

**ANALYSIS OF LOVE DESIRE REFLECTED IN “FIRST LOVE” POEM BY JOHN
CLARE**

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ABSTRACT

The writer discusses love desire in poem of John Clare entitled “First Love”. The purpose of this study is to understand the poem through analyzing intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the poem. The methods used were library research and structural approach. By using the method of library research, the writer collects some information and document that support the process of analysis. The structural approach used by the writer to discover and analyze intrinsic element inside the poem. The extrinsic element analysis discusses about love desire in this poem by using theory of love by Erich Fromm. The result of the study shows how deep the poet’s love desire and consistency of loving her are, although the girl does not love him.

Keyword: Love desire, love poem, erotic love

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama by Kennedy and Gioia (1991: xix), Poetry is a rhythmical composition of words expressing an attitude, designed to surprise and delight, and to arouse an emotional response. A poem can speak more than other literary works such as drama and prose, because it creates a "talking picture" of something. This is a portrait of an inner experience that is represented by the words of great significance. Therefore, it is more difficult to understand the true meaning of the poem.

The writer chooses John Clare's poem because he is a famous Romantic Poet who wrote many poems which tells about love. These poems are "Secret Love", "First Love", "A World for Love", "Merry Maid", etc. He is one of the Romantic Poets in the Romantic Period because he spent his life in 1793 until 1864. The writer assumes that this poetry tells the readers about someone's feeling when they fall in love. Besides, this poem has strong attraction for readers because the author used interesting expression that was able to make readers imagine the desire of falling in love.

2. THE POEM

First Love

By John Clare

I ne'er was struck before that hour
With love so sudden and so sweet,
Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower
And stole my heart away complete.
My face turned pale as deadly pale,
My legs refused to walk away,
And when she looked, what could I ail?
My life and all seemed turned to clay.

And then my blood rushed to my face
And took my eyesight quite away,
The trees and bushes round the place
Seemed midnight at noonday.

I could not see a single thing,
Words from my eyes did start—
They spoke as chords do from the string,
And blood burnt round my heart.

Are flowers the winter's choice?
Is love's bed always snow?
She seemed to hear my silent voice,
Not love's appeals to know.
I never saw so sweet a face
As that I stood before.
My heart has left its dwelling-place
And can return no more.

3. LOVE DESIRE REFLECTED IN FIRST LOVE POEM “FIRST LOVE” BY JOHN CLARE

3.1 Intrinsic Element

3.1.1 Organic Imagery

There are organic imagery in every stanza in the poem. The imagery in first stanza can be seen in bolded word below.

With **love** so sudden and so **sweet**,
And **stole my heart** away complete.
My face **turned pale** as deadly pale,
My legs **refused** to walk away,
And when she looked, what could I **ail**?

My life and all seemed **turned** to clay.

Love is a word of organic imagery. The poet uses the word **love** to show the readers that he is falling in love with someone. Then the poet uses the word **sweet** to describe his love. **Sweet** means lovely, pleasant, and cheerful. It shows that he feels very happy when he is falling in love. Next, he says that his heart is stolen away. It is kind of inner-feeling that means he is interested in the girl attraction. He also says that his face turned pale. Pale face in this case is physical phenomena when someone feels so shy. It is the effect of his emotion when he is attracted by the girl. In the next line, he uses word **refused** to indicate that he cannot move at the time. It means that he feels freeze when seeing the girl. After that line, the poet uses word **ail** to ask himself. Ail means sickness or trouble in mind or body. This expression shows that he feels so nervous. Then in the last line he describe that his life and all turned to clay. Clay is soft and sticky soil that commonly used for making pot, brick, etc. It shows the readers his feeling of helplessness when the girl looked at him as result of his nervous.

