

# HEURISTIC AND HERMENEUTIC STUDIES ON ROBERT FROST'S SELECTED POEMS

Nurhayati<sup>1</sup>, Kisman Salija<sup>2</sup>, Sukardi Weda<sup>3</sup>

State University of Makassar, Indonesia

**Abstract:** Nurhayati, 2018. *Heuristic and Hermeneutic Studies on Robert Frost Selected Poems*". (supervised by Kisman Salija and Sukardi Weda)

The objectives of this research are to find out (1) the significance of Frost's selected poems through heuristic and hermeneutic Studies, (2) the matrix and model operate on Frost's selected poems and (3) the intertextual relationship between Frost's selected poem and other writers'.

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. The design of this research aims at revealing the significance that is implied behind Frost's poems that are A Road Not Taken and Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.

The result shows that the three steps for getting the significance of a poem according to the Semiotics of Rifaterre that are Heuristic and Hermeneutic Studied, finding matrix and model, and Intertextual relationship are very useful in analyzing a poem, From heuristic Studied, the two poems represent the ungrammaticality on its lines which caused the heterogeneity on its interpretations. Hermeneutically, both poems implied the concept of choice and pleasure in this life. The matrix and model that are found in support the result from previous hermeneutic reading. There is intertextual relationship between Frost's poems and other writers' works that are also strengthened the significance of these poems.

Key words: *Heuristic, hermeneutic, matrix, model, intertextual*

**Abstrak:** Nurhayati, 2018. *Studi Heuristik dan Hermeneutik pada Puisi pilihan Robert Frost* (dibimbing oleh Kisman Salija dan Sukardi Weda).

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan (1) arti penting puisi pilihan Robert Frost melalui studi heuristic dan hermeneutic, (2) penggunaan matriks dan model dalam puisi pilihan Robert Forest; dan (3) hubungan intertekstual antara puisi pilihan Robert Frost dan karya dari penulis lainnya.

Jenis penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Rancangan penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan arti penting yang tersirat dibalik puisi pilihan Robert Frost yaitu The Road Not Taken dan Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga langkah untuk menemukan arti penting puisi berdasarkan teori semiotika Rifaterre yaitu studi heuristic dan hermeneutik, penemuan matriks dan model, serta hubungan intertekstualitas antara puisi dan teks lainnya sangatlah bermanfaat dalam menganalisis puisi. Dari studi heuristic, kedua puisi menunjukkan ketidakgramatikaian pada setiap larik puisi yang menyebabkan heterogenitas dalam menginterpretasinya. Secara hermeneutic, kedua puisi menyiratkan konsep pilihan dan kesenangan dalam hidup. Penemuan matriks dan model yang ditemukan pada puisi ini mendukung hasil studi secara hermeneutic yang dilakukan sebelumnya. Terdapat hubungan interteks antara puisi pilihan Robert Frost dan karya penulis lainnya yang juga menyempurnakan arti penting dari puisi ini.

Kata kunci : *Heuristic, hermeneutic, matrix, model, interteks*

## INTRODUCTION

Literature appears as something that lives because it has its own life. It is born to the world then grows like a human being. But literature will never die. This is one of the excesses of literature that makes it different from other human life existing products. To support the previous idea, the researcher will mention one of the facts in the society. There are countless writing as literary works from a lot of writers who had died tens even hundreds years ago that still exist till this present day. In this modern era, it is still easy for us to find out people whose interest in reading literary works for various reasons. They may read it just for entertaining their selves, having fun or spent their time. There are also people read the literary works to seek the meaning or message that is knotted behind it or to see the use of figurative language or to know another uniqueness on it. The literary works can also be compared to another literary work, even to analyze it by using certain theory for the project of formal writing. This phenomenon is the main reason to believe that literature has an endless life.

Another opinion about literature comes from Wellek and Warren (1956:22-23). They argue that literature is imaginative work with language as its medium, like sound in music, colors in painting, and body movement in dancing. Sometime, the language used in literature is different from the daily conversation and scientific language. Especially in poetry, we may find that the language closes to the ambiguity and connotative meaning. Further, Wellek and Warren (1956 : 3) said that literature is something beautiful or enjoyable and useful. It is beautiful thing because from the literary work. We may have something to enjoy, such the overflow of author's expression that are implied in those works sometimes may invite certain feelings from the reader. And it is sometimes useful, because in several literary

works, it is created as the reflection from the real condition or reality of something and it can make the reader aware about the real condition around them.

