

A Semiotic Analysis of Robert Frost's Poem Love and A Question Based on Charles Sander Peirce's Triangle Theory

Andi asrifan¹, Anita Candra Dewi²

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

Emails: andiasrifan@gmail.com¹, anitacandradewi@unm.ac.id²

Abstract

This study aims to identify the symbols that Robert Frost employed in his poem "Love and a Question" and to elucidate the significance of such symbols "Love and a Question through Peirce's triangle theory. In this research, the researchers observe the meaning of the used symbols in Robert Frost's Love and a Question by using descriptive and qualitative research. This research focuses on the interpretation of symbols that are used in the poem. This study, which is library-based, draws on books and other scholarly works to bolster its objectivity. Finally, to explain the meanings of the used symbols in Robert Frost's poem Love and a Question, the researcher uses a semiotic approach and the theory of Peirce's triangle. Through Peirce's triangle theory, the meaning of the symbolic words in the poem Love and a Question. The meaning of the symbolic words are as follows; the green-white stick symbolizes the long journey of life, the stranger symbolizes life's uncertainty, the rich curse symbolizes life's priceless, and then the sky symbolizes unpredictable future life. All the symbolized words in the poem have meaning that is strongly related to the essence of life. The real meaning of life is how to live life as a newly married couple and build a household. It also includes the meaning of life that is no longer measured by wealth because wealth is often related to greediness which sometimes ends with misery in life.

Keywords: Poetry; Semiotics; Robert Frost's Poem; and Charles Sander Peirce's Triangle Theory.

1. Introduction

Literature is a form of human expression. Literature contains humans' experiences such as thoughts, feelings, ideas, excitement, and conviction in the concrete portrayal utilizing language. Hudson (1958) stated in *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, "Literature is the expression of life through the medium of language. It can be regarded as something essential since it contains about real life". There are two categories of literary work: imaginative and non-imaginative. Imaginative type is a category of literature that commonly uses connotative phrases to convey its meaning, whereas non-imaginative kind of literary work is more realistic in that it makes use of denotative phrases. The non-imaginative genre includes works like essays, critiques, histories, memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, and letters. The

imaginative category, on the other hand, includes plays, poetry, novels, and short tales. Poetry is the subject of further analysis by the experts in this publication. Etymologically, the term poetry came from the Greek word *poesis* means to build, to form, to make, and to create. Meanwhile, the word *poet* means a person who created something through his imagination, who looks like a god, or people who adore gods. They are kinds of persons who have sharp sight, holy people such as philosophers, statesmen, teachers, or people who can guess the hidden truth [1]. Poetry is one kind of literature that is which the emotions and ideas of the poet are reflected. Someone who writes poetry is called a poet. Poets often use the full potential of language. They increase humans' sense of awareness and stir emotions through the use of language. Poetry is a

kind of literary work which contains multiple meanings in it. According to Sudjiman (1984) in *Kamus Istilah Sastra*, he stated that poetry is a kind of literary work with the language of rhythm, rhyme, lines, and stanza tied to it. The most important is that poetry is a kind of literary work whose words are chosen and imaginative. With the imaginative words make poetry different from language and words that are used as everyday language. In poetry, it is commonly connotative meaning and words that symbolize something else. Therefore, it causes poetry to be difficult to understand. To reveal the meaning of words in poetry, it is not enough to focus only on the elements but it is also needed to reveal the symbolized meaning of literature within those words. Therefore, poetry often uses devices to aim the reader to reveal the meanings as well as to elicit sensuous or emotional reactions. We refer to this tool as symbolism [2]. A poem's use of symbols frequently invites different interpretations. Richard Abcarian, one of the poets, says, "In poetry, however, a symbol usually indicates something more specific." A symbol in poetry is an item or occasion that conveys meaning beyond its own. It is one of the poet's most popular and effective tools because it enables him to simply and effectively communicate many different meanings. For example, Gold may represent wealth or prosperity. Rose may represent beauty or love. Light may represent life, hope, or wisdom. Furthermore, other well-known symbols could stand for quite distinct or even opposing ideas. Water and fire are examples of natural symbols that can represent opposing ideas. Water, for instance, is often associated with life, including rain, fertility, food, and life itself. Storms, floods, and tempests can also symbolize death with water. Furthermore, fire—which frequently denotes destruction—may stand for purifying. Robert Frost was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. His father is William Prescott Frost Jr., and his mother is Isabelle Moodie. He never received a formal college degree, but while attending Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire in 1892 and later Harvard University in

