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## The Objective and Expressive Study in William Blake's "The Sick Rose"

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find out the intrinsic elements of the famous poem of William Blake which is entitled "*The Sick Rose*." In this poem, Blake used many symbolism, imagery, and figures of speech so this poem becomes meaningful. This paper would also analyze the biography of William Blake to find out how his emotion the poem deeply and capturing the selection stanzas or lines which represent imagery and emotion of William Blake as the writer of this poem. After selecting the data, then the writer analyzes them by using the Objective and Expressive Theory proposed by Abrams. The researcher found that the rose in this poem is a symbol of love or woman which is being hurt by the lust of the man which is symbolized by the worm. Therefore, this poem describes the woman's hurt because of the materialism of man. This is a beautiful poem by Blake which is full of imagery and metaphors.

**Key Words:** Expressive Study ; Objective Study; The Sick Rose.

### Introduction

Literature is a study that develops mind, soul feeling, and views that can magnify the mind with interest. Literature comes from the Latin *Littera* that means 'letters' and referring to an acquaintance with the written word. Literature is a reflection of the human life in the depth of attitudes, behaviors, thoughts, knowledge, responses, feelings, the imagination of man himself. Literature has many abilities of each literary figures as well as from many aspects, but the main idea has the same core and meaning. Literary work is the product of the authors that are create based on the human problems, it is also an interpretation of the nature and the meaning of life in all aspects. Literary works include short story, prose, drama, novel and poem.

One of the literary works that many people are interested is poem. Poem as a part of literary works with the aesthetic verse is expected to bring up positive or moral values for the readers. Some of the verse may be about the figurative language that has a deep meaning behind it. Poem related to someone's emotional state and an expression of social phenomena in aspects of life. So, a poem usually tells about the realities of human life that is related to surrounding environment. The reality of human life displays the psychological aspects through the author as the real creator in a psychological phenomenon of literary works.

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the *Romantic Age*. Blake was a radical, anti authority figure. He was born on 28 November 1757 at 28 Broad Street (now Broadwick St.) in Soho, London. He was the

third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. Blake's father, James, was a hosier. He attended school only long enough to learn reading and writing, leaving at the age of ten, and was otherwise educated at home by his mother, Catherine Blake. Even though the Blakes were English Dissenters, William was baptised on 11 December at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London. The Bible was an early and profound influence on Blake, and remained a source of inspiration throughout his life. From an early age, William Blake was artistic. He also had 'visions' of things like angels. When he was 14, William was made apprentice to an engraver called *James Basire*. William served 7 years and became a professional engraver in 1779. Blake also wanted to paint and the same year he became a student at the Royal Academy of Arts. Blake became a friend of John Flaxman, Thomas Stothard and George Cumberland during his first year at the Royal Academy. They shared radical views, with Stothard and Cumberland joining the *Society for Constitutional Information*.

One of his masterpiece is *The Sick Rose* that was published at 1794, when it was included in his collection titled *Songs of Experience* as the 39th plate. The *incipit* of the poem is **O Rose thou art sick**. Blake is inviting us to see the rose and the worm as symbols – they must 'stand for' something - but it is hard to know for certain what that something is. Blake composed the page sometime after 1789, and presents it with the illuminated border and illustrations that were typical of his self publications. Most aspects of the original production were undertaken by the author, the composition of the poem and design, engraving, and promotion of the work. The printing was usually done by Blake's wife, Catherine, as well as any colouring not performed by Blake himself.

There have been many researchers who conducted a research related to literary approach proposed by Abrams. One of them is Warniaty (2020) who conducted her research entitled "*M.H. Abrams' Literary Theories in Jane Austen's Emma*." This study aims to analyze what literary theories and approaches can be applied in Jane Austen's works, namely one of the novels entitled *Emma*. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method and presents the types of theories and literature by M.H. Abrams, namely expressive theory, mimetic theory, objective theory, and pragmatic theory. The results showed that all the types of literary theories by Abrams can be applied in analyzing the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen by determining the issues or topics that have been described by the author in the novel, and the results of the study also show that to obtain an interest or relationship between existence literary works and society, the significant approach to be applied are expressive theory and mimetic theory which see the relationship between biographies and life experiences of authors to the works they create (expressive) and to what social phenomena are depicted in society (mimetics). The second, is a study from Monalisa (2019) entitled "*Social Criticism as Reflected by William Blake's selected poems*". This study discusses social criticism in literary works, poem by William Blake. Which poem that the writer wants to analyze is based on the real-life of the author. This writer uses the descriptive qualitative method. In this research, the writer uses Expressive theory and social criticism theory to support the writing of this thesis. In addition, the

