

# **AN ANALYSIS OF INTRINSIC ELEMENT IN EMILY DICKINSON’S “BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH”**

Suci Rahayu  
Arida Widyastuti

**Faculty of Humanity Diponegoro University**

---

## **ABSTRACT**

The writer discusses the intrinsic element in poetry of Emily Dickinson entitled “Because I Could Not Stop For Death”. The purpose of this study is to understand the intrinsic elements on the poem. The methods used were library research. By using the method of library research the writer collected some information and documents that support the process of analysis. The result of the study shows what kind of intrinsic elements is used in the poetry to deliver the message.

**Keywords: intrinsic element, imagery, rhyme, diction, symbolism**

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

There are many kinds of literatures, one of them is poetry. Poetry is different from the other literature because of the presence of alliteration, meters, metaphor and parallelism. According to William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard in *A Handbook to Literature*, poetry is a term applied to the many forms in which man has given a rhythmic expression to his most imaginative and intense perceptions on his world,

himself, and the interrelationship of the two. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Warren in *Understanding Poetry* describes that a poem is created by language, literary convention, and ideas (1952: 516). For that explanation we can assume that it is important to analyze the language in the poetry to be able to understand the message.

The writer is interested in studying the element of poetry in Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". The poetry "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" consists of interesting intrinsic elements such as imagery, figurative language, rhyme and symbol that make the readers feel the same situation with the speaker in the poetry. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" is one of the Emily Dickinson poetry that has death as a subject. In this poetry the poet delivers the idea about death as something that we should not afraid for.

The poet, Emily Elizabeth Dickinson is one of woman poets from The United States. Her works usually contain short lines and often use unconventional capitalization and punctuation. Many of her poems are talking about death and immortality.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to study the intrinsic element of poetry in “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson.

## **1.3. Scope of the Study**

Poetry has a lot of elements in it. Because of that reason, the writer thinks that it is important to limit the subject of the study. This paper will be focused on analyzing the imagery, diction, rhyme and symbol.

# **4 Analysis**

## **4.1. Imagery**

The poetry ““Because I Could Not Stop for Death”” has imagery in most of the stanzas that could make the reader imagine the same situation with the speaker in the poetry.

### **4.1.1. Visual Imagery**

Visual imagery on the poetry “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” is started from the third stanza. In this part the writer analyze the visual imagery line by line.

Stanza 3, Line 3

*We passed the field of gazing grain*

This line shows that the speaker sees a view of grain field. The phrase ‘the field of gazing grain’ comes in reader’s mind with a field of grain that is immense so it is like that the grain field gazes at us.

Stanza 3, Line 4

*We passed **the setting sun***

In this line, the poet makes the reader imagine the situation where the speaker and Death passed a situation of setting sun. From the phrase ‘the setting sun’ the readers come up with visualization of the situation of the setting sun. Because setting sun is something that can be seen every day, it is not difficult for the readers to imagine the time, situation, or even the color of the sky.

Stanza 4, Line 1 and line 2

*We passed the house that **seemed,**  
**A swelling on the ground***

The visual imagery in this line is shown by the word ‘seemed’. The word tells the readers that the speaker is doing something that is; ‘see’. The next line supported by the explanation ‘a swelling on the ground’. The phrase explains what the speaker sees.

Stanza 4, Line 3

*The roof that scarcely **visible***

The word 'visible' in this line gives a visualization of something that can be seen clearly or something that wide open. The word 'visible' is considered as visual imagery because it has a connection with something to see or related with eyesight.

#### **4.1.2. Kinesthetic Imagery**

Kinesthetic imagery is the most dominant imagery used in this poetry. Kinesthetic imagery can be found in almost every line on every stanza. In this part the writer analyzes the kinesthetic imagery line by line.

Stanza 1, Line 1 and line 2

*Because I Could Not **Stop** for Death,  
He kindly **Stop** for me*

In these two opening lines there is kinesthetic imagery that is; 'stop'. This word gives an image that Death is stopping for the speaker.

Stanza 1, Line 3

*The carriage **held** but just ourselves*

The word 'held' in this line shows kinesthetic imagery. The word 'held' is considered as kinesthetic imagery because it has a connection with movement. The reader can get a visualization of the carriage that stops moving for a moment.

Stanza 2, Line 1

*We **slowly drove**, he knew **no haste***

The words 'slowly drove' tell the readers that the carriage is moving slowly. It makes the readers come up with imagination that the carriage is moving. The phrase 'no haste' strengthens and supports the imagination that the carriage is moving slowly and not in a rush. It shows that the situation is relaxing. The poet wants to tell the reader that the speaker is on a pleasant ride with Death.

Stanza 3, Line 1 – 4

*We **passed** the school where children played,  
There lessons scarcely done;  
We **passed** the field of gazing grain,  
We **passed** the setting sun*

In this stanza, the kinesthetic imagery is shown by the word 'passed' that is repeated three times in line 1, 3 and 4. The word 'passed' shows the moving of the carriage that is passing through three different places. The repetition of the word 'passed' also shows the slow movement of the carriage.

Stanza 4, Line 1

*We **paused** before a house that seemed,*

The word 'paused' tells the readers that the carriage suddenly stops its movement for a while. By that explanation that the word 'paused' is considered as kinesthetic imagery.

#### **4.1.3. Organic Imagery**

Organic imagery is a kind of imagery that is related to feeling or internal sensation or experience. In this part the writer analyzes the organic imagery on the poetry "Because I Could Not Stop for Death".

Stanza 5, Line 2

*Feels shorter than the day*

The word 'feels' in this line shows organic imagery. It is considered as organic imagery because it shows an internal sensation. It shows how the speaker experiences something that is feels.

