
A sociological approach of literature in Leo N. Tolstoy's short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*

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Abstract

*Sociology is defined as the social life, change, and the causes and consequences of human behavior study. Literature means any written work, and it can refer to a single work itself or a categorical understanding of literature. Furthermore, the sociology of literature is a specialized area of study which focuses its attention upon the relationship between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created. The objective of this study is to find out and to describe the elements of a sociology of literature in a short story entitled *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* by Leo N. Tolstoy. Technically, this study talked about the relation between literature and sociology. This study used sociological methods by describing the characteristics and the facts related to people and particular areas. It explained some aspects like introduction, discussion and description, and closure. The present researchers found sociological aspects such as social facts, social history, social behavior and event, and also literature aspects like jobs, residence, customs, and romance in the discussion and description section in the short story which also as the real-life reflection.*

Keywords: *sociology; literature; short story*

INTRODUCTION

Sociology can be defined as the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences or the effects of human behavior. Sociology means a discipline dealing with the interpretation and explanation of social action and also as activities including orientation to the actions of one or more other actors (Ringle, 2018). Furthermore, sociology is common as the scientific study of social relations, social institutions, and societies that is characterized by a great diversity of ways of conceiving its objectives, uses, styles, and methods.

Literature means any written work, and it can refer to a single work itself or a categorical understanding of literature. Literature is also a form of human expression. According to Greil and Sollor (2009), literary is not only what is written but what is sounded, what is expressed and invented in whatever form”.

Literature sociology means a specialized area of study that concerns its attention upon the relationship between a work of literature and the social structure in which it is made. Therefore, sociology and literature share the identical issues. The short story, as one of the genres in literature, can be regarded as an effort to recreate the social world; relations between human beings and their family, environment, politics, state, and others. The difference between both of them is sociology creates an objective society analysis, while literature goes through into the surface of social structure and expresses human beings' ways of comprehending their society with their feeling.

The short story that was examined and presented in this study is a short story from Russia entitled *God Sees the Truth but Waits* by Leo N. Tolstoy. Leo Tolstoy, Russian in full Lev Nikolayevich, was born on August 28, 1828, in Tula Province, Russian Empire, and died on November 7, 1910, in Ryazan province. He is an author from Russia. He is a master of realistic fiction and the greatest novelist. This story was about Aksionov who loses hope and does not believe anybody except God. The judge accused him of a thing that he didn't do. He waited Twenty-Six years in prison until the key to his freedom came—Makar Semyonich. Makar revealed the truth, but it was already late, Aksionov was dead. This short story used a background in the past.

According to the description above, the problem formulation can be listed into (1) what the sociological aspects in short story literary works in terms of social facts, social history, social behavior, and social events are and (2) what the conditions of socio-cultural in the short story, in terms of jobs, residence, customs, and romance or love are.

A short story is a story that can be read in a very short time i.e., thirty minutes to two hours. A short story has only one value, one crisis, and one effect for the readers (Poe, 2009). The writer only wants to present something briefly. It is simple and short so that the readers understand it easily (Pratiwi et al., 2020). A short story should be full, the writer creates the characters, environment, and behavior at the same time (Stanton, 2012). Ratna (2004) said in detail that several definitions regarding the sociology of literature needs to be considered to find the objectivity of the connection between literary work and society, among others, as follows (1) understanding of literature in consideration of social aspects; (2) understanding of the totality of works accompanied by social aspects contained in them; (3) understanding of literary works as well as community relations which are the background of it; (4) sociology of literature is a two-way (dialectical) relationship between literature and society; and (5) sociology of literature seeks to find interdependent quality between literature and society.

The research related to the sociological approach in literature might be done often. Many researchers have already researched and analyzed literary works to prove that it has sociological aspects. It means that literary works can be inspired by real-life events. In the same research method i.e., qualitative method, *The Scarlet Letter* has been analyzed. It has very tough sociological aspects. The present researchers focused on the Puritan law and its impacts on society. The law in adultery which was applied in Puritan society had positive and negative impacts on the main character and also the society (Wulansari,

2017). Hedonism is another sociological aspect that had ever been analyzed through a novel entitled *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan. The present researchers focused on the hedonistic lifestyle and its impacts. Hedonism is not meant as a material and financial thing only but also has a broader meaning, namely leaving sadness for happiness (Kasanah, 2021). Many sociological aspects can be learned from literary works. Besides the lifestyle and the law aspect, there was a researcher that had already analyzed another aspect through a novel entitled *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The misery of war was the main point of discussion. The present researchers tried to show how great the misery of war and it had given a big impact on human life at that time. The war misery could cause depression (Listyawan, 2020)

Based on the previous researchers, there are still other aspects that can be analyzed. It can be seen through the limitation of the study. A limitation of the study is very important. It is necessary to facilitate the determination of the direction and objective of the research. The limitation of the study makes the problem concentration can be done effectively and efficiently. A limitation is also needed to guide the present researchers to find what are aspects should be analyzed. This study focuses on a short story entitled *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* by Leo N. Tolstoy in terms of the sociological aspects of literature. There are some variables and indicators to clarify the objectives of the study. The variables and the indicators are (1) variables about the sociological aspects of literature with indicators like social facts, social behavior, and social events; (2) variables background of socio-cultural conditions like jobs, residence, customs, and romance.