Almost each person has a different definition about literature. Many people do many things to define it themselves and one of them is such the explanation above. There are many more different definitions of literature that can be found today. Those difference appear because literature is a flexible thing. Its expansion follows the development of time and it is changeable from one time to another time. This is the main reason of why there is no successful person that can perfectly define what literature is.

There are several kinds of literary works as products of literature, such as poem, novel, short story, script of drama, and so on. Literary work is a work which has its own value, secret even saves kind of miracles behind it." Literature is something which has the certain characteristics and the coherence types, and it can express something inexpressible "(Luxemburg, 1984:5-6). It is also a wonderful things as the result of the creative works from the authors. The writers may create a new world, in which they have their own world. They continue the creating process in this universe e, even to make it more perfect than the most perfect thing that another person ever faces in this universe.

Poem is one of the literary works has already existed long time ago and still in progress and growing up by the development of time. Although those literary works use language as its media, but poem has something different from them. The language use in novel, short story, and the script of drama is quiet simple language as the descriptive and narrative text, but the language used in poems is the expressive language. "Poem expresses concepts and things by indirection because of the uniqueness on its Language" (Rifaterre, 1978:1). It give chance to everyone to interpret it freely or in the different way from each of the

reader. Although each person may have the differences in understanding it, but the certain theory should be used as the tool in analyzing and understanding the significance of a poem.

Poem is a dynamic thing. It can be produced in all party of time which saves its own history of time. The previous explanation tell us that literature may develop among the development of time. In nowadays, we are teaching that poem is something which had the specific rules in its, such the number of sentences in one stanza or the number of words in one sentences, the final sound of its poem in each sentence, and so on. Nowadays, poem appears and breaks the ancient convention of it. Further, we may find several deviations on the poems, such "lexical deviation, semantic deviation, phonological deviation, morphological, historical, and graph logical deviation, the use of register and dialect, and the deviation on meaning it self "(Geoffry in Siswanto, 2008:116). This phenomenon may not judge that today's poems are kind of disqualifies poems, but it shows us that the poems more concern to its meaning, its form, its messages, or another thing that can reveal the value of the poems.

Poem also can be seen as part of communication because it is able to communicate something. Poems may deliver kinds of speech or information in a few words. This kind of literary work may retell the personal experience of the authors. Such as the memory of the first love, childhood or gives the biographical history, the family and so on. Another thing that can be found on it is a self-awareness of human in their relation with other creatures' life, moral message, educative, philosophy and religious which can bring something useful for the reader. In this case, we can distinguish the text named poem with another text as part of communication from their way in delivering the information.

By the explanation above, we know a few of the excess of poem it is also the main reason of the researches about poem that had

been done before, including Robert Frost's poem as the object of this research. In this research, the writer will analyze two of Robert Frost's poem, The two poems are A Road Not Taken and Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. In the book *Visiting Frost: Poems Inspire by the Life and Work of Robert Frost*, the reader may get description about the relation between Frost's works and another writers' works. The previous argument support by the sentences that is given by Parini (2004) after reading the anthology of poetry that is inspired by Frost's poems that there is a singer everyone has heard, and that singer is Robert Frost. The reality presented by this anthology is that many gifted poets have listened to his songs, and they find the tunes marvelous, and they choose to respond to those airs in their own measure, in their own strong voices". From the previous statements, the reader can conclude that there are several poets that are making me very inspiring to his poems This fact may cause the inter textual relationship between Frost's poems with another writers' works, such as the works by Dorothy Parker, George Byron, and other poets that come after Frost.

Next, the two poems of Robert Frost was analyzing by applying Michael Rifaterre's theory of semiotic of poetry. To analyze the poem by using theory of semiotic will give some help to convey its significance. Barker in Uniawati (2007:13) states that "the most important thing in revealing the meaning of a text is how the meaning is produced in its interaction between text and the reader, so the consumption moment is also the production moment which is meaningful". Language, as the media in poem, is conclude on the system of sign, and semiotics is the study of sign, and the sign itself is something that refers to another thing or represents something else. From this statement, we may conclude that when we use the theory of semiotics to analyze the poems, it means that we are going to

examine the poems with another thing outside the poems.