Boston as a high school student in Lawrence, he became interested in reading and writing poetry. The publishing of two full-length volumes, *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston*, in 1913 solidified his fame. In 1920, he was the most well-known poet in America thanks to his novels *In the Clearing*, *Steeple Bush*, *A Further Range*, and *New Hampshire*. One of his famous poems is entitled "*Love and a Question*". This poetry is one of the collections poetry in his poem's book *A Boy Will*. This poem tells about a homeless man who came to the bride's house begging for shelter. However, the bridegroom was confused about whether or not he would allow him to stay because it was his newlywed's night with his wife. This poetry included symbolized meanings since the author let this poem have multiple interpretations from its readers. For the literary works to contain symbolized meaning and allow for multiple interpretations, it certainly needs an analysis of the poem. The analysis can vary depending on the used approach. One of the suitable approaches that is used to analyze literary works such as poems which contain many symbolized meanings is the semiotics approach. The Greek word for sign, *semeion*, is where the name semiotics originated. Peirce (as cited in Sobur, 2003) The Greek word for sign, *semeion*, is characterized a sign as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign". Moreover, Eco (1976: 7) says that "anything that may be interpreted as 'signs' is the subject of semiotics." It is in line with Daniel Chandler in his journal *Semiotics for Beginners*, who stated that "Semiotics involves not just what is referred to as 'signs' in casual conversation, but of anything which 'stands for something else'. From the definitions, we may conclude that semiotics are all things that might be interpreted as a sign and the indication can stand for something else [3]. In this research, the researchers use the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce especially his triangle model of sign. In the semiotics approach, Peirce uses the theory to reveal the

meanings of symbolized words. Peirce developed a triadic (three-part) model to explain the sign, what is "semiotic," and the taxonomy of signs. Among these are the Representation—the shape that the indication adopts—the Interpretant—the perception that the indication conveys—and the Object—the thing that the indication alludes to. The reason why chose the title of this research is because the researcher is interested in knowing the throughout meaning of the poem by Robert Frost "Love and a Question". There are some symbolized meanings within the poem that can be revealed through the analysis conducted in this research. As far as we are aware, a symbol is something that is visible and has acquired significance beyond its own. Therefore through this research, the researchers intend to reveal what the author of this poem needed to convey to the readers. This poem is among Robert Frost's well-known and renowned poems. It is of course that Frost had something wanted to convey to his readers related to moral values contained in this poem "Love and a Question". After analyzing and explicating the poems. The reader can comprehend more clearly life aspects such as love, relationship, attitude, or behavior that are contained within the poem "Love and a Question" [4]. Based on the explanation above, we know that literary works especially poetry can be called as a sign system since it uses language as its medium to convey what is within its works. The theory of semiotics cannot be apart from signs or codes which all of them contribute to give meanings in the literary works. In this research, the researchers tried to analyze some of the symbolized meaning of words within the poem in this research entitled "A Semiotics Analysis on Robert Frost's Poem *Love and a Question* based on Charles Sander Peirce's Triangle Theory." The following are the study's difficulties: 1) Which symbols does Robert Frost use in his poem "Love and a Question"? 2) How are the meanings of those symbols in the poem "Love and a Question" by Robert Frost through Peirce's triangle theory?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Previous Findings

