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The Analysis of the Meaning
in The Poem Fire and Ice by
Robert Frost

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the prose meaning and the total meaning contained in the poem “Fire and Ice” by Robert Frost. The writer relates other intrinsic elements (Symbol, Paradox, Denotation, and Connotation) to support and strengthen the meaning contained in the poem “Fire and Ice”. The intrinsic elements that used have also been analyzed. After the writer analyzes all these elements, the elements are interrelated to form a poem. Something that makes this poem interesting is that all the elements discussed are able to support the meaning of the poem and interconnected to form a unified meaning. By knowing these elements, we can capture the whole meaning of the poem.

Keywords: *prose meaning, total meaning, symbol, paradox, denotation, connotation*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna prosa dan makna total yang terkandung dalam puisi “Fire and Ice” karya Robert Frost. Penulis mengaitkan unsur intrinsik lainnya (Lambang, Paradoks, Denotasi, dan Konotasi) untuk mendukung dan memperkuat makna yang terkandung dalam puisi “Api dan Es”. Unsur intrinsik yang digunakan juga telah dianalisis. Setelah penulis menganalisis semua unsur tersebut, unsur-unsur tersebut saling terkait untuk membentuk sebuah puisi. Hal yang membuat puisi ini menarik adalah semua unsur yang dibahas mampu mendukung makna puisi dan saling berhubungan membentuk satu kesatuan makna. Dengan mengetahui unsur-unsur tersebut, kita dapat menangkap makna puisi secara utuh.

Kata kunci: *makna prosa, makna total, simbol, paradoks, denotasi, konotasi*

1. Introduction

Poem consists of lines arranged in various forms and contains ideas, imagination, feelings that are conveyed in beautiful language (Whitworth, 2006). Poem is not an ordinary text or writing. That is because poem has an implied meaning and we cannot interpret a poem just by ordinary

thinking. If it is just an ordinary writing, we will know the meaning of the text by reading it once. While, when we only read a poem once, we probably have not found the meaning of the poem we read. Furthermore, poem is also able to thrill the reader's feelings. Sometimes, when we attend a poem reading contest, we can see some of

the contestants read a poem until they cry. It indicates that the poem they read is very meaningful and has an impact on their emotions. Meanwhile, when we just read an ordinary text such as a textbook and find its meaning, we probably will not cry like reading a poem. In addition, reading poem is also able to increase our insight about the stories that exist in this world. That is because in some poems have a story that exists in this world and a long time ago, a story was remembered by singing or reading a poem (Barnet, Burto, & Cain, 2008). So, those are the things we can know when we want to learn a poem.

There are many great poets that we can identify and read their poems, one of them is Robert Frost. He is one of the great poets from America, his poems have been recognized and admired by many people (Fagan, 2007). Robert Frost has written many poems, some of his poems are Fire and Ice, The Road Not Taken, The Times Table, and Nothing Gold Can Stay (Frost, 1942). Many people have read his poems and they are interested in analyzing the poems that has been written by Robert Frost. Poems written by Robert Frost usually have a characteristic, Robert Frost often writes poem about the relationship between humans and nature (Srinivasarao, 2013). Robert Frost often uses elements of nature to describe his poems such as, Fire and Ice. Each of his poems also has meaning that is very useful for life. When we read his poems we will realize how we live as humans in this world and what we have done as humans. So, Robert Frost's poem is very interesting to read and analyze because his poems contains useful meanings for our lives.

One of Robert Frost's poems that can be read and analyzed is Fire and Ice. In the poem fire and ice, Robert Frost uses fire and ice as something to talk about. This poem is about life, which specifically discusses the emotions that humans have. Robert Frost uses elements of nature to describe human

emotions. This poem consists of 1 stanza, which in one stanza there are 9 lines. This poem has a rhythmic sound when we read it. That is because Robert Frost wrote this poem using the right word structure. In addition, what we can know when reading this poem is the figurative language in the poem fire and ice. Figurative language that we can find in this poem such as symbol, paradox, and understatement. The function of the figurative is to make this poem more interesting to read. The figurative language in this poem must be able to be understood using our interpretation because we need to understand the figurative language to understand the meaning of this poem.