In conveying the significance of the poem, the one who holds the biggest responsibility to give it meaning is the reader. Rifaterre (1978:1) states that "although a poem is something changeable among the times, but one factor that remains constant is that poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection". Next to understand the poem or to get meaning from it, we must carefully distinguish two levels or stages of reading, they are heuristic reading, that is reading based on the convention of its language and retroactive or hermeneutic reading, that is reading based on the convention of its literature. Further, Rifaterre (1978:6) explains that to get the significance of a poem, the reader should be able to decide the matrix and model for that poem, and we have to see the relation between the poem with another text (intertextuality). Overall in the book of semiotics of Poetry, Rifaterre explains the complete steps in analyzing a poem by using the theory of semiotics. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is correct to put the theory of Michael Rifaterre as the tool of analysis in this research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This is not the first research on Robert Frost's poems. There are several researches about those poems that I have read. One of them is the research of Dickinson (2010:23) with the title: I Never Saw a Moor. This poem is about faith-believing in the unseen and unproven. Just because you have never seen a certain natural landmark or God, does not mean that they don't exist. We cannot always know exactly what something looks like, or even if it is real, yet we can prove that it is a real thing, even if it is not tangible to the human eye. For example, believing in something that we cannot literally see as a concrete object is love. It is not a concrete thing, but we can see it exists

because of how people look at each other, and how people act around each other.

The next previous research is from Colyer (1968) entitled *Behind Light Words: Irony in the Early Dramatic Poetry of Robert Frost*. This research analyzes Frost's selected long dramatic poems to investigate how and why he employs irony on it.

This research has the same object of analysis that is about Robert Frost's poems. But we may find the difference between them that can be seen from the purpose of each study and the theory used on it. The purpose of the studies above has been mentioned before and those studies do not use Rifaterre's theory on it. This research analyzed Frost's selected poems by applying Michael Rifaterre's theory that aims at finding the significance of those poems through heuristic and hermeneutic reading, the matrix and model for the poems, and finding the intertextuality between those poems and another text.

There are also several researches which use Rifaterre's theory as the tool in analyzing the object of the research. One of them is the research from Uniawati (2007) with the title 'Mantra Melaut Suku Bajo: Interpretasi Semiotik Rifaterre'. The research of Uniawati and this research have the same objective of the research, they are to reveal the significance of the object of each of the research through heuristic and hermeneutic readings, find the matrix and model of it, and find the text which has the relation of intertextuality between the object of the research with another text. The difference from the previous research with this research lies in the object of the research. In Uniawati's research, the objects of it are ten selected poems from *Mantra Melaut Suku Bajo*, and the objects of this research are Robert Frost's selected poems.

### **Pertinent Ideas Poem**

The word comes from Greek, *poiesis* which means a making or a creation. In English

language, poetry close to the word 'poet', and that word itself also comes from Greek language which mean to make or to create, and the further definition in Greek, poet is someone who creates something by his imagination, someone such the God or someone who like God. In Medieval Latin, Poetry, that is the art of verbal creation, with inherently involves the structuring of sound. There is various definition of poetry, because this kind of literary works is something changeable from one to another time or era because it was created in the different moment of time.

### **Semiotics.**

In the general aspect, the study of sign or the study of the system of signs is called Semiotics or semiology. This term comes from Greek, semeion means sign. The term of Semiotics is also related to the production of sign or symbols that is used to communicate something to the other person that conclude visual or verbal communication. Eco in Chandler, said that "Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as assign" (2007:2), and the word 'sign' refers to all things which stand for another thing.

### **The Semiotic of Michael Rifaterre**

In the book *of Semiotics of Poetry (1978)*, **Michael Rifaterre** told and describes four the basic rules in conveying the meaning and significance of a poem from the view of semiotics, they are *indirection, heuristic and hermeneutic readings, matrix and model, and intertextuality*.

### **Indirection**

Poem as one of literary works which has the expressive language needs more effort to be understood rather than the short story, novel and the script of drama with its narrative language, The form of poems is changeable time by time, says Michael Rifaterre in the book of Semiotics of Poetry (1978:1).

### **Displacing Meaning**

We can view the appearance of displacing of meaning by notice the use of figurative language in it. Rifaterre (1978:2) says that displacing, when the sign shifts from one meaning to another, when word "stands for" another, as happen with metaphor and metonymy.

Figurative language is a word, phrase, or sentence that means another thing outside it word, phrase, or sentence. For the sample is the word 'red' that always used to express the 'braveness' This changing or displacing of meaning is caused by the using of metaphor and metonymy. The term of metaphor and metonymy are used to say generally about the figurative language. The figurative language has several types, which all of them can make the poem more interesting by make a relationship from one to another thing. There are seven types of figurative language. That are simile, metaphor, epic simile, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, and allegory (Pradopo, 1987:3-6, 16), with more explanation as follow:

#### **Simile**

In this kind of figurative language, There is an activity or an effort to compare one thing to another thing with put the comparison words in it, for example: such, as, like, etc. For more explanation, Pradoppo says that this is the simplest type of figurative language, so it is used in many poems.

