

**THE MEANING OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON POEM
“RICHARD CORY” BASED ON THE DYNAMIC STRUCTURALISM
THEORY**

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Abstract

Dynamic structuralism is a perfect form of the structuralism theory which is a concept to analyse the poem to get its meaning comprehensively. The research therefore aims to describe the elements construction of the poem and the meaning of the poem based on the dynamic structuralism theory. This research applies qualitative descriptive method through dynamic structuralism approach. The poem is “Richard Cory” by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Based on analysis, the researchers describe Richard as if he were royalty: rich, worldly, well spoken, and educated. Contrasts the discontented, frustrated lives of small town people with the seemingly successful and wealthy existence of their hero, Richard Cory. Richard Cory is a poem which shows why we should not judge people on appearances as it subvert our expectation in the final line. Richard Cory is basically an ironic poem. It deals with the irony that rich people are not happy with their life and the poor think that wealth is the guarantee of happiness.

Keywords: Richard Cory poem, Dynamic structuralism theory, meaning

Introduction

Basically, poetry looks popular because of its pattern in short and dense. From the pattern, poetry then is easier to read and does not take much time to read it for a whole, even sometimes can be memorized. Unlike other literary works (such as drama or prose), poetry gives opportunity to the readers to interpret through word by word, line by line, stanza by stanza, or all the poem as a whole to get its meaning thoroughly. In order to obtain the overall meaning thoroughly, poetry involves three important elements, namely aesthetic function, density, and indirect expression (Pradopo, 2005: 315). These three elements indicate that poetry holds a million beautiful

things through the use of density and meaningful words. Poetry in its aesthetic function contains beautiful things, so it is always poetic for all the time. In terms of poetry creation, poetry is concretely born in the form of a dense string of words or sometimes using figurative languages, but always beautiful as it sounds. Ten in terms of meaning, poetry contains a particular meaning that actually touches the way of human life.

Based on these three elements which complete each other, poetry finally becomes the greatest interesting of literary works by the various audiences. As a literary genre

with an aesthetic function, Semi (1993: 1) revealed that literature born by the author is expected to give the aesthetic and intellect satisfactions for the audiences. However, the audiences sometimes cannot enjoy and understand the works completely because they are not able to properly interpret the structure of the works. Therefore, the meaning obtained is also not comprehensively. In fact, the writer has never found poetry is written in stages and also does not know the form of poetry continued. This form or style distinguishes poetry with other works, such as novel, short story, or drama that are sometimes found in serials. Therefore, it is clear that every time a poem is created, the author instantly creates his or her work in a complete work, eventhough sometimes ends with a question mark. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the poem is unfinished. It is one poem and one work in one creation completely.

As a complete work, poetry also shall be read, understood, and reviewed in its entirety and completely. According to Pradopo (2007: 149), one step that can be done to examine poetry comprehensively is to integrate the results of intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The study of intrinsic element of poetry includes the text of the work as a basic, while its extrinsic element includes the fields supporting of the work, such as the history of the author, the object, the

reality, and the reader. It is a reaction to complete the previous examination of literary work in classical structuralism. This study of such poetry by Pradopo (2007: 146) is called dynamic structuralism. From various analytical perspectives that can be taken to analyze a literary work, the writer considers it necessary to analyze the poetry structurally at first, then relates the poem to the author, the reality, the work, and the reader. The four are the main points of the dynamic structuralism as described by Teeuw (1988: 190), Sayuti (1994: 89), Pradopo (2007: 146), Darmawati (2010: 139), and Endraswara (2013: 62-62). In line with this, the meaning of the poem can also be found completely and comprehensively. By considering the main points of a poem with its poetic elements structurally and the components of the dynamic structuralism, then finding up the meaning of the poem, the researchers are too interested to focus this study on the structure of the text as a whole at first, and then relates to the four components of the dynamic structuralism in formulating its whole meaning. For the researchers, it is very interesting and a rarely way in finding up the meaning of the poem through the two ways as described previously. In this study, the researchers introduce an Edwin's poem of "Richard Cory". It is a selected poem having opportunity to be categorized in the

four point of view of dynamic structuralism of the poem.

Some people have discussed about the Edwin's poem of "Richard Cory". Sepideh and Tengku (2015) from Universiti Sains Malaysia in his journal only explained the theme of the poem. They said that their study attempts to identify all the themes of Edwin Arlington Robinson's most famous poem. For the most part, this article discerns, investigates, and highlights the features which present all the themes of the poem, or to be more exact, it tried to uncover and shed light on the messages which created and represented some literary masterpiece so called Richard Cory, in detail, and from a deeper view. The other, Miftakhul Jannah (2015) from University of Gajah Mada analyzed the poem based on the correlation of the poem with the society's condition when the poem was written and to find out the correlation of the poem to the poet's life experiences. It can be concluded that the poem is a reflection of the society of Gardiner, a place where the poet spent most of his life. In the poem, Robinson also conveys the social gap in America in the late nineteenth century, when the lower class had to struggle to live, while the upper class became richer. In the poem Robinson also expresses his jealousy to his brother and relates his brother's death to Cory's in the end of the poem. Their death's, are the

description of human's failure to be grateful with what they have.

