

HUMANISM REFLECTED IN STEPHEN KING'S *THE GREEN MILE* NOVEL (1996): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH



**Submitted as a Formal Fulfillment of the Requirement for Getting the Bachelor
Degree of Education in English Department**

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2019

APPROVAL

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PUBLICATION ARTICLE

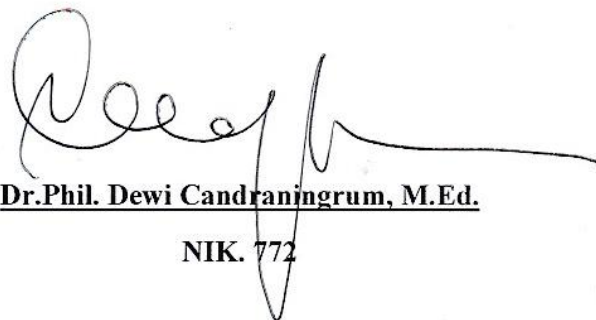
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dewi Candraningrum', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Abstrak

Pembahasan utama dalam penelitian ini adalah masalah yang terjadi di masyarakat yaitu mengenai humanisme. Dikarenakan adanya sesuatu yang berhubungan dengan manusia, dan sebuah pemikiran filsafat yang mengedepankan nilai dan kedudukan manusia serta menjadikannya sebagai kriteria dalam segala hal. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisa *The Green Mile* karya Stephen King berdasarkan elemen-elemen struktur dan menganalisa novel ini dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi dengan beberapa aspek yaitu social aspect, political aspect, cultural aspect, religious aspect dan science and technology aspect. Peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif. Peneliti menggunakan dua sumber data: data primer dan data sekunder. Sumber data primer adalah novel itu sendiri. Dan, sumber data sekunder adalah buku-buku mengenai penelitian pendekatan sosiologi, referensi mengenai *The Green Mile* dari internet, dan sumber lainnya yang berkaitan dengan penelitian. Metode pengumpulan data adalah dengan penelitian pustaka dan teknik pengumpulan data adalah dengan teknik diskriptif. Menurut analisis, peneliti mendapatkan beberapa kesimpulan. Pertama, penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat fenomena mengenai humanisme yang terjadi di *The Green Mile* novel karya Stephen King. Humanisme sangat terlihat ketika terjadi adanya pemenuhan dalam aspek aspek humanisme aspek tersebut yaitu, Self-Actualization, Esteem Needs, Love and Belongingness Needs, Safety and Security Needs dan Psychological Needs. Kedua, di novel *The Green Mile*, Stephen King mencoba memberikan pengertian mengenai masyarakat Amerika di pertengahan abad kesembilanbelas yang menonjolkan humanisme dan pengaruh sosial di masyarakat. Fenomena ini dapat dilihat di lingkungan E-Block dimana orang-orang menilai bahwa setiap orang mempunyai hak untuk saling membantu tanpa memandang ras, warna kulit maupun pekerjaan.

Kata Kunci: aspek humanisme, penelitian kualitatif, pendekatan sosiologis.

Abstract

The main discussion in this study is the problem that occurs in the community, namely about humanism. Due to the existence of something related to humans, and a philosophical thought that emphasizes the value and position of man and makes it a criterion in all things. The purpose of this study was to analyze Stephen King's *The Green Mile* novel based on structural elements and analyze this novel using a sociological approach with several aspects, namely social aspects, political aspects, cultural aspects, religious aspects and science and technology aspect. The researcher used qualitative methods. The researcher used two data sources: primary data and secondary data. The primary data source is the novel itself. And, secondary data sources are books on researching the sociology approach, references to *The Green Mile* from the internet, and other sources related to research. The method of data collection is by library research and data collection techniques are descriptive techniques. According to the analysis, researchers got several conclusions. First,

research shows that there are phenomena concerning humanism that occur in *The Green Mile* novel by Stephen King. Humanism is very visible when there is fulfillment in aspects of humanism aspects, namely, Self-Actualization, Esteem Needs, Love and Belongingness Needs, Safety and Security Needs and Psychological Needs. Second, in the novel *The Green Mile*, Stephen King tries to give an understanding of American society in the mid-nineteenth century that highlights humanism and social influence in society. This phenomenon can be seen in the E Block environment where people judge that everyone has the right to help each other regardless of race, color and work.

