills like White Elephants" (accessed on july 27 2017)
- <https://www.biography.com/people/ernest-hemingway-9334498/> Ernest Hemingway Biography.com Author (1899–1961)

Kenney, William. (1966). *How To Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monarch Press, pp. 59.

Lukens, Rebecca. (1999). *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*. New York: Longman cited in Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. (2010). *Sastra Anak*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, pp. 3.

Lukens, Rebecca. (1999). *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*. New York: Longman cited in Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. (2010). *Sastra Anak*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, pp. 3.

Merriam Webster. Literature definition.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature/> . [agustus, 8 2017]

Rosyidi, M. Ikhwan dkk. (2010). *Analisis Teks Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.

Spivey, Becky L. (2011). *Type of Figurative Languages*. Retrieved from [https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/336\\_typesoffigurative\\_lang.pdf](https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/336_typesoffigurative_lang.pdf) [July, 11 2017].

Spivey, Becky L. (2011). *Type of Figurative Languages*. Retrieved from [https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/336\\_typesoffigurative\\_lang.pdf](https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/336_typesoffigurative_lang.pdf) [July, 11 2017].

Term Paper, 2009 12 Pages, Grade: 1,0 [English Language and Literature Studies - Literature](#) ( august, 16 2017 : 11,01)

*THE HEMINGWAY REVIEW*, Vol. 12, No 1 Fall 1992. copyright of hemingway society. Published At the university of west florida , pensacola, Florida.