

METAPHOR DEALING WITH HUMAN NATURE IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S "A POISON TREE"

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to describe the metaphor dealing with human nature in the poem "A Poison Tree", and to reveal the metaphor constituting the human nature in the poem. This is a library research in which all the data and the theories were taken from written forms including internet browsing. The theories used in this study are the theories of figures of speech, metaphor, meaning and symbol. Moreover, structural approach, formalistic approach and psychological approach are applied to decide the strategy in analyzing the metaphor and symbols found in the poem. The analysis shows that: (1) there are two metaphor of human nature analyzed in this research, they are metaphor related to feeling and metaphor related to human characteristics. Metaphor related to characteristics is divided into two main discussions namely individual and social creatures. Furthermore, there are two symbols of human nature namely anger and karma.

Keywords : Figures of Speech, Metaphor, Symbol, Denotative Meaning, Connotative Meaning, Anger, Takdir.

INTRODUCTION

This article is an attempt to analyze metaphor dealing with human nature in order to reveal the symbol of human nature which has several meanings. The problem involved in this study is interesting and it is one of poetic aspects that is always found in the poem. So, the topic is considered relevant to discuss in this scientific study.

Literary works are created not only to entertain the readers but also to express people's feeling. It expresses what people have experienced in their lives such as their thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Besides, literature functions as pleasure giving for those who enjoy it. One branch of literary works is poetry. According to Robert Frost, "Poetry is the kind of thing poets write". Then, he added that Poetry is a rhythmical composition of words expressing an attitude, designed to surprise and delight, and to arouse an emotional response" (1966: 407). In other words, the poet writes the poems by exploring his or her ideas and arranges them into beautiful rhyming words that are full of imagination. Besides, many interesting things can be found in poetry such as figures of speech, metaphor, symbols, and so on.

According to Delbanco and Cheuse in *Literature Craft and Voice*,

“figures of speech are a technique of using language to describe one thing in terms of another, often comparing two unlike objects, such as *the sun* and *the face of the beloved*, to condense and heighten the effect of language, particularly the effect of imagery or symbolism in a poem” (2010: G-6).

It means that figures of speech are words or phrases that have connotative meaning. The figures of speech itself can be described in terms of technique of using language which is aimed to either strengthen the effect of symbolism and imagery or explain a concept.

Concerning the figures of speech, metaphor is important to create pictorial effects and suggest comparison to force the reader or listener to find the similarities. Marion and Blanche explain that “metaphor is a figure of speech that compares one thing with another by speaking of the one as if it actually were the other”(1969: 369). In metaphor, the quality or characteristic is given to a person or thing by using a name and image. Usually, it uses something else which has similarities.

Moreover, another kind of metaphor discussed here is conceptual metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 8) exclaim that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Hence, it is possible to conclude that conceptual metaphor structures how people think, how people perceive, and what people do every day. Basically, conceptual metaphor is depicted in people’s everyday language by a wide of variety expressions. However, it affects and shapes what their act is and how they comprehend what they are doing when they are arguing. In brief, human’s thought or conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined.

Symbolism plays an important role in poetry as well. It is the use of a concrete object to represent an abstract idea. Symbols can add the beauty of literary works. Delbanco and Cheuse define “Symbol as any object, image, character, or action that suggests meaning beyond the everyday literal level” (2010: G-13). In other words, symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else.

Additionally, meaning is very important as it has to do with the sense of expression. People can not understand the sentence if they do not know the meaning of each word. In this case, the meaning of the words in poetry will be different from the other literary works like drama, novel, or short story, and etcetera. Crimon states that, “meaning of a word is determined by the ways in which speakers and writers generally use it” (1967:166). Briefly, a word must have a meaning that expresses something in such a language. Here, meaning is divided into two kinds. They are denotative meaning and connotative meaning

Alten Bernd and Lewis also state, “its dictionary definition the thing that the word names, describes, or narrates presumably considered in a detached. We must be sure, of course, that we understand the correct dictionary meaning of each word”. (1996: 9-10). The denotation meaning is easy to understand because it is a real meaning. So, people certainly understand the correct meaning of each word.