METHOD

Type of research

The study used a descriptive qualitative technique. Qualitative descriptive means that the data analyzed are not within the variety of numbers or coefficients relationships between variables. It contains quotes collections for illustrations and filling infield material. The data collected are meaningful vocabulary, sentences, and images. So, this study does not use objects with calculations, numbers, percentages or statistics, but emphasizes quality terms like words, notes relating to the meaning of values and understanding.

Data source

Data is the main part of the research. Ary et.al (2010) mentioned that in qualitative research, two sources can be used to get the data i.e., primary and secondary data. The primary data source of the study is a Russian short story entitled *God Sees the Truth but Waits* by Leo N. Tolstoy. This short story tells a man's life named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov from Vladimir. This story conjointly presents love, life, and belief. While the secondary data source is a few data from net and alternative journals.

Data collection technique

Sugiyono (2008) explicit that the basic technique relied on by qualitative researchers for aggregation the data because the data is participation within the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and documentation review.

The data were collected through library research by taking notes of the documents or archives related to the aim of the research. Reading the story, analyzing, and reviewing the social aspects were the ways how to collect the data. Then, take note technique by noting down the data that is relevant to the object of the study.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis in the qualitative analysis may be a method of categorization, description, and synthesis. Data reduction is critical for the outline and interpretation of the development below study. This study used the structural analysis technique which is an approach that examines the constructive elements to get the full meaning of the work like social facts, social history, social behavior, social events, and another element to understand the character of a society's socio-cultural life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social facts

Social facts are not to be explained biologically or psychologically, but instead by society (Carls, 2021). Related to the data of the research, there are three elements of the story enclosed social facts. Those three elements are a fact of place, people's names, and objects or material.

Place fact

The place is different from space (Abusaada & Elshater, 2021). Related to the literary work such as a story, the place refers to where the events of the story happened. It is enclosed to the names of places which also found in reality. This term of fact is described by the real statement or true information. For example, Washington DC is the capital city of the USA. It implies that there is such a place named Washington DC and there is a country called the USA for real. While enclosed to the story, the place was found in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* can be found in the following sentence.

"In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. (Tolstoy, P.1)

From the sentence above the author explains the existence of a town named Vladimir and then a character named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov – a young merchant who lived there. Vladimir is a city and the administrative center of the Vladimir region, western Russia, located on the Klyazma River. So, Vladimir is a real place, a true region in Russia.

"He was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan, (Tolstoy. P.3)

Ryazan is the biggest city and Ryazan's administrative center itself. It is found in Russia. The city is located on a river named Oka in Central Russia.

"For twenty-six years Aksionov lived as a convict in Siberia." (Tolstoy, P.4)

Siberia is an in-depth nation-state spanning abundant of the continent and Northern Asia. The geographic area has been a part of modern Russia.

Facts of the names of people

The facts of the names of people or individuals are when there is/are a name/names. For example, Russian names such as Vladimir, Makar, Vanya or American names like Michael, Noah, or Mary. Each name has its uniqueness. Semantically, it has different meanings from others. According to Saujana and Wikanjanti (2012, p. 312), "Name means a word or term to call or mention someone, someplace, things, animals, and titles." While a nickname is a name used for greeting or calling. Focus on the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*, the names of individuals can be found in the following sentences.

"Aksionov was a handsome, fair-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun, and very fond of singing." (Tolstoy, P.1)

In the sentence above, the name Aksionov or Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov is the name of a young merchant who has a handsome face, a white-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun, and likes singing very much. In Russia, the name Aksionov is a male name and is usually used as a surname.

"From Vladimir. My family are of that town. My name is Makar, and they also call me Semyonich." (Tolstoy, P.6)

In the quote above, the name Makar Semyonich is an old man who met Aksionov while he was in jail.

Facts of object/ material

The fact of object or material means something real. Facts-finding should be based on the pursuit of "truth" (Shu & Song, 2021). It can be seen directly or indirectly. There are material objects and formal objects in the literary study. While in this story, object means something used or consumed by the people there. The fact about objects/materials in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* can be found in the following sentence.