#### **Metaphor**

Metaphor comes from Greek language which stand from two words, that are meta and phor. Meta is kind of prefix that is used to describe the changing, and phor comes from phrein that means bring. So, we may conclude that metaphor is bring the changing of meaning. Simile and metaphor has the close relation, that is both of these types also compare something, but the differences between simile and metaphor is the use of comparison words. Such the explanation in the part of smile above, it

uses kind of comparison words, but in metaphor, it also compares something without any comparison words. According to Becker in Pradopo (1987:67), the metaphor sees something by use another thing as it mediation. Then, Pradopo says that metaphor has two terms or two parts, principal term or tenor and secondary term or vehicle. Tenor is something that is compared and vehicle is the thing that compares another thing.

### **Epic Simile**

Epic simile is the continuously comparison. This kind of figurative language is formed by continue the characteristics of its comparison variable in the sentences or phrases which is continuously.

### **Allegory**

Basically, allegory has the similarity to another kind of figurative language that is epic simile, but the differences of it is in allegory, the author didn't give more explanation of the tenor part, but long and more explanation are given to the second part as comparison object.

### **Personification**

Personification is a kind of figurative language which considered something as someone. Why I say like that because personification style is describe something as a thing that can has an action like a human action, such drink, eat, dance, etc.

### **Metonymy**

Metonymy is a kind of figurative language that use or mention the attributes or the characters of something to mean the thing itself. But sometimes, the words that is used is didn't have any close relation to thing that it means.

### **Synecdoche**

Synecdoche is the figurative language that mentions the whole thing to express just a part of the thing. So that's why there are two types of synecdoche such:

- a) Pars pro toto which mentions a part of something to means the complete thing.
- b) Totum pro parte which mentions the whole thing to express just a part of thing.

### **Distorting Meaning**

Such Michael Rifaterre's explanation that distorting, when there is ambiguity, contradiction, or nonsense (1978:2). This is one factor that also cause the indirection in a poem includes the existence of ambiguity, contradiction, and nonsense in a poem.

### **METHOD**

The methods of collecting data in this research are collected and accumulated data that are relevant to this research. There are three steps for collecting data in this research, they are:

#### **1. Technique of Reading**

In this step, the researcher has to read the poems of Robert Frost that were analyzing.

#### **2. Technique of Noting**

After reading, it is important to have a note or write the things that are related to the focus of this research. They conclude words, phrases, and stanzas in the main source of the data that is the selected poems of Robert Frost.

#### **3. Technique of Choosing**

This technique was done by choose the matrix and model on Robert Frost's selected poems, and choose the text which has the relationship to the object of this research to analyze the intertextual relationship between them.

#### **Technique of Analyzing Data**

The data collected has been analyzed to find out the answers of problem statement above. So, in analyzing the data, the researcher follows several steps, they are:

1. Display, that is make a relation between one data to another data to get the relevant relation of the whole data, and get the meaning of the poems.
2. Interpreting, that is to interpret these Frost's poems by heuristic and

hermeneutic (retroactive) reading, finding the model and matrix on it, and by analyzing the intertextual relationship between these poems and another text to get its significance.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of Frost's selected poem in this research has been focused on Michael Riffaterre's theory of semiotics of poetry. The theory mentions that there are four basic principles in revealing the main significance of a poem. The four basic ones are indirection, heuristic, and hermeneutic readings, matrix and model, and intertextual relationship. Three of these principles have been used to reveal the significance on Frost's selected poems.

From heuristic reading, the researcher has found the lines deviate from grammatical rules and they seem there is not any correlation between words in a line or between lines in a stanza. In this regard, the deviation causes the heterogeneity or various possible meanings arise. Retroactive or hermeneutic reading finally brings out the insightful issues of the poems.

The significance of the poem "*A Road not Taken*" is about a warning for people in making a decision because every choice has its own consequences and there is not any second chance to change the choice that has been selected. It should be careful with the choice, because choosing something means chances to meet with any consequence may occur at any time.

"*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" talks about the awareness of a person to the essence meaning of life. The opportunity to do something in this world is put in the short period of time. It is possible for people to enjoy any kind of pleasure in this life, but sometimes the pleasure can not be maintained for a long time due to many waiting promises to keep in terms of circumstances surrounding man's existence.