Three earlier studies are used by the researcher in this investigation. The first is Andri Hermawati, who completed his thesis in 2010 at the State of Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta "A Semiotic Analysis on Kim Addonizio's Poems Based on C.S. Peirce Theory". His thesis used the semiotics of Charles Sander Peirce. It is the same with the researchers that he likewise makes use of poetry as his research subject, but the difference is he uses a different poem the poem of Kim Addonizio's poem as her object. The result of his thesis is he found the result of his thesis is he found the symbols that are used in the poems which he analyzed using the semiotic approach of C.S. Peirce. He also found the meanings of those symbols in each of the poems which he analyzed. Using the semiotic theory of Peirce, he found the used symbols as well as the meanings of those symbols. The meaning of the symbols he found were as follows; *the use of symbols is explained as the depressing view of the world in Verities, as the power of a woman's sexuality, independence, and equality in What Do Women Want, and as a comparison between tattoos and poetry to love in a relationship in First Poem for You*. 2010 graduate student Fitriana Pertiwi wrote the second prior study from Jakarta's State Islamic University "Syarif Hidayatullah" whose thesis was "A Semiotic Analysis in Literary Work based on Valentine Poems by Carol Ann Duffy". It is similar to the researchers of this conducted research in that she also uses the semiotic approach of C.S. Peirce. She does her studies using poems as well. Unlike the researcher, though, she makes use of poems by Carol Ann Duffy. In her research, she found that the poems which she analyzed contained different symbols with different meanings and functions in which all of these differences contributed to the revealed meanings of the poems. The other thesis entitled "Sy'i'r Tanpa Waton (Kajian Semiotik)" in 2013 was conducted by Nikken Derek Saputri is student at the University of the State of Semarang. She also applies C.S. Peirce's semiotic technique. She conducts studies on poems as well, but in a different way from the researchers, she uses a

Javanese poem from Guz Nizam in 2007. After reading the three previous types of research above, the researchers decided to research “Semiotic Analysis on Robert Frost’s Poem *Love and A Question* Based on Charles Sander Peirce’s Triangle Theory”. The researchers want to analyze the meaning of symbolic words in the poem. This thesis uses the semiotic approach of Charles Sander Peirce and the theory of Peirce’s triangle [5].

3. Some Pertinent Ideas

3.1 Definition of Poetry

Poetry is one of the genres of literature. Poetry is different from other literary works such as short stories, novels, and drama. The difference lies in the complexity and density of the language used. Poetry tends to use more complex words than the other works. It also uses unusual language instead of everyday language. Siswantoro (2010: 23) quotes Perrine as saying that poetry is the most condensed and concentrated form of writing. There are two components to poetry: internal and external components. The theme, character, place, rhythm, etc. are all part of the intrinsic element. In the meantime, the extrinsic factors include the author's location and time of creation of a particular poem, as well as its sociological, political, and cultural context. The investigation of one of the intrinsic elements—symbolic meanings—will be the main emphasis of this study. A poem consists of symbolized words. A poem is a piece of writing in poetry that is made from arrangements of words forming rhythmical lines. We may say the flower is the symbol of women or love and may have another possibility of meaning. Poets utilize symbolic language to convey their thoughts and emotions in their poetry. In light of such assertion, the researcher's goal in this study will be to decipher the meaning of the poem "Love and a Question" by Robert Frost's represented words.

3.2 Definition of Semiotic

The Greek term *semeion*, which means sign, is where the name semiotics originates. With the research of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who made significant contributions to the field of

semiotics, it was first applied in the 19th century. Another name for semiotics is semiology. It is the study of how signs and symbols are used and what they mean. It studies the sign system which is exploring how words or other signs create meaning. One of the definitions of semiotics is proposed by Umberto Eco, who states that ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’ (eco 1976, 7). By the definition, semiotics may be defined as the study that concerns the use of signs and symbols to know how words or particular signs make meaning. Semiotics is a study which not only concerned with what is referred to as a ‘sign’ in everyday speech but anything that ‘stands for’ something else. Peirce (as cited in Sobur, 2003) defined a sign “as something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”. In semiotics, what can be called a ‘sign’ is not only the word itself but also includes gestures, objects images, and sounds. Generally speaking, semiotics can be divided into two kinds. Both of them are semiotic communication and the other one is semiotic meaning. The theory of sign creation about communication aspects is covered in the first book, semiotic communication. The second is semiotic signification which concerns the meaning of a sign or symbol that is used in literary works. This research will concern the meaning of symbolized words that Robert Frost used in his poem “Love and a Question”.

3.3 Definition of Symbol

A symbol is something that represents something else. The symbol includes a word, an image, or anything that can represent other ideas. Peirce defined a symbol as “a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object”. From this definition, we may assume that a symbol is interpreted according to certain rules of a particular context [6]. There are some types of symbols. A symbol could be original and private, meaning that only that person knows what it means. It could also be culturally and historically significant, indicating that its meaning is

determined by its setting within a specific work or tradition. The other types are symbols that are both public and contextual. Symbols used by the public are symbols that are found with a wealth of meanings and associations and may be called ready-made symbols. Meanwhile, contextual symbols are symbols that are found tied to a certain context.