Keywords: humanism aspect, qualitative research, sociological approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature always refers to human values that exist in people's lives. Therefore, literary work is a social reflection in society because it is worth humanity, which is something that is present from human experience. Literary works are human objects, human facts, or cultural facts because they are human products. However, this is different from other humanism facts. Literature and sociology are not wholly distinct disciplines but, on the contrary, complement each other in our understanding of society (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972: 13). It means literary and sociology have a close relationship.

Stephen King is the author of the novel *The Green Mile*, he wrote the novel because of a sense of empathy, the result of Haitian massacre in 1804 was a massacre carried out by black man to whites leaving revenge, after the massacre the whites had a bad judgment on blacks, since that blacks are discriminated against by whites. Stephen king touched his heart to make a novel that was lifted from the real story of a black person who always spread goodness even though he was always hurt by the whites, that every human being has the right to be given love and has the right to be loved. Wellek and Warren (1970: 215) state that the novel is a thought of the author, it can be the characteristic features because of something happened in time is from author's mind.

John Coffey is a big black man who lives alone after being separated from his parents. John Coffey was black, like most of the men who came to stay for a while in E-Block before dying in Old Sparky's lap, and he stood six feet, eight inches tall (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 10). He has super natural power gift from god. He can cure a sick

person with a very high social spirit until he is willing to sacrifice his life to heal people. I couldn't help-it, boss," he said. "I tried to take it back, but it was too late (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 20). He can heal people from their illnesses, as he did with Paul Edgecomb's bladder disease and then eliminate the brain tumor of the Prison Warden's wife. Effective human relation is a combination of knowledge, experience, skills, and attributes. Collectively these traits enable you to perform effectively. It involves cognitive skills, relationship skills, and personal capabilities. (Marie Dalton, Dawn Hoyle, and Marie Watts, 2009: 3).

But one day John Coffey had a bad thing. He was accused of killing two little girls. John found two little girls who were dying and then he tried to help with the advantage he had, but the two little girls were not saved. He was accused because residents found him with the corpses of the two girls covered in blood, even though John Coffey's intention was to save the girl. With the conditions at the time whites were always negative thought on blacks, John could not do anything. With the accusation, John Coffey was sentenced to death. John Coffey came to E-Block, sentenced to death for the rape-murder of the Detterick twins (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 9). He is also tired with the world. Unfair, sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. A loner in a brutal and cruel world. The fact that he was black was detained against him; no one wanted to believe that he was innocent. In a world ostracized by racism, it is automatically seen as a murderer, adding that he is big. He is a gentle giant who feels like a mismatch in the world, and he just wants to leave it. That was the reason why he did not plead not guilty, he did not have the desire to live further. Relating to all the reasons above, the writer uses sociological approach. Sociology is essentially the science, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists (Swingewood, 1972: 11).

The Green Mile is the name of a prison for high-class criminals, people who have severe punishment (death penalty). The wide corridor up the center of E Block was floored with linoleum the color of tired old limes, and so what was called the Last Mile at other prisons was called The Green Mile at Cold Mountain. (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 6). John Coffey was placed on *The Green Mile*, there was the first time he met Paul Edgecomb (the head screw). Paul Edgecomb is warden who is the wisest