In this article will contain an analysis of the meaning of the poem Fire and Ice. The meaning of the poem that will be analyzed is the prose meaning and the total meaning. We can find the prose meaning just by reading this poem briefly without deep interpretation. Meanwhile, we can get the total meaning by doing deep interpretation. Therefore, this article will also discuss several other intrinsic elements to prove and support the meaning that contained in the poem Fire and Ice. Furthermore, these intrinsic elements will be associated with the meaning in the poem Fire and Ice. In that way we will get a deep meaning about this poem.

2. Research Question

Based on the explanation above, the formulation of the research question is what is the meaning of the poem Fire and Ice after in-depth analysis?

3. Method

This study is conducted with two research methods, those methods are intrinsic method and library research. This study is conducted with the intrinsic method because we have to understand the meaning of poem deeply. Poem contains many figurative elements that have implied meanings and cannot be interpreted only by using ordinary understanding. In addition,

we have to read more than once to understand the meaning contained in a poem. Therefore, the writer uses the intrinsic method to analyze the poem *Fire and Ice*. Furthermore, this study uses library research method because in conducting the analysis, the author needs to read other sources related to this study. Other sources are books and journals obtained by accessing the internet.

4. Result and Discussion

A. Meaning of the Poem

Every poem we read has a meaning in it. The definition of the meaning of poem is all experiences that are expressed in a poem (Perrine, 1969). There are two types of meaning in poetry, namely prose meaning and total meaning of the poem. The prose meaning is the meaning of the poem which may not be the idea of the poem, but may contain the story and description of a poem (Perrine, 1969). We can recognize the prose meaning of a poem without reading deeply because prose meaning is the meaning of the poem that can be determined by ordinary understanding without using our feelings. Furthermore, the total meaning is an experience that is not conveyed directly and we can feel by reading the whole poem with deep understanding (Perrine, 1969). We need to read a poem over and over again to get the total meaning because we can feel the total meaning with deep understanding and critical thinking. After this, the study that is made will analyze the prose meaning and total meaning in depth.

First, based on the meaning of prose meaning, the poem *Fire and Ice* contains the prose meaning that the world will end because of two things, they are fire and ice. Fire and ice have the same power to destroy the world. Fire can destroy the world by burning everything. Something that can be burned by fire is a forest, where the ecosystem in the forest is damaged (Orozco, Siebe, & Fernandez, 2017). Meanwhile, ice can destroy the world by freezing everything

through the cold nature of ice. When we put something in a refrigerator that has a very low temperature, something we put in the refrigerator will freeze. So the things that is discussed in this poem is fire and ice, which they can destroy the world in their way. In the poem *Fire and Ice*, especially in the first line there is a difference of opinion about the cause of the destruction of the world. Some people think that the world will be destroyed by fire and some people think that the world will be destroyed by ice. This poem conveys two ideas from different perspectives, which of those who support the world will be destroyed by fire and from those who support that the world will freeze because of ice. The speaker in this poem also expresses his choice regarding what makes this world destroyed. In the third line, when the speaker feels the desire that he has, he chooses to follow the opinion of some people who say the world is destroyed by fire. But, if the world can be destroyed twice, the speaker changes his choice about the cause of the destruction of the world. The speaker chose to follow the opinion of those who said this world would be destroyed because of the ice. That is because the speaker has sufficient knowledge about hate. So, the speaker of this poem talk about this world can be destroyed by fire and ice, and one day, the world may be destroyed by fire or may be destroyed by ice. So, that is the prose meaning that we can know from the poem “*Fire and Ice*”.