Meanwhile, connotation is secondary meaning. It means that connotative meaning is defined as the meaning of a word that can not be judged merely based on the word. Kennedy comments that "connotation is the overtones or suggestions of additional meaning gained by a word" (1994: 98). It can be said that connotation is various emotional meaning of a word. Before deciding the meaning of such a word, people have to pay attention to the context of the sentence and also the situation in which it exists.

METHOD

One of the most popular literary works is poem. Poem may be fantasy and also believable. It can represent a real life that is believable but some others are non real life happenings. The poem entitled "A Poison Tree" is chosen as a source of the data. Blake wrote this poem to reveal the deep truth about human's wrath and the ability to harbor wrath and fester desires to an incredible extent. Also, because he has a dark atmosphere around the death of the foe, he reveals the mystery of evil and how it influences humans.

Furthermore, there are three approaches which are used to support analyzing the data. The first approach applied is structural approach. According to Scott, "structural approach is used to analyze the word constituent. The appreciation and evaluation will be clear and easy to understand, so we will discover the truth" (1962: 83). It means that the structural approach is used to get the mastery over the structures.

The second one is called formalist criticism. A primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text's content to shape its effects upon readers. Scott states that,

"The formalistic critic examines the total poem without proper regard for the species of which it is an example, thus failing to distinguish between the broad genres (drama, novel, lyric, epic) or, still less, between sub-species (one kind of tragedy, perhaps mimetic, as opposed to another, perhaps didactic)" (1962: 183).

The statement above means that the formalist criticism is concerned primarily with the work itself.

Moreover, the third kind of approach is psychological approach. According to Guerin, "psychological approach is concerned with the motives that underlie human behavior. Psychology tends to be experimental and diagnostic; it is closely related to biological science and what psychoanalysis attempts to disclose about the individual personality" (2005:183). So, the psychological approach is the most suitable approach to analyze the problem related to the main character. This approach will be used to analyze the feeling from psychological condition of the main character.

In addition, a method of research is required in order to analyze the data. Here, the descriptive method is applied. Surakhmad claims that "Descriptive method is the way to solve the typical problem by collecting, arranging,

classifying, and interpreting the data” (1978: 132). It is used to describe the symbols of human nature existing in William Blake’s “A Poison Tree”.

To collect the data, the library method is used in this research. Djajasudarma states that “library research involves the relationship between a research and books as sources of the data” (1993: 4). It means that some materials from printed media is needed. The library research is used to support the analysis and to help to collect the data.

DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the analysis of the problems. There are two problems that have to be analyzed. The first problem is the metaphor dealing with human nature and the second problem is the symbols dealing with human nature.

1. The Metaphor Dealing With Human Nature In William Blake’s “A Poison Tree”

In this subchapter, the researcher wants to discuss the metaphor and the meaning dealing with human nature existing in William Blake’s “A Poison Tree”. After that, the researcher will find the metaphor that constitutes the symbol.

The poem can be seen below:

“A Poison Tree”

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears, 5
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night
Till it bore an apple bright; 10
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole:
In the morning glad I see 15
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

--William Blake

a. Human Nature Related to Emotion (Feeling)

There is metaphor which reveals human related to emotion (feeling). The metaphor of human nature related to emotion in the poem can be found in the first stanza :

**I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.**

The first stanza describes the inner feelings of the speaker. The first and second lines show that the speaker is angry to his friend since he has a problem with him or her. He tells his friend about the reason why he is angry as well. Besides, he wants to release his anger since it burdens him. He tries to talk to his friend about the problem in order to get a solution. He can talk to his friend about his wrath because he can explain clearly to his friend and his friend can understand well. Such a way is successful because there is a communication between the speaker and his friend. He feels relieved by telling the reason why he is angry to his friend. In his opinion, no matter what the problems are, he is eager to solve them. It is to keep the relationship with his friend. He always thinks that his friend is important to him. As a result, when he is angry with a friend, he is able to control his anger and enclose it in a finite sense. Further, the first stanza also demonstrates how the speaker expresses his true feeling towards his friend. The result of his action is he gets his anger gone.

