

A Project Journal

Analysis of Motherly Love in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother"

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

There are some genres of literary works such as play, prose, and poetry. Among those kinds of literary works, poetry is the oldest. Poetry is believed to be the most effective way to express the emotion of the poet.

Poetry is one of the unique literary works. Perinne said "poetry is as universal as language and almost as ancient. The most primitive people have used it and the most civilized have cultivated it"(1992:1). Poetry is a combination of words that contain a deep meaning. Poetry is a record and interpretation of important human experiences and is composed of the most attractive form. The language in poetry is written for other people, so it can also be said that the language of the poetry as one of the communication forms.

Based on the definitions, a poem can be analyzed through its meaning. To understand its meaning, people have to analyze its extrinsic side. In this paper, the writer will analyze the poem through intrinsic elements to prove that the poem talks

about love. The writer also uses extrinsic elements by using psychological approach especially *Theory of Love* of Erich Fromm, to analyze the motherly love that is expressed in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother".

1.2. Research Formulation

The writer reads the poem deeply and finds the problems to be studied, namely are:

1. What are the intrinsic elements of the poem "To My Mother" written by Edgar Allan Poe?
2. What kind of love that appears in the poem "To My Mother" written by Edgar Allan Poe?

1.3. Objectives of The Study

In a poem with the title "To My Mother" the objectives of extended essay are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic elements of the poem "To My Mother" written by Edgar Allan Poe.
2. To analyze the kind of love that appears in the poem "To My Mother" written by Edgar Allan Poe.

2.Theoretical Framework

2.1. Intrinsic Element

2.1.1. Denotation and Connotation

Denotation and connotation are two principal methods of describing the meanings of words. According to Perrine :

“denotation or denotations: that is, the dictionary meaning or meanings of the word. Beyond its denotations, a word may also have connotations. The connotations are word it suggests beyond what it expresses: its overtones of meaning” (Perrine, 1956: 38).

Poet uses denotation and connotation to enrich the meaning a word to support convey a message that contains a poem.

2.1.2. Imagery

Imagery is an element in a poem to imagine of what is perceived by senses. Image is not only visual, but something which is perceived by the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell). According to Perrine, imagery maybe defined as “the representation through language of sense experience” (Perrine, 1956:54).

In this extended essay, the writer focuses on analyze visual imagery and auditory imagery. Visual Imagery clarifies the description which is caught by sense of sight. Perrine states that “the word image perhaps most often suggest a mental picture, something seen in the mind’s eye visual imagery is the most frequently occurring kind of imagery in poetry” (1956: 54).

Auditory imagery is an imagery which relates to auditory. This imagery that evokes in a poem is not like auditory perception. It means, when the reader reads it, he only feels sense of hearing, but not really hearing in purpose.

2.1.3. Figure of Speech

A. Symbol

Symbol is type of figurative language. Symbol is something that stands or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. In literature, however, symbol is in the form of words, images, objects, settings, events and characters that are often used to suggest and reinforce meaning. According to Perrine “symbol maybe roughly defined as something that means more than what it is” (1956: 83).

B. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech that illustrates an inanimate object in human personality. According to Perrine “personification consists of giving the attribute of human to an animal, an object or concept. It is really a subtype of metaphor, an implied comparison in which the figurative term of the comparison is always a human being” (1956: 83).

C. Methapor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that contains words that are used for allegorizing someone or something else. It is almost the same as simile. The difference is that simile uses the word like, as or etc. According to Barnet, “a metaphor assert the identity, without a connective such as "like" or a verb "appears", of term that are literally incompatible” (1961:66).

2.1.4. Theme

Theme is the main idea and the main point of literary works. According to Pickering “theme is also used sometimes to refer basic issues, problem, or subject with which the work is concerned” (1981:42). In a poem, theme is a main idea that unifies all parts of the poem. The readers who understand the main idea will also know theme of the poem, because theme has greatly affected the process of delivering the content of the poem. The analysis of some fundamental elements of poem is very valuable to get theme.

2.2. Erich Fromm’s Concept of “Motherly Love”

According to Fromm “love is an activity, not passive affect, it is a “standing in “not a ‘falling for”(1956:22).It means that love is an action that causes a reaction that brings feeling of pleasure.