3.4 Robert Frost's Poem

Joseph Hillis Mills (1965) in his book *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-century Researchers*, explained that poetry "has primarily to do with the expression of feeling and emotion". Through poetry, the readers can feel the influence of the poet's feelings. As a result of the poet's feelings the various topics of the poetry. Any of the poet's feelings can become the topic of the poetry such as love, nature, death, and religion. Because poetry is influenced by the poet's feelings, it makes the poetry tend to be more difficult besides it has a complicated form. Robert Frost is an American poet who was much admired for his depictions of the rural life of New England. He was the premier American poet of nature and rural life in the modern era. His interest in nature and rural life influenced him to write poems with much of the theme of nature and rural life. His purpose is not to write or describe nature at all but he intends to communicate the complex psychological life of humans through nature as its background. The way Frost writes a poem is by first observing something in nature and after he finds it, he connects it with human psychology. The readers who read Frost's poems will be encouraged to be sharp in making the connection between nature in the poem with its connection to a certain psychology. The nature and rural life raised Frost does not attempt to tell the nature or any of the animals in the nature background. In conclusion, Frost's main purpose in making poetry is to analogize nature and seek suitable human psychology concerns. One example of nature and rural themes poems of Robert Frost is the 1923 collection "New Hampshire" which contains the poems "Fire and Ice," and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", Frost's mastery of form and line structure is on full display in the poem

"Fire and Ice," when, in just nine lines, he summarises the main argument regarding the fate of the universe and then subtly undermines it with a wry remark. In addition, one of his most well-known poems, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," blends an autobiographical account with a consideration of the tension between duty and desire in a traditional New England environment [7].

3.5 Charles Sander Peirce's Triangle Theory

In conducting the research, the researchers used the theory of sign from Charles Sander Peirce, an American philosopher as well as scientist and logician. He was born in 1839 in Cambridge, United States. He was noted for his work on the logic of relations but his popularity rose when he proposed the theory of sign. In his theory of semiotics, Peirce assumed that a sign "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign". He used to refer to 'sign' as something that substitutes something for someone. This study would be more specific in using Peirce's theory which is his Triangle Theory. According to Chandler in his book *Semiotics: The Basic*, he explained Peirce's triangle model in semiotics. Peirce offered a triangle model of semiotics as follows: 1) The *Representament* (R): the shape that the sign adopts, which is typically regarded as material but need not be; 2) An Interpretant (I): the sense that the sign makes rather than an interpreter; and 3) An Object (O): the thing that the sign refers to (referent). To be more understood the triangle theory of Peirce, it can be explicated as follows: 1) The representamen; is a representation of something different; 2) What the sign or representation represents and stands for is the object, and the interpretant is what the sign permits to exist and may manifest as the interpretation of the sign into a new sign. Furthermore, this Peirce's Triangle Theory can be visualized as follows;

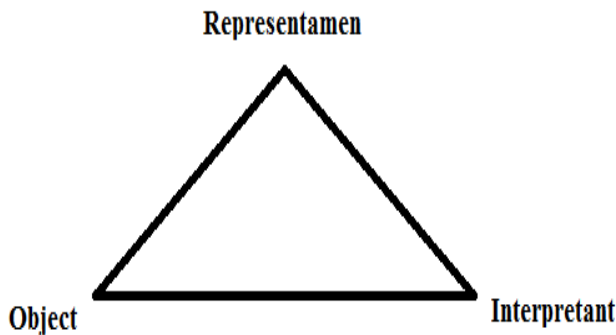
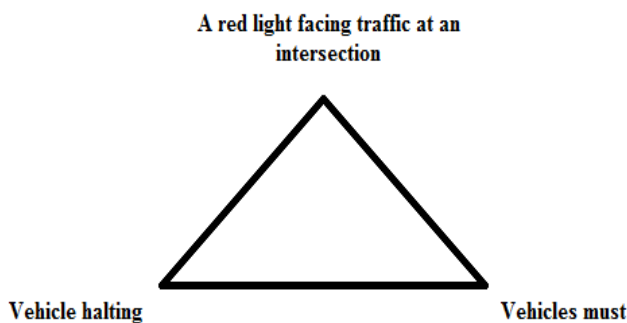