Those researches are different to this study. The researchers directly analyzes the poem through the text at first, and then relates to the four main points of the author, the object, the reality, and the reader. After the researchers find the meaning of poem, the researchers relate between the meaning and English teaching issue in Indonesia. All of them are in a unity of the dynamic structuralism analysis. The meaning is also found from the result of the analysis of the poem as a whole. Therefore, the question problems of this study are mentioned below.

1. How is the analysis of Edwin's poem of "Richard Cory" by applying the dynamic structuralism approach?
2. What is the meaning of the poem based on the dynamic structuralism analysis?

Related to the two questions above, thus the objectives of this writing are to find out the description of the elements built of the Edwin's poem of "Richard Cory" through the dynamic structuralism approach and its whole meaning.

Methodology

In this writing, the writer applies qualitative descriptive research method which focuses on finding the meaning of the poem as a whole through the structural content and the dynamic structuralism

influenced. The qualitative method is also said as a naturalistic method by conducting in natural setting and using to search the object naturally, then the result of the research focuses on the meaning of the object (Sugiyono, 2009: 8-19). Moreover, the descriptive method usually uses to investigate a variety of problems and issues (Gay, L.R., 2006: 159).

A question of how to get the meaning of a poem comprehensively as shown in the previous study problems may reflect the writer on how to analyse a poem completely, both of the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the poem. A careful definition of the term of analysing poem through the dynamic structuralism approach will help the writer and cover the both elements built the poem. To get the result of literary work analysis comprehensively based on the problems mentioned, the both elements are important and must be involved in analysis process. In addition, it is also the critics of the classical structuralism which only focuses on the intrinsic elements of the work and rejects the other supporting elements. Therefore, the writer applies the dynamic structuralism approach introduced by Mukarovsky as mentioned in the previous field.

This research is the meaning of "Richard Cory" poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson based on the dynamic structuralism theory.

Discussion

As one genre of literary work, each poetry has a particular meaning based on the using of the density and meaningful words. Conversely, poetry has two different meanings or more based on the overview of the readers. In analyzing poetry, the writer is one of the readers of the poem who appreciates it from reading the poem at first. By the first step of reading, the writer interprets the poem to get the exactly meaning. In this case, the writer introduces the selected poem to interpretate the poetic meaning based on the intrinsic elements and others influences. In discussing poetry, the writer focuses on the texture of intrinsic elements, then relates it to the other elements to get the meaning of the poem comprehensively through dynamic structuralism approach as mentioned in the previously part of this writing. To get the aims effectively based on the previous problems mentioned, the researchers simply introduces the selected poem, then continues the analysis as shown in the following series.

Richard Cory by Edwin Arlington
Robinson

Whenever Richard Cory went down
town,
We people on the pavement looked
at him:

He was a gentleman from sole to
crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.
And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he
talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he
said,
"Good - morning," and he glittered
when he walked.
And he was rich yes, richer than a
king
And admirably schooled in every
grace:
In fine, we thought that he was
everything
To make us wish that we were in his
place.
So on we worked, and waited for the
light,
And went without the meat, and
cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer
night,
Went home and put a bullet through
his head.

**The Dynamic Structuralism of
"Richard Cory" poem by Edwin
Arlington Robinson.**

Basically, poem consists of many elements, either intrinsic or extrinsic ones. Discussing poem structurally, the poem is dominantly analyzed by its intrinsic elements. Te intrinsic elements involve the character, plot, theme, and messages. Tese elements are found through words, lines, stanzas, and poem as a whole. Moreover, the history of the

author life will help the writer in analyzing poem as one of extrinsic elements. Te result of the analysis of the both elements of the poem shows the texture of the dynamic structuralism of the poem as follows.

First Stanza

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean-favoured, and imperially slim.

This is our introduction to the eponymous character, Richard Cory. He is held in great esteem by the townspeople. This is clear as he attracts their attention for they 'looked at him' and noted that "He was a gentleman from sole to crown'. The final line of this stanza suggests that he was a morally upright fellow, and the adjective 'imperially' implies that he carries a sense of grace and regality about his person.

Second Stanza

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good Morning!" and he glittered when he walked.

The repetition of 'And he was always' shows a consistency and warmth of character. The fact that 'he was always human' indicates his sincerity. Despite his wealth and

good looks he talked to people without condescension or pretension. However, this does not stop him causing a stir when he wishes them “Good Morning!” The exclamation mark suggests that he has a genuine pleasure in meeting others. The verb ‘glittered’ is ambiguous as it hints at both his sparkling personality, but in the literal sense it could be his watch or other accoutrements which glint when they catch the sunlight. Although he was ‘quietly arrayed’ there was something intoxicating about his person which meant that as he passed he ‘fluttered pulses’. We have the immediate image of young ladies catching their breaths and fanning themselves as he passed, and the men looking on wistfully, wishing that they possessed something of his wealth and charm.