Fromm also explains the feeling of love that grows from a person will indirectly be followed by care to something someone loves. He also has care as an indicator of love. He says “love is the active care for the life and growth of that which we love. Where these active care is lacking, there is no love”.(1956 : 26). This statement clarifies that the feeling of love cannot be separated from care. Even Fromm considers if care is lacking, it is not love.

Fromm divides love into five types. Those are brotherly love, erotic love, self-love, love of god and motherly love.

In this extended essay, the writer focuses on one type of love, that is, motherly love. According to Fromm, “motherly love is unconditional affirmation of the child’s life and his needs” (1956:49). Fromm also states that “mother does not get anything in return from the child, she just expects a smile or the expression of satisfaction in his face” (1956:50). This first phase is explained that motherly love is unconditional love and without expecting anything in return proven by the willingness of caring for a newborn child, but for just a smile of her baby.

The second phase is when the children have started growing as Fromm states that “the relationship of the mother and child is by its very nature one of inequality. Where one needs all the help and the others give it” (1956:50).

Fromm also states that “the very essence of motherly love is to care for child growth and that means to want child’s separation from herself” (1956:51). At this stage, motherly love becomes the hardest duty of a mother because it requires unselfishness, the ability to give everything without wanting anything, but child’s happiness” (1956:52). The phase above shows that motherly love is the relationship between mother and child. This relationship requires a process in the form of care and sacrifice of a mother to a child.

3. Research Method

The writer uses library research to look for some information related to the object in an extended essay. According to Semi, library research is the method of research focusing on the library as the place filled with the information and data

related to the paper (1993:17). Related to this extended essay, the writer finds the data from books, journals, and internet.

Beside library research, the writer also uses psychological approach in this extended essay. Based on Wellek & Warren, The psychological approach in the reviewing the literature based on the assumption that the literary work always discusses events that range from human behavior (1942:298). Because of the proximity between human behavior and literature, the writer uses psychological approach to analyze the kind of love especially motherly love that is expressed in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother".

4. Analysis of Motherly Love in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother"

4.1.1 Analysis of Denotation in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother"

Based on the poem "To My Mother" written by Edgar Allan Poe's, the writer considers that there are denotation meaning which supports theme of the poem, that is, the expression of love to someone, especially, feeling of love of Allan Poe to someone that he considers a mother.

*The angels, **whispering** to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,*

In the second line, Allan Poe chooses the word "whispering" instead of speaking or talking. Whispering in this poem has denotation meaning. Whispering derived from word whisper. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,

whisper means “to speak very quietly to sb so that other people cannot hear what you are saying” (1995:1361). Allan Poe has been carefully choosing the word “whispering” to show that “The angels” in this poem are talking about a very intimate thing that does not want to be heard by others beside them.

4.1.1 Analysis of Connotation in Edgar Allan Poe’s “To My Mother”

Beside denotation meaning, Poe also uses some of the words which contain connotation meaning, especially at the early line. Poe uses connotations to show how great the love of a mother in this poem. This is shown in the third line is quoted below:

*Can find, among their **burning** terms of love,
None so devotional as that of “Mother,”.*

Word “Burning” on the line above shows something that never goes out and continues to smolder. Usually, burning always relates fires that burn an object. Nevertheless, in this poem, Poe uses the phrase “burning terms of love”, this object here is terms of love which is closely related to a person’s feelings. So, the overall meaning of “burning terms of love” is the feeling of love that never goes out and continues to smolder. So a word “burning” in the line above has connotation meaning. This is strengthened by next line “None so devotional as that of Mother, it shows that the love that never goes out and is sincere given by a mother.

Connotation meaning is also found in this poem in line seven as quoted below:

*And **fill** my heart of hearts, where Death installed you
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.*

“Fill” here has a connotation meaning because the heart may not be filled by anything different from denotation meaning. “Fill” in this poem refer to a positive impact on mood of being lonely or sad. In this poem, Poe with “*And **fill** my heart of hearts*” tries to show that the spiritual life is filled with sincere love he has got from his mother. Strengthened with Heart's in line above also has connotation meaning for "Hearts" here has meaning something related to human feelings and also a symbol of love and affection.

