Moral values in Satirical French Literature
for Learning Materials

by
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Abstract
This paper aims to describe the essence of moral values in French roman, Les Contes du Chat Perché written by Marcel Aymé. As a satirical French literature, Les Contes du Chat Perché has a collection of fable that satirized human society by bestowing human characteristic upon animals. It is filled with personal invective and angry moral indignation. Furthermore, this fable, exposes the world’s evil, i.e. injustice, vanity, avarice, hypocrisy, pedantry, corruption, wile, and deception. Briefly, this fable portrays animal characters acting as humans but unlike the fable usually lacks a moral. Therefore, discussing the moral values in the satirical French roman Les Contes du Chat Perché which analyzed human being about who and what human matters means how they should behave and achieve their goals in living their lives in order to be used as learning materials for reader.

Keywords : satirical french literature, fable, moral values

1. Introduction
People from multi ethnic and multi culture usually familiar with legend, and fairy tales. Fable once a popular and spread widely in the world. The fable is a kind of story tales where human being was represented in animal characters. The moral of people is well depicted in animal. Fabel usually rich of moral and character educations (Abrams, 1981:17).

Fable is regarded as the oldest tales and has been known hereditarily. It becomes favorites for people especially the children, as they often experienced with the fairy tales and its story. Through its characters, such as cats, tigers, lions, pigs, rabbits, elephants, donkeys, monkeys, dears, and so on, makes this fable closer to children. The children highly pay attention to this kind of story, as if the story in this fable brings them to the fantasy, beautiful, and attractive worlds. This fantasy drives the imagination of the children. As if the
children have the similar journey as those characters from the fables. In another word we can say that as the children absorb the story from the fable, so that their imaginative power increase strongly.

Many animal characters in fables are widely used as a symbol of human life. Actually through these characters we can find some didactic values such as politeness in speaking with others, thinking as human being does, and behave as a kind human being conducts. Both, explicitly and implicitly, those didactics inside the fables show some moral values. The story tales about *Cinderella* is one of the famous fantasy fairy tales in the world. Although the main character in Cinderella, which is Cinderella herself, but there are supporting characters represented by animals who always loveable and ready to help her. Those animal always around her to cheer her up when she is so sad or encounter a bad situation.

We also know about another famous story of *Hatchiko* from Japan. Hatchiko, the name of the dog, shows us how very loyal he was to his master. Every day he always wait for his mater coming back home, without realizing that his master already died. Hatchiko still waiting for his master at the same place and time until he himself die as well. Through a character like some animal around *Cinderella* and *Hatchiko*, we found many human being characters. It is true that in terms of moral values in the literature work, fables has the strong power to voice their moral values.

In Indonesia, the fable like *Kancil* or a cunning mousedeer is so well known and full of moral values along with it serials. Kancil' life always close to danger, but as he is so smart and cunning little dear, he often be able to escape from those dangers. Further, he even can continues his life without any serious stragglies. Kancil is so blessed and even play some tricks over his enemies. Fortunately, he often become the winner. On the other side, Kancil also face a difficult situation and hopeless. We can find this story when Kancil have a run competition with a turtle. As Kancil feels that he is stronger and smarter than the turtle, then he becomes arrogant and look down his rival. Unfortunately, as being underdog and humiliated by Kancil, the turtle has more brilliant thought about how to beat Kancil. Turtle uses his strategy, and finally win the competition. We can also find some other versions about this Kancil fable. Sometime Kancil acts as good Kancil, cunning Kancil, and a smart Kancil. All of those story always symbolize human attitude in daily life. All these moral values appeared from Kancil fable can be well accepted, internalized, or even well rejected. Good and bad is always exist in the fable, and so is, in this real life.
2. *Le Contes du Chat Perché* : the satirical French literature

In French literary, fables stories were allegedly appeared in the Middle Ages or which so-called *Le Moyen Age* in the form of a narrative (story). During the century, the literary work in realism and satirist were two style which much appreciated by the public. Fable that appeared hereditary in society, solely contain moral values and underlined philosophy that good life and bad life. *Le Roman de Renard*, or The Tale of a Fox was first fable of the most popular story tale in the French literary history. This fable shows Fox as the main character who is an intelligent animal as well as cunning one. The Fox (or Renard) has a high spirit, a good bravery and courage, clever in deploying words and charming attitude that makes he much preferred and becomes successful character who can live in the palace as well as with the rich family. This fable later on becomes popular in French vocabulary which means fox as a kind of animal as well as its denotative meaning.