in moral and making decisions. "My name is Paul Edgecombe," I said. "I'm the E Block super - the head screw. You want something from me, ask for me by name. If I'm not here, ask this other, man - his name is Harry Terwilliger. Or you ask for Mr. Stanton or Mr. Howell. Do you understand that?" (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 17). He always treats prisoners as well as possible and always serves as role models for other wardens except Percy, because Percy has a governor uncle. Percy always makes noise that always disturbs calm in Green Mile, because his behavior wardens hate him. Percy had no business on E Block, where an ugly nature was useless and sometimes dangerous, but he was related to the governor by marriage, and so he stayed (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 10). But relationships are not relatively static entities, like chemical elements or the taxonomist's species, but dynamic, involving ongoing processes. We must therefore remember that any description we make refers to processes over a slice of time. (Ann Elisabeth Auhagen, 1996: 8).

Mr Jingles is a pet mouse owned by Eduard Delacroix (prisoner) to be friends in prison, and it becomes its own attraction in E Block. Mr Jingles always does all orders from Eduard Delacroix, like the attraction of a circus. Be still, Mr. Jingles," Delacroix said, and the mouse stopped on his left shoulder just as if he had understood (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 15). Mr Jingles is always entertaining; his behavior can calm Eduard Delacroix who is nervous because he will be executed. Eduard Delacroix also made a sleeping basket for Mr Jingles. The prisoners and guards were entertained by the presence of Mr Jingles. Three or four days after Mr. Jingles started doing the trick with the spool, Harry Terwilliger rummage through the arts and crafts stuff we kept in the restraint room, found the Crayolas, and brought them to Delacroix with a smile that was almost embarrassed. "I thought you might like to make that spool different colors," he said. "Then your little pal'd be like a circus mouse, or something" (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 143).

The next day Warden Moores (Block E guards) came to check the condition of the warden, secure and supervise the prison area from unfair acts. Besides, he is also the person who regulates the position of a guard, accepting or removing the guards. I worked for three wardens during my years as a Cold Mountain guard; Hal Moores was the last and best of them. In a walk. Honest, straightforward, lacking even Curtis Anderson's rudimentary wit, but equipped with just enough political savvy to keep

his job during those grim years ... And enough integrity to keep from getting seduced by the game (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 50). Swingewood and Laurenson (1972: 16) state that “The main purpose of any viable sociology has function as an instrument to grasp the meaning of the authors and to improve understanding of the society based on the phenomena as social life”.

There are reasons of why the researcher chooses this novel. The first reason is that the novel has a unique story and an interesting plot to read and understand. The author tells how difficult the situation must be for the main character. The main role is big black but has a soft heart, has super natural power from God, it makes the reader curious to read this novel to completion.

The second reason is that the author gives sarcasm to us through the novel so as not to judge someone by just looking at the cover. Until those who become victims do not have the right to defend themselves. In the novel John Coffey is one of the victims of injustice in those days.

The last reason is has a unique storyline and strong character in each character, making researchers and readers inspired by each story. Other than that it can be used as reference in addressing a problem more wisely.

Based on the previous reasons the researcher will observe *The Green Mile* novel by using sociological approach. Therefore, the researcher constructs his proposal entitled **HUMANISM REFLECTED IN STEPHEN KING’S *THE GREEN MILE* NOVEL (1996): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.**

2. METHOD

In order to analyze *The Green Mile* novel the researcher uses social of literature based on liberal sociological and applies it using descriptive analysis which concerns to make some interpretation of dealing with the novel. The data sources are library and literary data. It's purposes in to analyze using sociological approach. In analyzing the content of *The Green Mile* novel (1996) in the form of text, then that should be done in analyzing the contents by reading the entire text in the novel systematically and comprehensively.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing *The Green Mile* novel, the researcher obtains some findings. The findings of the study as follows:

3.1 Sociological Analysis

3.1.1 Social Aspect

Social aspects cover four aspects, namely social structure, social status, immigrants, and social relations. The social structure is divided into three classes including upper class, middle class, and lower class. United States social class can be seen in this work, which was published in the nineteenth century (*The Green Mile novel*). Stephen King creates character works based on social conditions. This category is based on the working class in the status of American employment including lower, middle and upper.