writer also uses a sociological approach. Data sources from this research are some poems by William Blake in which there are social criticisms, namely: *Earth's Answer*, *The Little Black Boy*, *The Chimney Sweeper*, and *London*. From the results of this study, the writer finds four problems of social criticism that exist in William Blake's poems: (1) social criticism of gender issues in the *Earth Answer* poem, in which the poetry describes the suffering of women (2) social criticism of moral problems in the poem *Little Black boy*, who explains the difference in skin color between white people and black people (3) social criticism of technological problems in the poem *The Chimney Sweeper*, which explains the suffering of children due to technological progress (4) social criticism of economic problems in *London* poem, which explains about the economic decline of the community at that time. The previous studies above are related to this research. They have similarities and differences. The similarities are the two researchers have conducted the research of the analysis of literary works by using the four theories proposed by Abrams especially *Expressive* and *Objective Approach*. However, there will be some differences among those research with this research. First, this research focus on *The Sick Rose* poem by William Blake. The second, the different data of this research cause the different in the result of the research

The researcher chose the poem "*The Sick Rose*" as the material to analyze poems, because of several things. A poem by William Blake is one of the best poetry of William Blake. This poem is very interesting to study because of the selection of beautiful words and complex and accompanied with the use of imagery and a figure of speech that is increasingly making this poem becomes more meaningful. In addition, this poem was made against the background of patriarchy where men are dominant attitude towards women. This is very clearly illustrated in this line of poetry. To appreciate this literary work well, it is important to the writer analyze the poem by using objective and subjective approach about it in detail.

### **Research Methodology**

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative methods. According to Arikunto (1995), descriptive studies are aimed at gathering information about the status of existing symptoms. Next, it is appropriate to interpret the meaning of the metaphorical expression of poetry in the meaning of the sentence itself. This study belongs to this method because the data collected is written in the form of words in paragraph statements. In addition, Mukhtar (2007) stated that qualitative research is a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of people's written or spoken words and observable behavior (observable). This means that this study belongs to this method because the data collected is the written data. The research discussions took up data one after another to clarify the problem of the topic. The qualitative description is intended to get an accurate reading of the received data and text. The data has meaning. The meaning is the actual data, and the final data represents a value that exceeds the displayed value. Therefore, qualitative research does not

emphasize generalization, but rather expresses various qualitative information with careful and subtle explanations in order to accurately explain the characteristics of the case (individual or group), the state of the phenomenon. It focuses on importance, that is, it is not limited to data collection, but includes analysis and interpretation. The descriptive evaluation recommended for evaluation is based only on facts or phenomena that are empirically present in the speaker (writer). This means that the elements recorded and analyzed in the literary work remain intact.

The main data of this research was a poem by William Blake, *The Sick Rose* (1974). In this research, the researcher used only theoretical documentation techniques to retrieve the data. Afrizal (2014) stated that the document is a collection of written material such as media, meeting minutes, communications, and reports to find the information you need. Based on the statement, the researcher concluded that the type of data collection is important in the study, given that the results of the study correspond to the data collected, and that the data with the results are appropriate will be solved by the research.

In collecting the data, there are several steps that the researcher taken. They are: *First*, the researcher collects data taken from William Blake's poems entitled "The Sick Rose." *Second*, The researcher reads the poem carefully and enthusiastically. *Third*, after reading the poem, the researcher emphasizes some important words and phrases that the researcher calls objective and expressive approach. *Fourth*, after the data is detected and completed, the researcher processes and analyzes the data. *Finally*, the researcher organizes the paper based on the data collected in the last step of this study. After the researcher collects all of records, subsequent step is figuring out and classifying the records which can be contained the objective and expressive approach. The researcher already made use of the method of studying records from net supply withinside the preceding explanations. Analyzing the records continually made use of the inward visions and linguistics intelligence for gaining the tender results. Furthermore, the final section is drawing the belief in this poem that has been analyzed from the way of means of the author. In every stanzas of this poem, the researcher ought to see what's the candy crop of the poetry that could eventually transmit in to the readers primarily based totally at the accuracy results.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Findings**