Second, based on the meaning of total meaning, the total meaning of the poem “*Fire and Ice*” is that human emotion or feeling, which are described as fire(desire) and ice(hatred) in this poem can endanger human life. The “fire” in this poem is used to describe the desires that exist in humans. Meanwhile, “Ice” is used to describe the hatred that humans feel towards something. In this poem there are two opinions from some about the destruction of all mankind. In the first line of this poem, according to some people, the lives of many people will

be destroyed because of the desires that humans have. Some people think like that because they have realized how their desires can destroy the people around them. There are also some people who think like that because they have become victims of other people's desires. Furthermore, in the second line, there are some other people think that lives of many people will be destroyed because of the hatred that humans have. They think like that because they have realized that the hatred they have can harm many people around them. Moreover, there are also people who think like that because they have become victims of other people's hatred. The speaker of this poem also thinks that the world will be destroyed because of the desire and hatred brought by humans. He thinks that desire that he feel will perish many people. If the world is destroyed twice, through sufficient knowledge of hatred, the speaker says that the lives of human will be destroyed by hatred. Through the delivery of this poem, the speaker agrees that desire and hatred have the same ability to destroy life. This poem is very related to the real life that is experienced by humans. In real life many people try to fulfill their own desires. The desire they have, such as the desire to be rich by taking family inheritance. People who have that desire will be willing to do anything to get rich, they may hurt their brothers or sister to get all their family inheritance. When they have that desire, they will feel no affection or love for the people around them. Meanwhile, humans who have a very deep hatred will also do anything to take revenge on those they hate. They are willing to do anything like killing the person they hate or killing the closest person of someone they hate. Hate can lead to war and hostility, such as something that happened in North Korea and South Korea. One day, if the hatred they have cannot be controlled again, it will lead to war. This poem is able to shake our hearts and make us feel fear. That feeling of fear is directed to the power of desire and hatred. The power

of desire and hatred is so great that it can cause suffering, sadness, and anxiety. Therefore, this poem was made to show the reader that human desire and hatred are very terrible and dangerous if not controlled. So this poem is very meaningful for life because everything discussed in this poem is related to human life.

B. The Intrinsic Elements that can Support the Meaning of Poem (Symbol, Paradox, Denotation, and Connotation)

First, according to Wainwright (2004), something that can represent other things related to characteristics, emotions, etc is symbol. Symbols in the poem has a very important role because sometimes, symbol is something that is talked about in the poem. To understand the poem deeply, we must know every symbol in the poem. In the poem "Fire and Ice" there are two things that are used as symbols, namely fire and ice. Fire in this poem is used to symbolize desire and ice in this poem is used to symbolize hatred. In the poem "Fire and Ice" we must understand the meaning of the symbols of fire and ice to understand the whole poem. That is because something that is important in this poem are fire (desire) and ice (hatred). When we don't know the true meaning of the symbol of fire and ice, we will think that the world will surely be destroyed because of fire and ice. Besides that, we will think that the world will burn because of fire and freeze because of ice. The symbols in this poem also tell us that human nature is the same as fire and ice. When humans have a strong desire to get something, they will be like fire. When we see a very big fire, we will also certainly see many things that have been burned by the fire. It is like the overwhelming desire that humans have, the overwhelming desire to get something, must have sacrificed a lot of people in getting what they want. Furthermore, when humans hate something they will be like ice. When humans hate someone they may be cold and indifferent toward someone they hate. What

humans do when they hate someone is the same as the nature of ice, which is cold. When a relationship is destroyed by hatred, that relationship will be very difficult to rebuilt again. So, knowing the symbols of the poem "Fire and Ice" can help us to know the overall meaning of the poem.

Second, according to Perrine (1969), paradox can be defined as a real contradiction that exists in a statement, but it contains truth. Paradox in the poem "Fire and Ice" is very important for us to know. By knowing the paradox of the poem, we can find out what is discussed in the poem. Paradox in this poem can be seen in lines one and two. in the first line the thing that discussed is fire, while in the second line, the thing that discussed is ice. That is a very strong and clear contradiction. Fire and ice are the paradox of this poem because they have a very striking difference. We can feel the difference between them when we stay between fire and ice. When we are near the fire, we will feel the heat in our whole body. That is because fire has a hot nature. However, when we are near the block of ice and touch the block of ice, we will feel cold and our hands will feel frozen. Fire and ice also have different colors, the color of fire is usually red and the color of ice is usually clear white. Furthermore, when we interpret fire and ice more deeply, we will get the meaning that the fire discussed in this poem is desire and the ice discussed in this poem is hatred. Through this deep understanding we can find a deeper paradox about the poem "Fire and Ice". We can know that desire and hatred are paradoxes if we understand them deeper and use critical thinking. Desire and hatred are contradictions because desire and hatred contain different emotions when we feel them. When we want something, of course we like something that we want and we are willing to do anything to get it. Desire is usually associated with a feeling of loving something that is very deep and difficult to forget. Meanwhile, when we hate something