There was John Coffey who was accused of killing until he was imprisoned to get a death penalty. John Coffey belongs to the lower class social group It can be seen as follows:

“It was a small door - I had to duck my head when I went through, and John Coffey actually had to sit and scoot. You came out on a little landing, and then went down three cement steps to a board floor. It was a miserable room without heat and with a metal roof, just like the one on the block...” (The Green Mile, 1996: 7)

3.1.2 Political Aspect

In *The Green Mile* novel, Stephen King shows that political conditions through stories in his novels. The existence of parties in the state must aim to have power, some power will be given to the winning party. And will be systematically divided into each scope from the smallest to the widest. Power is often misused. in *The Green Mile* novel where prison can be a monopoly for those who want to play. It can be seen as follows:

“Great accommodations for a prison (especially in the thirties), but the inmates would have traded for cells in any of the other four. Believe me, they would have traded.” (The Green Mile, 1996: 4)

With the existence of unhealthy politics will be a problem, like the one who used his uncle who was the governor to be able to work as a guard at E Block, with

the help of his uncle he easily worked there. He's the troublemaker, because basically he wants to be a warden because of obsession, he doesn't have talent and is also stubborn. It can be seen as follows:

“Percy had no business on E Block, where an ugly nature was useless and sometimes dangerous, but he was related to the governor by marriage, and so he stayed.” (The Green Mile, 1996: 10)

3.1.3 Cultural Aspect

In the mid-nineteenth century in the United States become a general discussion about popular culture. Artists and musicians patented their products in American culture including music, television programs, and Hollywood films. In *The Green Mile* novel, pop music becomes one of the music that has many fans.

In *The Green Mile* novels, pop music become one of the music that has many fans. They believe that singing pop songs can build mods for the better. There are some actors who like to sing pop songs. That can be seen as follows:

“All cured up,” I said, and off I went, singing songs like “Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine” and “We’re in the Money” to keep myself company. (The Green Mile, 1996: 193)

3.1.4 Religious Aspect

Religion is an important aspect for Americans, although including a country that embraces liberalism. According to the Pew Research Center (Religion & Public Life organization), 76 percent of US citizens participate in religious groups. And there are around 3,000 religious groups in the United States.

There are many aspects of religion in *The Green Mile* novel, because green mile is the place of death row prisoners, many prisoners are aware of the existence of god and his book, dean (one of the guards) also often reminds the role of god in human life. It can be seen as follows:

As Dean was finishing, old Toot-Toot came by with his red snack-wagon, which was covered with handlettered Bible quotes (“REPENT for the LORD shall judge his people,” Deut. 32:36, “And surely your BLOOD of your lives will I require,” Gen. 9:5, and similar cheery, uplifting sentiments), and sold us some sandwiches and pops. (The Green Mile, 1996: 94)

3.1.5 Science and Technology Aspect

The development of technology and industry in America is driven by the availability of abundant natural resources to support technological development and industrialization. Whereas in the 19th century, AT & T or The American Telephone and Telegraph Company had acquired assets and obtained patents from the American Bell company. So the telephone network in America in the 19th century was good.

In *The Green Mile* novel the guards and wardens or other offices have used telephones as remote communication tools. It can be seen as follows:

Then she lifted the handset one last time, and spoke those words that were almost a trademark of the early telephone systems of that time, at least in the rural South: "Hello, Central, are you on the line?" (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 31)

3.2 Humanism Analysis

3.2.1 Self-Actualization

The need becomes something that the person is able to realize to the fullest of all of his potential abilities. Self-actualization is the desire to gain satisfaction with his self to be whatever he can do and to be creative and free to reach the peak of his potential achievements. The need for self-actualization includes the desire to be self-full of his abilities and become anything according to his abilities.