As explained above that in analyzing intrinsic aspects of literary works (structural) based on norm stratum technique must cover: *First layer (sound devices)*, *second layer (unit of meaning)*, *third layer (object, setting, and story)*, *fourth layer (world layer)*, and *fifth layer (metaphisic layer)*. It can be seen in detail as the following table:

**Table 1:**  
**The Intrinsic Elements of William Blake's *The Sick Rose***

No	Layers	Intrinsic Elements	The Data
1	Sound devices	Alliteration	<i>That flies in the night</i>
		Assonance	<i>O, Rose thou art sick That flies in the night</i>
		Ballad Stanza	O Rose thou art sick (A) The Invisible worm (B) That flies in the night (C) In the howling storm: (B)
2	Unit of meaning	The first line	<i>O Rose Thou art sick</i>
		The second, third and fourth line	<i>The Invisible worm that flies in the night, in the howling storm</i>
		The fifth and sixth line	<i>Has found out thy bed of crimson joy</i>
		The seventh line and the last line	<i>And his dark secret love does thy life destroy</i>
3	Object, Setting, and Story	The object	rose, bed, secret love, storm
		The actor	Worm
		Setting of time	night,
		Setting of place	bed
		The author's world	The story world created by the author
4	World layer	The first stanza The second stanza	<i>the invisible worm that flies in the night; in the howling storm</i>
5	Metaphisic layer	In the poem	The destruction because of love

Table 1 above illustrates in detail about the intrinsic elements that the researcher found in this poem. In the first layer, the sounds can be layered units of sound: the sound syllables, words, and perhaps the entire sound (voice) that rhyme: sound phrases and sentences sound. In poetry, the talks should be aimed at the sound layered sounds or sound patterns that are special, which is used to get the effect of poetic or artistic value. The first sound in this poem is the use of Alliteration. Klarer (2004) said that Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant at the beginning of words in a single line. Alliteration can be found at third line in this poem: "*That flies in the night.*" This line is

alliteration *T* in this poem. Moreover, the second sound in this poem is the use of assonance. Christopher Russell Reaske said that Assonance is the use of identical vowel sounds surrounded by different kinds of consonant sounds in words in close proximity to each other. Assonance can be found at first line in this poem: "*O, Rose thou art sick,*" and also at third line have repetition: "*That flies in the night.*" There is assonance *O* in first line and in third line there is assonance *i* in the middle of words. The use of alliteration and assonance in these line give aesthetic effect for the poem. It becomes a dynamic sound unity.

The two stanzas in this poem have a rhyme scheme of ABCB that is also called Ballad stanza. As in the following quotes of the poem:

O Rose thou art sick (A)  
 The Invisible worm (B)  
 That flies in the night (C)  
 In the howling storm (B)

Ballad stanza is a verse stanza common in English ballads that consists of two lines in ballad metre, usually printed as a four-line stanza with a rhyme scheme of abcb. Since the lines are fairly short, it adds to the dread that can be felt in the poem and complements the unflinching directness with which the author tells the rose she is dying. Unit of meaning leads to the third layer, in the form of objects that is raised, settings, actors, authors and his world. The object that is raised are rose, bed, secret love, storm. The actor is the worm, setting of time is in the night, setting of place is at the bed in the howling storm. Meanwhile, The author's world is the story; world that is created by the author. This is a composition and sequence of objects are presented, background, actors, as well as the structure of the story (plot) as follows:

In a gloomy night in the storm very tight, there is the worm in a hurry find rose in her bed. He was very happy to meet rose. Secretly, this worm falls in love with the roses. However, his love only made the rose were damaged and destroyed. Each diction in the poem has been through such election of words by the poet. It is very likely caused by compaction to be one characteristic of poetry. The diction election ultimately resulted in certain impression on readers. In the poem "The Sick Rose", the author still using words with old English spelling of the period. In addition, each word also describes the diverse imaging. In the first line: "*O Rose Thou art sick*", 'Thou' is an ancient word from you. 'Art' can be interpreted as a form of expression, or an ancient form of 'sick' means pain. It can be defined as the rose is suffering from pain. Meanwhile, in the second, third and fourth line: "*The Invisible worm that flies in the night, in the howling storm.*" It means the worm that is invisible can fly into the air at night in the very strong storm. It also can be interpreted as the worm that go hastily. In the fifth and sixth line: "*Has found out thy bed of crimson joy*", the worm has found out the rose's place that crimson joyfully. Then, in the seventh line and the last line: "*And his dark secret love does*