Stanza 5, Line 3

*I first **surmised** the horses' head*

In this line the organic imagery is shown by the word 'surmised'. The word tells the reader that the speaker in the poetry experiences an internal sensation that is surmised.

#### **4.2. Rhyme**

This part of the discussion will analyze the rhyme in the poetry “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson. The writer analyzes the rhyme stanza by stanza.

Stanza 1

“Because I Could Not Stop for Death”,

*He kindly stops for **me***

*The carriage held but just ourselves*

*And **Immortality***

In this stanza, the word ‘me’ in line 2 has the same final sound as the word ‘Immortality’ in line 4. By that explanation it is clear that in stanza 1 has rhyme in line 2 and line 4.

Stanza 3

*We passed the school where children played,*

*There lessons scarcely **done;***

*We passed the field of gazing grain,*

*We passed the setting **sun***

In this stanza, the word ‘done’ in line 2 has the same final sound as the word ‘sun’ in line 4. By that explanation it is clear that stanza 1 has rhyme in line 2 and line 4.

Stanza 4

*We paused before a house that seemed*

*A swelling on the **ground;***

*The roof was scarcely visible,*

*The cornice but a **mound***

In this stanza, the word 'ground' in line 2 has the same final sound as the word 'mound' in line 4. By that explanation it is clear that stanza 1 has rhyme in line 2 and line 4.

### 4.3. Symbolism

As it was explained in the theoretical framework, symbol is defined as something that says more than it expresses. In the poetry "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" there are some words that are considered as symbol. In this part the writer analyzes the symbolism in the poetry.

Stanza 3

*We passed **the school** where children played,  
There lessons scarcely done;  
We passed the field of gazing **grain**,  
We passed **the setting sun***

In this stanza, the symbolism is shown in line 1, line 3, and line 4. It can be seen in line 1, the word 'the school' symbolizes the time of childhood when children go to school and playing. In line 3, the word 'grain' symbolizes the time of youth. Grain has gold color, the gold color in this line represents the time of youth. The last line tells the readers that the carriage passed the 'setting sun'. The phrase 'setting sun' symbolizes the old time that is known to represent the end of the day or in this line is the end of the speaker's life.

By those explanations, it can be seen that in stanza 3, line 1, line 3, and line 4 are symbolize the three dimensional times those are young, adult, and old times.

#### Stanza 4

*We paused before a **house** that seemed*

*A swelling on the ground;*

*The roof was scarcely visible,*

*The cornice but a mound*

In this stanza, it is considered that the word 'house' has symbolical meaning. The symbolical meaning of the 'house' is explained by the other lines that the house is *swelling on the ground, the roof was scarcely visible, and cornice but a mound*. It is considered that the word *house* in this poetry is different from the house in dictionary. By those explanations, it can be concluded that the *house* on the poetry is a grave or burial spot. The word 'house' is chosen to show that the speaker is not surprised or afraid to know that she is going to die since house can represent the comfort place to have a rest.

#### 4.4. Diction

This part of the discussion the writer analyzes the diction of the poetry. The writer analyzes the reason why the poet chooses the particular word to deliver the message and analyze the denotation or connotation used in the poetry. There are several words that are considered as dictions. They can be found in these following stanzas.

Stanza 1, Line 3

*The **carriage** held but just for ourselves*

As it was explained before, every poet chooses the word carefully to deliver the message. In this poetry, Emily Dickinson did not choose the word 'carriage' as the transportation tools

without reason. Dickinson used the real meaning (diction) of carriage that is transportation tools pulled by horse. The word 'carriage' is used because a carriage usually moves slowly. It can represent the calmness and show that the journey of the speaker and Death is not in a rush. The word 'carriage' then is suitable with the lines in stanza two; *we slowly drove, he knew no haste*. Carriage is also chosen because it can represent a private transportation tools.

Stanza 2, Line 3

*My labor and my leisure too,*

In this line, Dickinson takes an advantage of the various meaning of the words 'labor' and 'leisure'. The word 'labor' used in this line has a meaning of *task, difficulties, work, or business*. The word 'leisure' in this line has a meaning of *break time, day off, or spare time*. *Labor* and *leisure* are considered to be contradictive. These words are used because they can represent the lifetime as life usually consists of busy and spare time. Dickinson wanted to say that the speaker had to leave to join Death.

Stanza 4, Line 3 and 4

*The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice but a mound*

In this lines, Dickinson uses connotation meaning of the words 'roof' and 'cornice'. The denotation meaning of the word 'roof' is the exterior surface on the top of a building. Here, the 'roof' meant by the poet as not a real roof. 'Roof' in this line means *sky*.

The word 'cornice' has a denotation meaning, it is the top part of a wall, upper decoration of a house or pillar. In this line, the word 'cornice' has a connotation meaning of *burial soil*.

## **5 Conclusion**

The intrinsic element analysis of poetry is important to make the readers understand what kind of element used in the poetry to understand the message of the poetry. The poem “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson consists of intrinsic elements; those are imagery, rhyme, symbolism, and diction. Dickinson uses those intrinsic elements on the poetry to deliver the message to the readers and to make the readers feel the same situation with the speaker in the poetry. This poetry pictures death as a gentleman who takes the speaker on a pleasant ride on a carriage.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baldick, Chris. 2001. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York: Oxford University Press

Holman, G Hugh. 1939. *A Handbook To Literature*. New York: The Odyssey Press

Kennedy, X. J. 1978. *An Introduction to Poetry 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. New York: Little Brown and Company

Perrine, Laurence. 1956. *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. Orlando: Harcourt brace company

Scholes, Robert. 1969. *Element of Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press

<http://www.biography.com/people/emilydickinson-9274190>,

Accessed in May 20, 2015 at 02:15 PM