Paul Edgecomb is the head screw; he has the responsibility of maintaining the conditions of the detainees. The needs of detainees sometimes involve members of the guard, such as arranging hours for visiting, or needing something. Wardens serve in accordance with applicable rules, maintain security, and maintain noise. Like when Paul met John for the first time, Paul offered John not to hesitate to ask or need something because it was his responsibility. It can be seen as follows:

"My name is Paul Edgecombe," I said. "I'm the E Block super - the head screw. You want something from me, ask for me by name. If I'm not here, ask this other, man - his name is Harry Terwilliger. Or you ask for Mr. Stanton or Mr. Howell. Do you understand that?" (*The Green Mile*, 1996: 17)

3.2.2 Self-Esteem Need

Self-esteem is an assessment of results, which is achieved by analysis, to what extent fulfills the ideal of oneself. If an individual is always successful, his self-esteem tends to be high and if he fails his self-esteem becomes low. Self-esteem is obtained from yourself and others.

Paul who feels unappreciated by his partner Percy, Percy always threatens Paul if he arranges the role. Percy always threatened by using his uncle who was the governor. And then Paul finished his patience and immediately defended himself to the threat given by Percy. It can be seen as follows:

If the governor ordered Warden Moores to fire me for ruffling the wrong set of feathers, who was Hal Moores going to put in my place? Percy? It was a joke. "I really don't care what you do, Percy, as long as you get out of here for awhile!". (The Green Mile, 1996: 14)

3.2.3 Love and Belongingness Needs

The word love is too difficult to define, because it implies too broad and unlimited meaning. Love is related to emotions, not to one's intellectuals. Feelings play more roles in love than intellectual processes. Nevertheless love can be interpreted as a state of mutual understanding in and accepting wholeheartedly. The need for compassion and belonging is a need that encourages individuals to establish effective relationships or emotional ties with others, which are actualized in the form of: the need to have and a sense of belonging, love and love, the need for feeling recognized and included as group members, feel themselves important, a sense of loyalty, cooperation, and so on.

Hal Moores also loved his wife (Melinda), he was worried that if his wife left him because of her illness, love could affect his activities when he was sick, Hal Moores also seemed unenthusiastic in passing his day. he also often remembers getting a kiss from his wife. It can be seen as follows:

My concern was genuine he was a woman I could have loved and married myself, if the lines of our lives had coincided - but I didn't mind diverting him a little from his main business, either. (The Green Mile, 1996: 51)

She kissed my forehead right over my left eyebrow, which always gives me the prickles. (The Green Mile, 1996: 45)

3.2.4 Safety and Security Needs

This aspect includes the needs of security, stability, protection, legal structure, order, boundaries, freedom from fear and anxiety. Physiological and security needs are basically the need to sustain life. Security needs are related to the physiological context and interpersonal relationships. Physiological security concerns something that threatens a person's body and life. The threat that comes physiologically can be

either real or imagined. Security in the context of interpersonal relationships depends on many factors, such as communication skills, ability to control problems, ability to understand, consistent behavior from others, and the ability to understand people and the environment around them.

With the concern of Hal Moores with his wife Melinda who was suffering from a brain tumor, because Melinda felt in a state of insecurity because of his illness and then asked Hal Moores to quickly contact the doctor to take care of it. It requires if Melinda feels the need for a doctor to treat the disease. It can be seen as follows:

“Dr. Haverstrom wants her to go in hospital up to Indianola,” Moores said. “Have some tests. Head X-rays, he means. Who knows what else? She is scared to death!” He paused, then added, “Truth to tell, so am I.” (The Green Mile, 1996: 52)

3.2.5 Psychological Needs

Physiological needs are the most basic needs of human beings who will strive to gain their self-interest, or the realization of their full human potential, when they have achieved satisfaction from the need for more principles. Etymologically, psychology comes from the word “psyche” which means soul or breath of life, and “logos” or science. Psychological needs can be interpreted as a need that aims to develop personality in someone.