4.2. Analysis of Imagery in Edgar Allan Poe’s “To My Mother”.

4.2.1. Visual Imagery

The writers only find one visual imagery that is in line three and four as quoted below :

*The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,*

Because in this poem Edgar Allan Poe uses first person perspective, so the line contains visual imagery. It is because in this line can be perceived by visual sense.

Poe tries to demonstrate to the readers that he looks angels as gathering, whispering and burning term of love.

4.2.2. Auditory Imagery

*The angels, **whispering** to one another*

The third line uses the auditory imagery. The words “whispering” is words that indicate an action that produces sound that comes from the mouth that can be heard by others. Sound is perceived by auditory sense, so that the line contains auditory imagery, and in this line “whispering” performed by “The angels” as quote below :

*Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
You who are more than mother unto me,*

In the line above the writers finds that there is auditory imagery. “*Therefore by that dear name, I long have called you*—“that is an auditory imagery because “*I*” in this poem to called “you”, “*called*” here is an action taken that produce sound through the mouth and can be heard and felt by auditory. Therefore the line above contains auditory imagery. With the line above, Poe tries to show that he does not stop constantly calling someone by dear name to someone whom he considers his mother to show that he loves her.

4.3. Analysis of Figure of Speech Edgar Allan Poe’s “To My Mother”

A. Symbol

In *"To My Mother"*, Poe puts symbols about holiness, obedience and loves in early line to describe how it is all provided by a mother. In the second line, *"The angels, whispering to one another"*. "The angels" in the religious approach is regarded as something holy, obedient and feeling of love. This symbol is strengthened by the use of the word "heavens" not sky in the first line, to further show the religious approach who wants to show by Poe. Poe uses this symbol to express that mother has given even more holy, obedient and loving than an angel who is regarded as one of the most devout worship in a religious approach, this is shows in the fourth line *"None so devotional as that of "Mother,"*.

Poe in next line tries to show emotional closeness with someone whom he considers a mother and a wife with words heart, spirit, and soul. In line seven *"And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you"*. Word "heart" in this line is a symbol of love and emotional closeness. Poe tries to show that through this line someone whom he considers his mother filled his life with love and affection. Poe also uses the word "soul" in the last line to indicate symbol of emotional closeness

*By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.*

The difference is that word "soul" in the last line means deeper than "heart". Soul is a symbol of life while "heart" refers to love. In the last line, Poe tries to show that someone whom he considers his mother and his wife is something that is irreplaceable and invaluable in his life. This is shown by words "my soul". Soul is a

symbol of human life because if someone loses their soul, they will die. So in this poem, Poe shows that someone whom he considers his mother and his wife is equal to his own life and gives meaning to life for Poe.

B. Personification

The writer finds personification in line eight of the "To My Mother" poem

And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you

The line above contains a figure of speech of personification. Personification is a figure of speech that illustrates an inanimate object in human personality. Where in "where Death installed you" because installed is an action that can only be done by humans, while in this line installed is conducted by death which is a concept. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, install means "to fix equipment or furniture into position, so that it can be used" (1995:621). Therefore, the line above using personification and in this line, Poe wants to show that the impending death is well prepared by someone whom he considers his mother, maybe through the religious factor given to him in addition to the love given to Poe.

C. Metaphora

In this poem, metaphor can be found in the last three lines of the poem in the last three lines of the poem.

*And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.*

The last three line contains a figure of speech which is metaphor for Poe analogy a someone whom he considers his mother and his wife as something dearer as him soul directly without using like, as or etc. This metaphor is used to show how the magnitude of the love that is given by both of them to Poe is compared with word "my soul".This word means a very big thing in his life, that is, his soul.

4.4. Analysis of Theme in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother".

Theme or main idea of the poem "To My Mother" is love, especially, love to a mother. This poem is written to express Poe's love and longing to a mother and some people who love him. This love is shown in some lines in this poem as "*None so devotional as that of "Mother,"*" and "*Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,"*". Although it uses love as the main idea, Poe does not convey this poem happily but instead a way that is dark. Referring to the life story of Poe who is heavy enough and has lost several his loved ones, so a sense of love, longing, and gratitude are devoted in this poem.