And then my blood **rushed** to my face

And **took** my eyesight quite away,

I **could not see** a single thing

And blood **burnt** round my heart

In the second stanza, the poet uses expression **blood rushed to my face**. When there is a lot of blood in a face, the skin color of the face looked red. This expression shows that his face blushes when he meets the girl. It indicates that he feels very shy. Next, the poet uses expression **took my eyesight away** as if he is blind after blood rushing his face. This expression indicates that he gets love that is blind. Next, he says that he cannot see anything. In this line, the poet emphasizes his very deep love. Then in the last line, he uses words **burnt round heart**. Burnt in this line means intense, strong, and terrific. It indicates that his love is very deep and strong.

My heart has **left** its dwelling-place

And can return no more.

In the last stanza, he says that his heart leaves its place and can return no more. In this line, he emphasizes his statement in first stanza that the girl steals his heart. This line also shows that he will always love her and his love will last forever.

3.1.2 Simile

The simile are found only in the first and the second stanza. The simile can be seen in bolded words below.

Her face it bloomed **like a sweet flower**

My face turned pale **as deadly pale**

My life and all **seemed turned to clay**

Words from my eyes did start—

They spoke **as chords do from the string**

The poet compares the girl's **face** with **a sweet flower**. Flower is beautiful and colorful plant. It indicates that the girl is very pretty, cute and charming. Next, he compares his **pale face** with **deadly pale**. In this point, pale is a wooden stake or post used for fence. It means that his pale face looks like the color of wooden stake or post. This statement is also supported by previous analysis that he is shy and his pale face as result of emotional effect when he is attracted by the girl. Then he compares his **life** with **clay**. As stated in previous analysis, clay is soft and sticky soil that commonly used for making pot, brick, etc. It shows that his helplessness condition is represented by clay. The last, he compares **words** with **chords**. Chord is a group of notes that sounded together as basis of harmony. The chords reflects kind of strong emotion or feeling he sends when he is making eye contact with the girl.

3.1.3 Rhyme

The poet uses *ababcdcd* rhyme scheme in every stanza of poem. The analysis of rhyme sound in every word can be seen below.

I ne'er was struck before that **hour**
With love so sudden and so **sweet**,
Her face it bloomed like a sweet **flower**
And stole my heart away **complete**.
My face turned pale as deadly **pale**,
My legs refused to walk **away**,
And when she looked, what could I **ail**?
My life and all seemed turned to **clay**.

The first stanza has perfectly *ababcdcd* rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme makes the poem beautiful to read. Every pair of rhyme gives stronger feeling to readers about the poem emotion expressed in the first stanza. It will help the readers to understand the meaning of this stanza.

And then my blood rushed to my **face**
And took my eyesight quite **away**,
The trees and bushes round the **place**
Seemed midnight at **noonday**.
I could not see a single **thing**,
Words from my eyes did **start**—
They spoke as chords do from the **string**,
And blood burnt round my **heart**.

The second stanza also has perfectly *ababcdcd* rhyme scheme. This rhyme scheme keeps this stanza in harmony with the first stanza. It give the readers experience of ongoing emotion starting from the first stanza. From that ongoing emotion, the readers will understand that there is relative meaning between every stanza.

Are flowers the winter's **choice**?
Is love's bed always **snow**?
She seemed to hear my silent **voice**,
Not love's appeals to **know**.
I never saw so sweet a **face**
As that I stood **before**.
My heart has left its dwelling-**place**
And can return no **more**.

It is the same as the first and the second stanza, the last stanza also has perfectly *ababcdcd* rhyme scheme. By using same rhyme scheme in every stanza, this poem serves a kind of simple repeating pattern facilitating memorization. The readers will easily remember the whole line of poem and its meaning. Every pair of rhyme in the last stanza also gives stronger emotion to the readers about his consistency of strong feeling reflected in the poem.

3.2 Extrinsic Element

The poet expresses his feeling in the entire stanzas of the poem. The analysis of every stanza can be seen below.

I ne'er was struck before that hour
With love so sudden and so sweet,
Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower
And stole my heart away complete.
My face turned pale as deadly pale,
My legs refused to walk away,
And when she looked, what could I ail?
My life and all seemed turned to clay.