*"Suddenly a **troika** drove up with tinkling bells and an official alighted, followed by two soldiers." (Tolstoy, P.2)*

Troika means an ancient Russian harness driving combination, using three horses abreast, usually propulsion a sleigh. Troika is the fastest cart. It is a Russian symbol similar to matryoshka and balalaika. Troika has a speed of around 45 – 50 kilometers per hour. There are three horses, *korennik* in the middle and *pristyazhnyye* on both sides.

Social history

Social history means handling the structures of societies and social modification, social movements, groups and categories, conditions of work and ways that of life, families, households, native communities, urbanization, mobility, ethnic groups. Social history challenged dominant historical narratives. It shows an event that can be rewritten. A social history that happened in the short story entitled *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* is concerned

about Aksionov's life. What happened to Aksionov can be seen within the following sentence.

Aksionov tried to answer, but could hardly utter a word, and only stammered: "I—don't know—not mine." Then the police officer said: "This morning the merchant was found in bed with his throat cut. You are the only person who could have done it. The house was locked from inside, and no one else was there. Here is this blood-stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole?" (Tolstoy, P.3)

From the sentences, it can be known how Aksionov was in jail. What sin that he did. He was accused of the murder of a merchant. This event had changed and given a big influence on Aksionov's life. His way of life had already changed.

Social behavior

The social behavior here is related to the individual interaction with another like how he or she behaves toward someone in some situations so that she or he can make or form his or her character. Social behaviors are begun, maintained, changed, and terminated through some activities. Social activity is said to arise when: (1) two or more people are enclosed (2) person perform mental acts, reveal behavior or engage in action (3) the actions are in a correlated way (4) which collectively has some aims or function. Activities in the sense meant here always elicit some coordination and cooperation degree, this can be heightened if the individuals in pursuing the purpose of the activity take each other into ethnic or tribal consideration and trust each other (Jokinen, 2020). The social behavior of the main character of the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* can be seen in the following sentence.

And Aksionov wrote no more petitions; gave up all hope, and only prayed to God. (Tolstoy P.4)

He drew his hand away, saying, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling of you—I may do so or not, as God shall direct." (Tolstoy P.8)

From the sentences above, Aksionov was a loyal man and had faith in God.

When Aksionov heard him sobbing he, too, began to weep. "God will forgive you!" said he. "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." (Tolstoy, P.10)

Taken from the sentence above, it can be known that Aksionov has a good heart.

Social event

Event has a close connection with a social group where and when someone interacts with others in a group. The social event of the short story entitled *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* can be seen in the following sentences.

One summer Aksionov was going to the Nizhny Fair, (Tolstoy, P.1)

Nizhny Novgorod Fair or Makaryev Fair was a major Russian trade fair that existed from 1817 to 1917 and again from 1921 to 1929. It was a special event where people could enjoy the arts and trade or just had conversations in groups. (Tolstoy, P.1)

*In prison, Aksionov learned to make boots and earned a little money, with which he bought *The Lives of the Saints*. He read this book when there was light enough in the prison, and on Sundays, in the prison church, he read the lessons and sang in the choir; for his voice was still good. (Tolstoy, P.4)*

From the sentences above, it can be seen that some events happened in the main character's life. The events are related to his life in prison. Aksionov made friends with people in the prison and join the activities there.

Socio-cultural

Social life cannot be separated from cultural life. A habit's existence can form a culture. Interactions and activities in social life can create cultural life. The socio-cultural in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* has some aspects such as jobs, residence, customs, and romance.

Jobs are related to the socio-cultural situation

Job significantly influences the social status. In Czar era, farmers are just like slaves because they work for Czar without owning the farm. Farmers, labors, and other similar professions are considered as the lowest group of people. Those people are called as proletariat (Kristinawati, 2013).

In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He had two shops and a house of his own. (Tolstoy, P.1)

Merchant is a social activity. It will become a culture for who does it because he/she always does it over and over. He has two shops too and, in these shops, there will be interaction or social activities.

They entered the house. The soldiers and the police officer unstrapped Aksionov's luggage and searched it. (Tolstoy, P.2)

Soldiers and police officers are other jobs that show social activities. They have duties to protect and serve society. Soldiers also fill vital functions to society, as their work ensures the safety of entire communities (Robinson & David, 2005).

In this era, police and army are two important elements of Czar. Czar is a lordship that dominates the era at that time. Czar is very reactive and

autocratic. They use military system or strategy to press the rebellion that is done by the farmers, labors, and slaves (Kristinawati, 2013). So, farmers, labors, and slaves are very suppressed.