One of the French fable that will be discussed in this article is a collection of fables entitled *Les Contes du Chat Perché* or The Tales of a Perched Chat, written by a French author, named Marcel Aymé. Aymé, the author was born in 1902, and published his first collection of these fables in 1934. He starts his career as a journalist since his arrival in Paris in 1925, Aymé has finished many journalism articles, including literary works, in the form of romance, novels, fairy tales, drama and movie scripts. As his writing style was so popular in playing his language and easily understood that placed his became known as a talented young writer during that period of time.

Passing his childhood and teenager life in a family of blacksmiths in rural environments, make Marcel Aymé feel close to nature and the common people. In fact, he often spent his time by walking around his village and the forest nearby. All these moments had strong affects for him towards the development of his talents in the future as an author of fables. During his travel around villages and forests, Aymé discovered the mysteries of the animal’s life and its natural surroundings. Through his experiences, Marcel Aymé successfully accomplished *Les Contes du Chat Perché* as fable literature in tragi-comedie’s genre. His collection of fables which has no less popular with the of *Le Roman de Renard* can be enjoyed by readers of all ages. This fable collection consisting of 17 fables and was extraordinary acclaimed by the readers, and was reprinted for several times over a period of 50 years since it was first published (Eterstein, 1998: 32-33). The stories in *Les Contes du Chat Perché* was written by using daily language so that it is easy to understand. Both the
flowing or sequences and and the themes of the story are also simply displayed and rich with ridiculous moments and also dominated by funny behavior of different characters.

In *Les Contes du Chat Perché*, Marcel Aymé was showing his expertise in displaying characters of animals. He sometimes does not display some animal figures as it is depicted as stereotype. For example cats as pets which is usually portrayed stereotype as slacker animal, but in this fable collection Aymé depicts it as a wise animal who loves to help other animals. His hobby as ‘perching’ in a tree (*le chat perché*) makes the Cat be able to see and observe the variety of moments and activities taking place around him and the he is able to give advices, counseling, and even forbid other animals. Similarly, it is also happened to the Donkey. As a donkey usually stereotyped as a stupid and dumb animal, otherwise in his story, Aymé describes it as a cunning animal figure. And the even the goose that usually looks graceful animals unfortunately in his story, it is appearing as stupid and dumb goose.

The similar things also takes place to the figures of Tigers and Wolves. Conventionally, Tiger and Wolf figures are stereotyped as the wild animals, vicious and loved killing his victims cruelly. But in *Les Contes du Chat Perché*, there was a moment when the Tiger and the Wolf face to Duck, then both, Tiger and Wolf made a promise that they will not be mean and cruel anymore. Both of these animals, Tiger and Wolf have a humble attitudes and are willing to change their bad habits. It seems that some characters described in the *Les Contes du Chat Perché* have a unique character unlike the stereotype that has been the generally understood and believed.

Like in Indonesia, in French the appearance of fable as a literary work that is both showing the realism and satirist, is very popular. Fable often full of moral values which implied by the funny and comical characters actually presents a role as satire. For example, the Pig character in *Les Contes du Chat Perché* has been described overweight. But the Pig wish to have the same look as the Peacock whose bird figures, beautiful and slim. To pursue the desire, Pig does some exercises every day and also observes diet. From this, it can be understood that when the fat body of Pig desire to have slim body as the Peacock, drive some motivations for the Pig to do exercise and diet every day. Without those strong effort, the wish of Pig to have slim body will soon disappeared. When we wish something should be followed by strong effort. Without any effort, our desires will be in vain. We can conclude that fables provide a critical view will invites the readers to explore the moral values and some principles of life. The story in this fables can be seen as mirror for our lives.
3. **The moral values in *Les Contes du Chat Perché* as the learning materials.**

In general, literature including the fables contains about worldview of life’s principles and moral values. As it is rich of moral values and wise behaves, so that through the characters inside the story (or fables), the author wish to offer some ideals life for the readers. As it is mentioned above, some characters namely the Pig, the Cat, the Tiger, the Wolf, in the fable collection of *Les Contes du Chat Perché*, written by Marcel Aymé is significantly interesting to be discuss as they have dominant roles.