In the first line and the second line, the poet says that he **was struck with sudden and sweet love**. In imagery analysis, word **love** and **sweet** show that he is very happy when he is falling

in love. The sweet love he feels reflects the outcome of a spontaneity of his emotional reaction and irresistible feeling. This condition appears when someone meets specific or high individual elements that exist in somebody and lead to strong feeling. As reflected in the next line, he admires her face. The poet has already compared her **face** to **flower** in simile analysis. It indicates that beautiful is specific individual elements that exist in the girl. After that, he says that his heart is stolen away. This line shows his strong feeling to the girl that arises due to influence of emotion that exists. The emotion appears as the result of his admire. It has already been explained in imagery analysis for the words **stole my heart** that he is interested in the girl attraction. The strong feeling in this line also reflects his desire of loving her begins. His love desire influences his attitude represented in the next line. From the fifth line until the last line in the first stanza shows his attitude that represents his outcome of emotional reaction gripped by irresistible feeling. It has already been explained in imagery analysis that he is shy and nervous when he meets the girl.

And then my blood rushed to my face
And took my eyesight quite away,
The trees and bushes round the place
Seemed midnight at noonday.
I could not see a single thing,
Words from my eyes did start—
They spoke as chords do from the string,
And blood burnt round my heart.

In this second stanza, the poet still expresses his emotional reaction as the effect of his strong feeling. According to imagery analysis for words **rushed** and **took** in the first and the second line, he is blushed after meeting the girl and he gets love that is blind after that. The experience of his love indicates that his emotional reaction is gripped by his irresistible feeling. In the mind of someone who gets love that is blind, there is only the person whom he

loves. Therefore, this kind of love also reflects that his love desire increases as result of the emotional reaction. The fifth line until the last line, show his emotion and feeling that flow away and he cannot control it. It has already been stated in simile analysis, when he compares **words** that spoken from his eyes like **chords**, it reflects kind of emotion or feeling he sends when he is making eye contact with the girl. Then, it has already been explained in imagery analysis for word **burnt** in the last line, it means that his love is very deep and strong. He really has strong feeling with her. This strong feeling reflects his great desire to loving her forever.

Are flowers the winter's choice?
Is love's bed always snow?
She seemed to hear my silent voice,
Not love's appeals to know.
I never saw so sweet a face
As that I stood before.
My heart has left its dwelling-place
And can return no more.

Based on simile analysis, it shows that the poet relates the girl to flower. From words **the winter's choice**, it means that winter chooses the girl. It indicates that the poet relates himself to winter. Winter is the coldest season of the year and there is no flower lives in winter. When he relates himself to winter, it shows that he is unappealing, rigid and unenjoyable personal. In the next line, he asks that **love's bed is always snow**. The meaning of bed in this line is an area of ground, typically in a garden, where flowers and plants are grown. Snow is ice crystal that has cold temperature and it appears in winter. This line represents his life of love that is boring and not interesting as cold as snow. It has already been stated before that love requires certain specific or high individual elements that exist in someone. In his side, the girl is very interesting, but in her side, he may not be interesting. In the third and the fourth line, it

actually reflects that the girl know that he admires her. His emotion appears when he is making eye contact with the girl, but the girl does not give any attention to him. Therefore, his love is unrequited love because his love is only in his feeling and there is not any promise to love each other. In the seventh and the last line, he emphasizes his strong feeling and it is supported by imagery analysis for word **left** that he will always love her and his love will last forever. It shows his final statement of his love desire although she does not love him, he will always love her.

4. CONCLUSION

The readers can learn and understand the meaning and the message in the poem through intrinsic and extrinsic aspect of the poem. The imagery of the poem gives a description of the poet's love, especially his strong feeling to the girl. The simile gives an illustration of the girl's beauty and his emotional reaction. The rhyme makes the poem more beautiful to read and gives stronger feeling to the readers. In the analysis of extrinsic element, we can learn that the poet's love desire show how deep the poet's love desire and consistency of loving her are, although the girl does not love him.

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