*thy life destroy*" it means that the worm love secretly to rose and because of his love, makes the rose is damaged. Furthermore, world layer which is seen from the point of view that does not to be stated explicitly because it is already contained in this poem (implicitly). Viewed from a certain point of view, the worm is a bad and lustful. It can be seen in the first stanza, the invisible worm that flies in the night; the word flies means that the worm towards the rose hastily. This illustrates the fearful and strained feeling. In the howling storm, the howling storm means the wailing sound of rose that is in pain. In the second stanza, the first and second line illustrates the pleasant feeling of the worms because he had discovered the existence of rose in her bed. In the third and fourth line illustrates a sorrow and destruction of rose (woman) because of love from the worm (man) destroyed her.

### Discussion

After completing the research, the researcher found that the poem is a metaphor. The rose symbolizes woman or love, which becomes ill when infected with the materialism of the world. Then, the worm can be interpreted as lust or jealousy that owned by man. The worm has a "dark secret love" that destroys the rose's life suggesting the men use love that sham and presented secretly to the woman who ultimately destroyed the life of the woman. It means that men use love to trick women with the lure of giving true love. In this poem, women seemed to be the object of sexuality by the opposite sex, man. Woman is often tricked and harassed in the name of love. Sometimes in the name of love, a woman so honored and revered. On the other hand because of the beauty that is owned by a woman is what makes the woman's self-esteem is lowered. Thus, love is not always beautiful; love can bring destruction even the death.

*The Sick Rose* is an emotion of William Blake toward *Free Love* movement that happened in his era. *Free love* is a social movement that rejects marriage, which is seen as a form of social and financial bondage. The Free Love movement's initial goal was to separate the state from sexual matters such as marriage, birth control, and adultery. It claimed that such issues were the concern of the people in this era included William Blake. He once considered mad for his idiosyncratic views, Blake is highly regarded today for his expressiveness and creativity, as well as the philosophical and mystical undercurrents that reside within his work. His work has been characterized as part of the Romantic movement, or even "Pre-Romantic", for its largely having appeared in the 18th century. William Blake was a Romantic poet who explicitly compared the sexual oppression of marriage to slavery in works such as *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). Blake was critical of the marriage laws of his day; for Blake, law and love are opposed. In the earlier days of his marriage, there appears to have been some sort of trouble, arising out of jealousy or uneasiness on the wife's part, occasioned in all probability by her husband's expressed opinions on the relations of the sexes, which were of a very broad character, amounting, in fact, to a belief in free love. In part due to Catherine's apparent inability to bear children, he directly advocated bringing a second wife into the

house in imitation of the patriarcs. His poetry shows that fidelity in a marriage is not proof that an authentic love, and he condemned the jealousy and egotism merely as a motive for marriage laws.

In this poetry, Blake critics that a major problems to a free love society was corrupt human nature, not merely the intolerance of society and the jealousy of men, but also the hypocritical of human nature. He also seems to have thought that marriage should afford the joy of love, but that in reality it often does not, as it is known the couple of being chained often diminishes their joy.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

The poem "The Sick Rose" by William Blake is a beautiful poem for the selection and use words differently. The theme used in these poems is love but William Blake serves in the interpretation of love as a feeling that sometimes can hurt or even kill the perpetrators of love itself. In this poem was not found repetition of words that can make the poem becomes boring. The using of figure of speech such as personification and metaphor seemed so dominant to decorate in this poem. This is because the words in this poem describes the woman's feeling is hurt.

There are many things that can be discussed about objective and expressive approach from different perspectives, so the researcher makes some points that can be used as suggestions and recommendations to readers interested in subjective and objective approach, especially the study of poetry. On the other hand, this study presents objective and expressive criticism in poetry, including studies of literature, society, and meaning, and may be an alternative reference for students studying poetry. In addition, the following researchers interested in further research in the same field were advised to use these results as a starting point for conducting their research. In addition, it is advisable to use data sources from novels, advertisements, or spoken language such as songs and speeches. Overall, objective and subjective approach is an interesting topic to discuss, so we hope that this research will be useful to all readers, especially those who are interested in the same subject.

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