Residence

Residence can describe the socio-cultural condition. Residence here relates to a place where someone stays or normally building.

In prison, Aksionov learned to make boots and earned a little money, with which he bought The Lives of the Saints. He read this book when there was light enough in the prison, and on Sundays, in the prison church he read the lessons and sang in the choir; for his voice was still good. (Tolstoy, P.4)

According to the sentences above, it can be seen how is social life in a place called prison. The way of society treats the prisoners can tell us much about the culture (Roth, 2006). How their lives and how their activities can be cultural life.

In another situation, living in jails is never expected by everyone. At that time, jails in Rusia were far from properness. According to National Library of Australia, male prisoners slept on *nare*. *Nare* was a board that put on the ground. Most of them were chained. This situation was very depressing. It created stressful and hopeless life for most of them. Although some of them have better condition by making them getting closer to the God like has already mentioned in the story that character read the lessons and sang in the choir in prison church on Sunday.

Customs

Customs in a short story can be a socio-cultural condition. Based on the story, customs can be defined as the authority that has power to manage particular field. Nowadays, customs are related to the agency in a country that have responsibility for controlling the flow of goods and people who want to come and go from a country (Collins Dictionary, 2022).

"We must petition the Czar not to let an innocent man perish."
(Tolstoy, P.4)

Czar was a title for who has authority or power in a particular field. It can be a custom at that time known as the former emperor of Russia, but there is no more Czar like that nowadays. And, the czar is used as an informal title used for certain high-level officials. The rise of the "czar" has accompanied the expanding role of the executive office in promoting policy initiatives in the postwar era; it tends to be used when presidents make special new posts for the people charged with pushing those initiatives through (Zimmer, 2008).

Romance

Love is a feeling from God to people to love each other. Romance etymologically comes from Anglo-Norman and Old French romance, which means a story of chivalry and also love. Romantic love is a cultural universal or examines various corollaries (de Munck & Kronenfeld, 2016).

When Aksionov heard these words, he felt sure this was the man who had killed the merchant. He rose and went away. All that night Aksionov lay awake. He felt unhappy, and all sorts of images rose in his mind. There was the image of his wife as she was when he parted from her to go to the fair. He saw her as if she were present; her face and her eyes rose before him; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite a little, as they were at that time: one with a little cloak on, another at his mother's breast. And then he remembered himself as he used to be young and merry. He remembered how he sat playing the guitar on the porch of the inn where he was arrested, and how free from care he had been. He saw, in his mind, the place where he was flogged, the executioner, and the people standing around; the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself. (P.7)

The sentences talk about the main character when he felt so sentimental. He missed his wife and remembered his kids. He tried to memorize his happiness living with his wife and kids.

God Sees the Truth, But Waits covers sociological aspects and socio-cultural situations as a reflection of true life. Sociological aspects in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* are as follows (a) social facts describing places such as Vladimir town and Siberia, facts about the names of characters namely Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov and Makar Semyonich, fact about object or material is troika; (b) social history is the story of the character how he could be in jail; (c) social behavior is in the form of literary psychology related to Aksionov's sadness, acceptance, loyalty to his God; and (d) the social event, how Aksionov interacts with others and lives in prison. While the socio-cultural situation in the short story, *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* describes (a) work as a merchant than a prisoner; (b) place of residence, that is the setting of the story in Vladimir town, in prison; (c) custom Czar was a former emperor in Russia and nowadays Czar is an informal title used in certain official; and (d) romance which is Aksionov's love for his wife and kids that cannot be erased.

CONCLUSION

This study presents the answers of the questions. The first is about the sociological aspects of the story. Those aspects reflect in the real life. Sociological aspects found in this story are social facts that consist of facts of place, people's names, and objects; social history, social behavior, social events, and socio-cultural life. The story presents the social facts like Vladimir and Ryazan as the place fact that those places exist nowadays. Aksionov and Semyonich are people's names that are fact of Russian names. *Troika* as the object fact taken from the story is fast cart which are pulled by three horses and now, troika is used as the term for organization that are led by three people, groups, or elements. While, other aspects can be seen from history which shows the plot of the story; from the behavior that shows loyalty and faith to God; from the event like Nizhny Fair; from the socio-cultural life like jobs, residences, customs, and romance.

Literary work is not only something to read. It is a description of real life. It is born from a true phenomenon that has important values for the readers. This short story gives us an important lesson i.e., everyone has his problem, no

matter hard it is, God is the best place to ask and consult. God is the right choice. With His Mercy, any issue will be able to solve. The short story *God Sees the Truth but Waits* by Leo N. Tolstoy has a nice moral value. It teaches us how believers face problems and obstacles well. Many parts of this story can be explored by other researchers.

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