Matrix and model in the both poems exist to reveal the significance of the poems. "*A not Taken road*" tells about choice that should be faced and taken along the journey of life. "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" remarks on any pleasure that may be encountered in any life of someone's existence.

The intertextual relationship between those poems and other texts should be analyzed through social and cultural background that can be achieved in order that deep understanding of the poems available. The concept of intertextuality is used to show the similarity between several texts, such as "*A road not Taken*" poem by Robert Frost has an intertextual relation to the poem by Dorothy Parker's "*The Choice*". The second poem of Robert Frost "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" has the intertextual relation to a poem by George Gordon Byron's "*There is Pleasure in the Pathless Woods*."

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

The researcher has found the lines deviate from grammatical rules and they seem there is not any correlation between words in a line or between lines in a stanza from heuristic reading. In this regard, the deviation causes the heterogeneity or various possible meanings arise. Retroactive or hermeneutic reading finally brings out the insightful issues of the poems.

**The significance of the poem "A Road not Taken",** is about warning for people in making a decision because every choice has its own consequences and there is not any second chance to change the choice that has been selected. "**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**" talks about the awareness of a person to the essence meaning of life. The opportunity to do something in this world is put in the short period of time.

Matrix and model in a both poems exist to reveal the significance of the poems. "A road not Taken", tells about choice and

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” remarks on any pleasure that may be encountered in any life of someone’s existence.

The concept of intertextuality is used to show the similarity between several texts. Such as “A road not Taken” poem by Robert Frost has an intertextual relation to the poem by Dorothy Parker’s “The Choice”. The second poem of Robert Frost “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”, has the intertextual relation to a poem by George Gordon Byron’s “ There is Pleasure in the Pathless Woods”.

The benefit of using Literature specially Poems for students:

1. Can help students to integrate the language and literature syllabuses more closely. Students are encouraged to draw on their knowledge of familiar grammatical, lexical or discourse categories to make aesthetic judgement of the text.
2. Literature exposes students to complex themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language. A good novel or short story can take the students to foreign countries and fantastic worlds. A play or a poem can bring up certain dilemmas and powerful emotional responses. All this can be transposed to their real lives
3. To enable student’s to make meaningful interpretations of the text itself; and to expand students’ knowledge and awareness of the language in general.

### **Suggestion**

The researcher would like to give some suggestions, which runs such as follows:

1. The poem’s analysis by connecting the poem to another thing outside of the poem itself can be carried out by applying the theory of semiotics which can be developed to find the significance of any poem.
2. The selected poems of Robert Frost remains challenging to be the object of

any kind of research using different approach.

### **REFERENCES**

- Adams, William W. 1954. *The Concept of Man in the Poetry of Robert Frost*. Thesis. Chicago.
- Chandler, Danial, 2007. *Semiotics the Basic*. London. Roudledge.
- Colyer, Michalle. 1968. *Behind Light Words: Irony in the Early Dramatic Poetry of Robert Frost*. Ontario.
- Cresswell, John W. 2012. *Research Design*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- De Saussure, Ferdinand. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Djoko Pradopo, Rachmat. 1987. *Pengkajian Puisi*, Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Frost, Robert, Henry Holt and Company. 1994. *Complete Poems*. New York.
- Hawkes, Terrence. 2004. *Structuralism and Semiotics*. New York: Routledge (Tailor and Francis e-Loibrary)
- Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1964. *Complete Poems of Robert Frost*. America.
- J. Waluyo, Herman. 1987. *Teori dan Appresiasi Puisi*. ERLanga.
- Luke, Edith Jackson. 1965. *The Man – Nature Dialogue in the Poetry of Robert Frost*. Thesis. America.



Luxemburg, Jan Van, 1984.: *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, Jakarta Gramedia.

Perloff, Marjorie & Craig Dworkin. 2009. *The Sound of Poetry and the Poetry of Sound*. United State of America: The University of Chicago Press.

Perrine, Laurence. 1969. *Sound and Sense, An Introduction to Poetry*. United State of America: Southern Methodist University.

Riffaterre, Michael. 1978. *Semiotics of Poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Siswanto, Wahyudi. 2008. *Pengantar Teori Sastra*. Jakarta: PT Grasindo.

Siswanto, 2005. *Appresiasi Puisi-Puisi Sastra Inggris*. Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press.

Uniawati. 2007. *Mantra Melaut Suku Bajo: Interpretasi Semiotik Riffaterre*. Tesis. Semarang. Universitas Diponegoro.

Wallek, Rene & Austin Warren. 1956. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Penguin Books Ltd.