According to structuralism theory of literature, a main character is defined as individuals who experienced some or most of the sequence of events and serves as the main driving story (Schmitt, 1982:63). In general, in a fable there is more than one characters. Among those characters, there will be one or more who act as the main characters. These main characters usually called as the hero, or protagonist figures. The hero figure is keep seeking the authentic values within the degraded world (Faruk, 1994:18). This definition begins with understanding about the concept of a character in Goldmann’s concept which means the story about the degraded of degraded authentic values in a world which is also being degraded. The search was conducted by a problematic hero (the hero). The hero figure (protagonist) serves as the lead character along with the antagonist characters. In accordance with the roles, a hero character plays an important role as the center of the sequences in the story (Schmitt, 1982:64).

The characters have the positions and functions of each part in the story when they have been involved in side the story from being the figures, which depicts the individualist, actions, ways of thinking, and the life (Chatman, 1980:170-108). *Les Contes du Chat Perché* have animal characters that behave like human beings. They speak, behave, act, think, and feel just as the same as the human beings do. In *Les Contes du Chat Perché*, some protagonist characters who well behave are represented by the Cat, the Cow, the Goose, the Dog, the Chicken, the Wolf, the Tiger, and the Pig. While the antagonist characters who misbehave are represented by the Fox, the Peacock, the Eagle, the Donkey, and the Goose. The Cow is a protagonist who can read and count. For the Cow there will be no day without reading and counting. The Cow is kind of animal who represent a smart thinker and loves philosophy. Further, please have a look at this following quotation.
“J'ai trop de respect pour la science et la philosophie”. Ce boeuf blanc était un boeuf très savant, qui savait lire dans les livres les plus difficiles. Pourvu qu'il fut de bonne humeur, il conseillait volontiers les bêtes dans l'embarras.

"I am very fond with science and philosophy". That is a very clever cow, who is able to read all kind of books as hard as it can be. Besides, he is always lovable and deliberately like to advise the other animals that often make troubles. Unlike the Cow who is described as the protagonist hero character, the Fox and the Eagle figures who are portrayed as antagonist characters who pretend to be good with the Chicken and wish to make friend with—when they will actually wish to size eat the Chicken. This can be seen in the following monologue delivered by the Chicken.

Quand j'y pense. Ah! Je suis en colère, vous savez! Figurez-vous que cette nuit, le renard est venu roder autour du poulailler pour la troisième fois depuis quinze jours. Au secours! Il y a une buse qui veut me manger!

When I am thinking about that, ah, I am upset. Will you believe me, the night when the Fox came around my cage for the third time in this week? Oh please, there is Eagle who would eat me as its prey!

The other animals from the protagonist character namely the Duck, is portrayed as a wise leader who will deliver some advices, suggestions and warnings to other animals. The Duck is also often lead some meetings with the other animals to solve the problem. It can be said that the description of the Duck character in Les Contes du Chat Perché is not only as figure of a wise leader, but also a good listener who always gives the best solution for every problem appeared. The Duck also described as an animal who likes to learn Geography. As he was so diligence, therefore he was able to break free from the bad threat of the Tiger. The Duck answered all the Geography questions launched by the Tiger.

Besides the story of the Duck figure mentioned above, the story of the duckling seem to be interesting too. This Duckling refused to be taught by her mother on how to catch fish. In fact, the Duckling was so lazy to learn how to catch a fish. She always hope that her mother will serve the fish for her. One day she saw the Goose family were enjoying catch fish in the river. Without first asking permission from her mother, the Duckling meet the little Goose and they off looking for fish together. Unfortunately they took a different paths, then separated. The Duckling went up to the headwaters. When he was alone, not so far from his spot, he saw a snake swallowed a frog. The little Duckling was so afraid and cried, and straightly go back to her mother. He met the mother to ask her apologize and promise not to leave without saying goodbye to her. Further, he also promise to tell a lie
anymore. The mother Duck lovingly forgive the little Ducking. This story about the little Ducking character illustrated above is similar to typical story of children’s problem in real life today. A child sometimes wanted to get away from home and then returned home to stay together with the father, the mother, brother and sister with a new awareness and feeling about the warmth and secure of living in a family.