Meanwhile, the third and fourth lines depict the speaker is angry to his foe. In this case, being honest to his friend about his feeling is easier than telling his foe the truth about his feeling. The speaker is angry to his foe but cannot tell him. However, he thinks he has a reason to be angry. He chooses to keep his anger inside of him and not let it out, this is the same as nurturing it. He has an enemy that he cannot speak as frankly as he can with his friend. He worries that his words are misinterpreted and resented. In other words, he is not able to solve the problem at all.

Additionally, the speaker puts the different action towards the foe about this matter. He finds difficulty telling his foe the truth. He keeps hiding his feeling instead of explaining his foe what makes him angry. He lets his wrath grow bigger and affect himself. It seems that he is afraid if he tells the foe about it, his foe may react badly, and cause something which is not good for him. Therefore, he tries to forgive his foe but unfortunately he cannot. Then, the effect is that he is not able to enjoy his life since his heart is full of hatred towards his foe. It can be seen that no matter how good his foe is, he always hates his foe.

b. Human Nature Related to Human Characteristics

There are two metaphors of human nature related to human characteristics. The first is human nature as a social creature and an individual creature.

1. Human as a Social Creature

In this subchapter, human as a social creature is analyzed. Human beings are considered as a social creature since they are not able to survive in the society by themselves. Consequently, they tend to seek for companionship. Moreover, they also interact with others socially in order to fulfill their needs and achieve what they really want. However, it is also possible that the social interaction among people is done in order to express their feelings including the wrath itself. In this case, the first stanza of the poem especially in the first and the second lines demonstrates that people are social creatures. Take a look at the following example:

**I was angry with my friend,
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.**

Those lines prove that the speaker naturally has feelings or emotions. Anger is one of feelings or emotions which is expressed by him. Here, he shows that he is angry with his friend due to some reasons. It happens because he literally needs someone to understand, accompany, and help him to get through tough time. Unfortunately, no one is there for him. However, it does not last long since he eventually needs his friend.

As a social creature, the speaker actually wants some companions in his life because he realizes that nobody can live alone and survive by themselves. He must socialize with other people in the society in order to fulfill his social needs. Basically, other people's presence is aimed to complete each other. Besides, it is normal if a conflict occurs in friendship. Sometimes, it does not ruin or break their bond yet it strengthens their relationship. That is the reason why he is able to get over being angry with his friend. Then, he decides to forgive him and forget about his friend's mistakes. In other words, he chooses to end his wrath and the feeling of vengeance towards his friend.

2. Human as an Individual Creature

Human being are destined to not only become a social creature but also an individual creature. Being individual creature means that a person tends to be someone who separates from other people and possesses his own needs or goals. In other words, they often isolate themselves from society and rarely interact with other people around them. Here, the third and fourth lines of the first stanza portray human as individual creature. Pay attention to the following lines:

**And I watered it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;**

The first and second lines show that the speaker as an individual creature has feeling and his own way to solve the problems. Further, the word, **tears**, is often used to describe something which shows that people are weak or fragile. In the poem, his tears not weaken him even though they come out over and over again. In fact, his tears encourages him to be stronger. This word can be defined as an emotion or urge which is able to lead the speaker to express his wrath. Meanwhile, the word **fears** portrays the speaker's feeling as well. This feeling

appears after his foe hurts him terribly and causes suffering over his life. As a result, it obviously makes him realize that he must survive and stay strong in order to take a vengeance. He cannot let him live happily while he himself feels depressed and desperate.

Consequently, those feelings finally turn the speaker into an individual creature which means that he becomes independent, selfish, and arrogant. Both of **tears** and **fears** inside his heart completely inspire himself to be a survivor. Besides, they also strengthen his desire to explode his anger towards his foe later on. The emotions basically can increase the tendency for being an individual creature.