Like humans in general, who feel hungry and thirsty. So did John, who at the time was hungry, accepted McGill's offer of a food attendant at E-Block for lunch. it illustrates that all living things eat and drink. It can be seen as follows:

“Oh, now, a little lunch, is that right?” McGee asked, and Coffey nodded and said yessir with his eyes running and dear snot-runners hanging out of his nose. “And where did the likes of you get a little lunch, John Coffey?” (The Green Mile, 1996: 41)

Coffey said it was, a little lunch. There was a bacon-tomato sandwich and a jelly fold-over. There was also a pickle, wrapped in its own piece of a funny page John Coffey would never be able to puzzle out. There were no sausages. Bowser had gotten the sausages out of John Coffey's little lunch. (The Green Mile, 1996: 42)

4 CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes the analysis of sociological approach into five sociological aspects in *The Green Mile* (1996) novel by Stephen King as follows:

First, social structure is one of the social aspects. Social structures include the upper class, middle class and lower class. This category is based on the type of work in the United States. The upper classes are upper class and people are rich in social hierarchies. In the novel, Hal Moores is rich because of their work as the main leader in E Block. The middle class is the class of people in the middle of the social hierarchy. Paul Edgecomb is a warden who belongs to the middle class. The lower class is the population segment that occupies as low as possible in the class hierarchy. John Coffey who became a prisoner on death row on E Block was included in the lower class.

Second, the political conditions at *The Green Mile* novel. In this section, the researcher highlights the character, Percy. Percy has many of the brothers who work in government. One of them was his uncle who became governor. With this access, he can freely choose a job that he wants. Percy is a person who does not have ability to be a warden. He only wants to execute prisoners who will be sentenced to death. Percy always threatened to report his uncle if his partner didn't treat him well. The political conditions become unhealthy and can endanger others.

Third, the culture that was popular at the time was pop music and hobby in imitating a pop song. In *The Green Mile* novel they believe that listening to pop songs is that someone in trouble will feel better and be able to reflect on his mind so that he can focus on activities. Then singing songs can also improve the mood by slightly changing the lyrics to fit the situation. John and Paul also often sing the songs 'My Flying Machine' and 'We're in the Money'. As if they would be able to escape the burden of life and enjoy the song with expression.

Fourth, the aspect of religion is very clearly illustrated in *The Green Mile* novel. In the novel there are many discussions about beliefs and religion. As a discussion to appease death row inmates, there Paul often reminds us that there is another world after we die and John also explains about the Bible revealed by God to be used as a guideline. John Coffey's strong in religious beliefs make him a good

person and wants to help each other, in the novel aspects of religion have a good effect and can be understood inwardly and well received.

Fifth, the aspects of science and technology in this novel are very visible. America is a country with up-to-date technology, in the novel it is clearly illustrated that technology needs are not a problem, from cellular phones to electric chairs can meet the needs at that time. With science, technology can be utilized properly. Electric chairs became a very crucial tool, where prisoners were executed starting from Arlen Bitterbuck, Eduard Delacroix and John Coffey they ended up in electric chairs. But Eduard Delacroix suffered an unlucky fate when Percy became an executor, with limited knowledge and work based on lust, mistake to make Eduard Delacroix in a bad execution.

Based on the issue of humanism in Stephen King's *The Green Mile* novel, researchers will present their conclusions. All humans are social creatures so that humans will always need other people, no matter whether they are rich or poor, blacks or whites, big or small, young or old they need to socialize, establish communication has a relationship between one another. All kinds of discrimination regarding differences do not make us disappear from our foundation as living beings. Humanism aspects must exist in all religions and cultures.

The researcher concludes the reason Stephen King discussed Humanity in the novel *The Green Mile*: (1) all humans are social beings; (2) everyone must have a human side to help each other; (3) as members of the community, are responsible for maintaining good socialization so that solidarity is realized.

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