Third Stanza

And he was rich — yes, richer than a king

And admirably schooled in every grace:

In fine, we thought that he was everything

To make us wish that we were in his place.

After suggesting that he came from a monied background, we are now informed that this was indeed the case, and the dashes in the line serve to emphasise the point. The assertion ‘yes’ and the comparative line ‘richer than a king’ snare the interest of the reader. We wonder how this man has made his fortune

and picture some dashing Gatsby-like character. However, unlike Jay Gatsby who rose to wealth through illegal means such as gambling and bootlegging, Richard Cory appears to have acquired his riches through hereditary means, by the reference to a king, or perhaps through business. A doubt is sown in our minds in line three of this stanza where the speaker states ‘We thought that he was everything’. This alerts us to the fact that all may not be well, and also reminds us of the old adage, ‘be careful what you wish for.’ The final monosyllabic line with its frequent alliteration propels us along to the poem’s conclusion.

Fourth Stanza

So on we worked, and waited for the light,

And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;

And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,

Went home and put a bullet through his head.

In this stanza the speaker alludes to the difficulties faced by the other inhabitants of the town. The ‘so’ at the beginning almost carries a sigh, to suggest fatigue and hardship. There is an obvious discrepancy between the life led by the gentleman, Richard Cory, and the people who look up to him. While he ‘allegedly’ enjoys the good life, the others struggle. This is conveyed through the long drawn out assonance and the repeated ‘w’

sounds in the first two lines of the stanza. They have insufficient money even to have access to the most basic of goods, since the ‘went without the meat and cursed the bread’, which was obviously of poor quality and lacking in nourishment. Even the word ‘cursed’ stands out here, as it seems ill-fitting after the descriptions of Cory. There is thus a disparity between their lives and that of Cory, except they are not alone in their suffering. Such are his demons, that he shocks them all, by returning home from one of his strolls in town ‘and put a bullet through his head’. The researchers are left speechless by this revelation, and the fact that this event is preceded by the line ‘one calm summer night’ further compounds their shock.

The researchers face with an unexpected moment here after the whole poem that tells us how perfect Richard Cory is, the researchers end on this, the man kills himself. As it turns out, his life wasn't so flawless, perfect, or ideal in spite of everything. The researchers guess that the researchers cannot ever know exactly what is going on in someone else's head. From these last lines of the poem, it can only be inferred and deduced that Richard Cory's reality was quite different from what the townspeople expected, estimated, and assumed.

The meaning of “Richard Cory” poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson.

Seemingly and according to what is being said, Richard Cory is the gorgeous and handsome guy. He has got a nice slim figure, wonderful lovely clothes, and approachable kindly treatment. And, parenthetically, he has also got a great deal of money to spend on and use for looking good. But appearances can be deceiving. In the sense that good looks do not all the time mean a happy life. We might all think that looking very nice, or having the money to spend on our appearance, might make our lives just that much better. But even Richard Cory, the richest, luckiest, and superlative looking man everywhere, is not made happy by his good looks or money. As a critical remark, in reality, there are more important things in life than looking good. The poem comprises numerous royal words such as “imperially”, “slim”, and so on to refer to Richard Cory. Richard Cory's good looks, ostentatious as well as fashionable clothes, and on the whole, his wealth are the main reasons that the townspeople admire and respect him. Richard Cory would not deserve the respect that he does without those fashionable and stylish garments. That is to say, the townsfolk respected him because of his appearance and cloths not because of himself, his personality,

or what he was. This situation also designates and indicates the superficial views of the people.

Based on the poem, the author of the poem ensures and certifies that we know about all those things. However, we never hear about Richard Cory's relationships and interactions with others. That is to say, it is not indicated or even not implied in the poem that whether he has any loved one such as a girlfriend, a beloved, any member of family, and so on. In fact, are uncertain and we doubt it. We may also think that the poem would not end as it does, with Richard Cory's death, if he did have those things. In reality, we can achieve that if there was not such distance between Richard and the townspeople, if he had any loved one, if he had any close friend, if he had any family member waiting for him, and so on, he would not kill himself. Therefore, although the poem doesn't elucidate it for us overtly and explicitly, we can come to this point that Richard Cory's isolation lead to his suicide. In other words, The absence of Richard's loved ones from the poem suggests that he, in effect, had no loved ones. That sad, sad isolation was the motive for his suicide.

Conclusion

Richard Cory is a poem which shows why we should not judge people on appearances as it subvert our expectations in the final

line. In literature, the dynamic structuralism approach is important to be applied analyzing a poem, both classical and modern poems. The poem Richard Cory by Edwin Arlington Robinson has been analyzed based on a dynamic structuralism approach, so that an understanding of the poetic content can be obtained well. In analyzing the Edwin's poem of "Richard Cory" through a dynamic structuralism approach, Richard Cory is a basically an ironic poem. It deals with the irony that rich people are not happy with their life, and the poor think that wealth is the guarantee of happiness. This short sixteen lined story also tells us a lot about the human irony that constantly surrounds us, the power of being admired and envied at the same time.

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