The story of the Duck and the other animals in Les Contes du Chat Perché written Marcel Aymé showing the morality values. Some stories of happiness, sadness and thrilling adventures were experienced by different animal figures. These gave us some lessons about the values of life that we have to face and deal with any situation in our lives. Some moral values such as self-sacrifice based on good purposes, responsibility, honesty, compassion, passion, struggle, strength, courage, and helping each has been coloring the stories in this collection of fable.

The stories inside the collection of fable Les Contes du Chat Perché written Marcel Aymé whose full of moral values also present the equilibrium between human being and animals. All are the same creatures. Some similarities can be seen in the figurative aspects, character aspects, feelings, and human expressions in social order and also in the conversation done by the characters in the story. Each of animal character represents a certain type of human being and a social type. In literature term this is what we call story is a reflection of real life. In this case, literature has a role serves as a medium for application of moral values to its readers. Through the lecture of fables, the author offered some different kind of life which can be regarded as an example in social community. But when those moral values which can be found in the story of the fable do not match with the moral of the society, therefore the readers will easily leave the without paying any attention. The readers will consider that those moral values were just an etiquette.

It is hoped that the collection of the fable entitled Les Contes du Chat Perché written by Marcel Aymé in French literature can serve as complement to the variety of literary genres that not only are entertaining but also giving advantages. It seems that through some animal characters in fables, the internalization process of moral values can be implemented easily to the readers, especially for the children as they need to learn a lot about the moral values. Build-up the moral values in human being’s life through the reading of literature only can be reached through a long process. One of French philosophy named Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712—1778) emphasized the importance of moral development in relation to
literary readings. Further he said fantasy including the fable can be used as a medium in
developing children imagination, as well as inserting the moral value to that those value will
stay there in the life of the children and getting stronger as they grow up. Further Rousseau
said, the moral values in the literature implicitly appears to disguise in various series of
evident. That is why literature as moral learning materials never get rigid and even taught
dogmatically in instilling moral values to the readers.

4. Conclusion.

In the fable, there are good elements and evil elements. The author of fables then
use animals to personify the various types of good and evil elements. Briefly, fable is story
that describes a dynamic life, which is the life of the man himself. In reading the fable can be
considered as an effort to develop the character or personality of the readers. Because
while reading the fable the readers will open their outlook and their critical thinking and
ability towards moral values offered in the fable stories. Here the fable serves as a moral
learning materials to deal with social issues in the community and the fluctuation dynamic
of life. In the end, this will inspire the readers to become more humaine.

Fables from around the world, including the collection of fable entitled *Les Contes
du Chat Perché* by Marcel Aymé, actually has tremendous attraction as moral lesson for the
readers, especially children from an early age. Stories in fable from various cultures all
around the world often attract attention of the children, whenever they listen to their
parents tell them the story or from storyteller telling the story. Through storytelling, the
children will easily entertained and they will be able to activate all their senses to pay
attention to all aspects from the storyteller as well as from the fable story. The powerful
attraction of the fable story will drive the children to understand the moral values which
stand in advice, inspirations and motivations.

Teaching and learning activities in elementary school using the story telling appears
to help teachers in attaching the subject material to the level of affective domain of a
student. When the elementary school students hear the fables that delivered in a integrated
subject it likely that the students will remember that story for the rest of their lives.
Although in general the fable is only regarded as learning materials in the field of
Humanities subjects, however, this material can be used as teaching materials in the field of
Mathematics and Natural Sciences. For example when teacher plan to teach multiplication
in mathematics, the teacher then can tell the story of a monkey who has the magical power to multiply everything he touches, including his favorites fruits, bananas. While in Natural Science the teacher can explain about the disaster, raining phenomenon, lightning and storm, etc. The teacher can also share the story about the animal that will be saved by Noah, the prophet into his ship sailed up the broad ocean. Therefore, story in the fables can be maintained as subject material, or moral lesson to the readers, especially early childhood or school age students.

References