4.5. Analysis of Motherly Love in Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother"

This poem was published in 1849. Two years earlier Poe should lose his wife Virginia who died caused by tuberculosis. The title of this poem is "To My Mother" clearly seen from the title of this poem addressed to Poe's mother. but looking at the background of life the author of poem Edgar Allan Poe, this poem actually addressed to a person considered more than the biological mother, that is, his aunt. Poe

biological mother died when he was three years old. The background of this poem is very interesting, so the writer is trying to analyze motherly love expressed in this poem through a psychological approach with *Theory of Love* of Erich Fromm.

Poe has shown how his mother loved him so much in line 1-4

*Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother"*

The line above shows that Poe considers mother more than an angel, as discussed that angels are a symbol of holiness, obedience, and love. The line "*None so devotional as that of "Mother"*" shows that a mother's love is more than obedience to the religion of angels where they do not expect compensation. This shows that the affection given by the mother to Poe does not expect compensation. Mother is meant that here are all the mothers who have been taking care of Poe. Poe uses allegory heavens and angel that can refer to biological mother who is in heaven, although his mother died when Poe was three years old. Poe still considers the biological mother is a sincere person for care at birth until he is three years old. In this the overall poem, Poe shows more his gratitude to his aunt, mother who treats him when he is baby. Motherly love that expects compensation to Poe in accordance with the theory of the motherly love expressed by Erich Fromm that says "mother does not get anything in return from the child, she just expects a smile or the expression of satisfaction in his face" (1956:50). This shows the first phase of motherly love theory in which a mother

gives all children need without expect compensation felt by Poe which he later performs through the early line of this poem.

The second phase of motherly love according to Erich Fromm “the relationship of the mother and child is by its very nature one of inequality. Where one needs all the help and the others give it” (1956:50). This phase is the phase where child is growing and in need of help and love of a mother and it occurs naturally. Nevertheless, in this phase, Poe biological mother died and then he gets love. His life emptiness is filled by his aunt naturally, so Poe considers his aunt over his mother. Poe reveals it in this poem through this line :

*You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.*

The lines above Poe reveal that he considers his aunt more than a mother for Poe. His aunt can fill his heart and sacrifice to him shown in line “*And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you*” Poe increasingly considers his aunt means to him when he gets married with his aunt’s daughter named Virginia. Therefore, Poe psychologically feels motherly love in the second phase according to Fromm, but Poe does not get it from his biological mother, but from his aunt so that in this poem Poe considers her aunt more than his mother

Although Poe considers his aunt means that he has not forgotten his biological mother as shown in this poem through this line.

*My mother—my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you*

In this case, Poe still does not forget his mother who cares for him as a child, but as said Erich Fromm, the most important phase in the motherly love is when the child's growth, and when the mother has to take off her son to live independently. Here, Poe psychologically gets love and affection from his aunt and eventually Poe is more grateful to his aunt expressed in the next line as follows.

*Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.*

The last line shows how happiness is not measurable in life that is given by his aunt and his wife. They all live together from childhood until Poe and Virginia get married. Poe lives very happily until Virginia's death and Poe depression and alcoholism.

Motherly love is felt by Poe, so he expresses it through this poem. However, there are some exceptions where Poe actually grows up and got the love given by his aunt because her mother died when he was three years old and according to the concept of motherly love, it is unequal relationship. Inequality is obtained Poe from

his aunt. Therefore, the interpretation of the mother is that there is not only a mother who gives birth but also a mother who cares for and maintains a child to grow up.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing poem Edgar Allan Poe's "To My Mother". The writer concludes that this poem contains one element of the love in Erich Fromm's "The Art of Loving" that is motherly love. Accordance to the title of this poem "To My Mother", Poe aimed this poem to his mother. Where in this poem, Poe shows the love of someone who cares him for a child since they were kids to grow up with love and without expecting a reward.

The explanations above in accordance with the concept of motherly love by Erich Fromm, but there is one make poem interesting that is the background of Poe. Poe was an orphan where he was left for dead by his mother when he was five years old. So he did not get the love of a mother from her natural mother's. but she was treated and grew up with his aunt so this poem after the author analyze more precisely aimed Poe leads to his aunt.

Statement above shows that the concept of motherly love is infinite and must be given by the biological mother who gave birth to his son. but also by all those who care for and raise a child from childhood to adulthood sincerely without expecting a reward.

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