we will not be attracted to the things we hate and we also tend to ignore the things we hate even we will do bad things to something or someone we hate. Hate is usually associated with disgust and dislike toward something, so we tend not to care about the thing we hate. So, we can know paradox that is not seen directly in a poem by using deep understanding when we read a poem. After we understand the poem deeper, we can see that desire and hatred are part of paradox because desire can be described as feeling of love and hatred can be described as feeling of indifference. This poem has paradox, something that contains contradictions are fire (desire) and ice (hatred). This poem is very interesting because Robert Frost is able to use natural elements that have different natures to describe desire and hatred, where desire and hatred also have different natures.

Third, denotation is the meaning of a word that we can find in the dictionary and has no other meaning (Miller & Greenberg, 1981). denotation in the poem "fire and Ice" can help us to interpret a poem. Sometimes in a poem contains some words that we do not know or rarely hear. Therefore, we look up the meaning of the word in a dictionary to understand the meaning of the word mentioned. By knowing the true meaning of a word in a poem, we will be able to find a deeper meaning of a poem. There are several words in the poem "Fire and Ice" that we can look up the meaning in the dictionary, such as :

1. World (line 1) : World is a place called the planet where many people live in there (Bull, 2008).
2. End (line 1) : End is the last section of an event, activity, or object (Bull, 2008).
3. Suffice (line 9) : What we want has been fulfilled in various ways or a sense of satisfaction with something (Bull, 2008).

So, denotation can support the meaning of a poem because before interpreting a word more deeply we must know the true

meaning of a word.

Fourth, connotation is the meaning of a word that can be felt deeply by knowing the implied meaning of the word (Miller & Greenberg, 1981). By knowing the connotation of a word, we can find out the hidden meaning of a poem. We can also feel the emotional feelings of a poem by knowing the connotation of the words in the poem. When we can't know the connotation meaning of words in a poem, we will not be able to interpret the poem in detail. There are some words in the poem "Fire and Ice" that we can know the connotation of the words, such as :

1. World (line 1) : The meaning word "world" in the poem is life because desire or hatred can endanger or damage something that has a soul.
2. End (line 1) : The word "end" in first line has negative meaning, "end" has meaning as destruction. Something that destroy in the poem "Fire and Ice" is life, where life is destroyed by desire and hatred.
3. Suffice (line 9) : The word "suffice" in the poem has negative meaning, The word "suffice" is very dangerous because in eighth line is mentioned word "great". The word "great" in the poem explains how great and spooky the destruction because of the ice, then in ninth line the speaker says "suffice", it means very dangerous and enough to destroy everything.

So, through knowing the connotation of a word we can find out the meaning contained in a poem in more detail.

5. Conclusion

From the results of the discussion, we can conclude that the poem "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost has the meaning contained in it. The meaning that we can know from a poem is Prose meaning and total meaning. The prose meaning of the poem discussed is that the world will end because of two things,

they are fire and ice. Meanwhile, the total meaning of the poem is that human emotion or feeling, which are described as fire(desire) and ice(hatred) in this poem can endanger human life.

Furthermore, to support the meaning contained in a poem, we need to know the meaning of other intrinsic elements (Symbol, Paradox, Denotation, and Connotation). By knowing the symbols of the poem "Fire and Ice" we can know that the fire mentioned in the poem that discussed is desire and the ice mentioned in the poem that discussed is hatred. Then, by knowing the paradox of the poem discussed, we can also find out the important things that discussed in it and the differences that exist in the two things. last, understanding connotation and denotation can also help us to understand every word in the poem. So, all the elements that have been discussed are interrelated and can form the meaning of a poem.

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