2. The Symbol Dealing With Human Nature In William Blake's "A Poison Tree"

In this subchapter, the researcher wants to analyze symbols dealing with human nature existing in the poem of Blake entitled "A Poison Tree" and figure out the meaning of them.

a. Anger

Anger is one of the most basic human emotions. Literally, it is an aggressive and intense emotional response which can be caused by problems in the past. Moreover, anger can be a force for bad purposes. It drives people to act more aggressively and do something outrages which are able to harm other people. This kind of feeling changes them to be evil. The following lines can support the discussion:

**And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.**

In the second line of this stanza, the phrase **apple bright** symbolizes the wrath of the speaker. Basically, his hatred towards his foe has grown every single day since it keeps being nurtured by other negative emotions such as jealousy, suffering, and tear. The anger grows bigger and even stronger day by day deep inside his heart. It cannot be stopped no matter what happens. Thus, his hatred bears an **apple bright** which represents the fury or the darkest side of him. Besides, it also refers to the evil that has lived in the heart of the speaker. After the **apple bright** or the evil feeling appears, it completely affects himself and leads him to take a vengeance on his foe. Finally, the fruit has turned into a very poisonous and dangerous one. It contains the wrath and grudge. In this case, it is considered as a weapon. It is used by the speaker to harm his foe and cause serious damage.

b. Fate

Generally, every single intentional action that people have performed in the past determines what happens in the future. Fate is very often depicted as a power separate from the gods and which works in, around and even through the

gods, but is not finally dependent upon the gods. In other words, fate is the effect of people's action. Additionally, this following stanza may clarify the explanation:

**And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.**

The line two of the fourth stanza : **When the night had veiled the pole.** Here, the word **pole** symbolizes a heart which still has kindness. The symbol itself refers to the speaker's foe, while the word **night** symbolizes the wickedness. Thus, the phrase **When the night had veiled the pole** reflects the foe's heart who has covered by his evil thoughts. The effect is that it affects himself and causes his humanity fade away. Then, it drives him to commit a crime by hurting and torturing the speaker.

However, the wicked action which he has done makes the speaker's vengeance appear. He must pay for his mistakes in the past by being suffered. His suffering is caused by the speaker's fury. The worst thing which occurs is that he dies since he steals and eats the poisonous apple provided by the speaker. Here, the death of the foe means his psychologically. The speaker successfully makes the foe can not do anything either psychologically or physically. Therefore, the phrase **when the night had veiled the pole** means that the foe's heart is covered and influenced by his wickedness towards the speaker. At the end, his evil action causes a bad fate occurs.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, the researcher concludes all the problems that have been analyzed in the preceding chapters. A poem entitled "A Poison Tree" is chosen as the main source of data which is analyzed in this research. Besides, some problems found in this research are interesting to discuss. It is about the metaphor dealing with human nature. Further, some metaphor used to constitute the symbol dealing with human nature are also found in the poem.

Additionally, two kinds of metaphor dealing with human nature are found in the poem. Those metaphors are metaphor related to feeling and characteristic. The characteristic is divided into two kinds, namely individual and social creatures. Besides, there are two symbols of human nature as well. The first one is symbol of human nature related to anger and the second one is symbol of human nature related to fate.

After conducting this research, the researcher learns more about human nature. The researcher is also able to comprehend the meaning of the poem denotatively and connotatively. Further, people must praise God's creation as it can symbolize the human's life too. There is a cycle of life shown in this poem that is experienced by all the people. They will experience many stories of life especially anger. Everyone feels angry towards their friends and even foe. Here, anger is probably one of the most dangerous feelings which can harm the others. We have to realize that wrath is caused by certain situation. Thus, it is very necessary to control our emotions. At the end, by reading this research, the

researcher hopes that the readers are able to learn and understand more about metaphor and symbol of human nature.

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