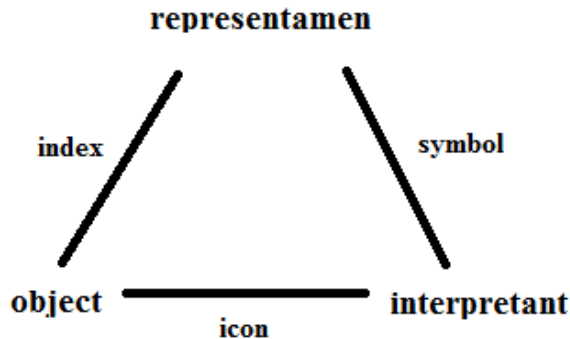
Fig 1 The Process of Linguistic Sign

This is the following example of Peirce's semiotics triangle applied theory of the traffic light sign for "stop":



The explanation of the example above is as follows: 1) The representamen (R) is a red light at an intersection facing traffic; 2) The object (O) is a vehicle halting; and 3) The knowledge that a red light means that cars need to halt is the Interpretant (I). Three trichotomies are used to categorize signs: first, based on whether the sign is a simple characteristic, a real thing, or a universal rule; second, based on whether the sign's relationship to its object is characterized by the sign's inherent qualities, existential qualities to that object, or relationship to an interpreter; and third, based on whether the interpreter interprets the sign as a factual, possible, or rational sign [8]. The first division divides a sign into three categories:

Qualisign, Sinsign, and Legisign. A Qualisign is a characteristic that functions as a sign. It is only when it is embodied that it can function as a sign; yet, this does not change the symbol's meaning. 2) A real-world item or occurrence that functions as a signal is called a sinsign. It is only what it is due to its qualities; hence, it involves one or, more precisely, more than one qualisign. 3) A law that functions as a sign is called a Legisign. According to the second trichotomy, an indicator, symbol, or icon can be used to describe a sign. 1) An icon is a symbol that, whether or not the object it represents exists, is simply indicated by the characters of its design. A cartoon, a portrait, and so forth are a few examples. 2) An index is a symbol that indicates the thing it represents and how that object affects it. This category contains more deliberately managed meaning as well as natural phenomena like smoke and fire, dark clouds and approaching rain, a human footprint, and the presence of a human being. 3) A symbol is a designation that denotes the thing that a sign can be referred to as an Argument, a Rheme, or a Dicisign or Dicient Sign, under the third trichotomy. A rheme is a sign that, in the eyes of its interpreter, represents a certain type of conceivable object; in other words, it is a sign of qualitative possibility. Alternatively, we may define a theme as a sign that simply serves to embody its object in its persona. 2) A dime sign is a symbol that, in the eyes of its interpreter, indicates real reality. or a sign that is supposed to indicate what it means in terms of real existence. 3) An argument is a sign that, in the eyes of its interpreter, is a legal sign. Alternatively, we may say that's an understood indicator. Furthermore, there is an explanation of the relationship between Peirce's Triangle and three different kinds of signs (icon, index, and symbol). According to Peirce, there are three different kinds of signs (239-240).



An icon is a representation of an object that is close enough to the original to be identified as the "genuine thing." Icons are the first kind of signs. This also holds for recording films or making sketches. The item in the triangle and its meaning, which makes the vital connection, are more important than the referent. The second kind of sign is represented by the index. In this instance, the link is independent of meaning and is represented by the object's consequence. For instance, smoke indicates that something is burning whether or not someone is around to analyze it. This also applies to the sound of raindrops hitting your window. Whether you're awake or not, the rain is still falling and it's still communicating with you in your room by tapping on your window. A depiction is the third. The relationship between a symbol's referent and meaning is what counts when it comes to symbols (representation). Examples of this include slogans, brand logos, national flags, and hand gestures used by people to be unfriendly. The portrayal and meaning of the object are important; the relationship to it is only a social convention. For an instant, imagine what would happen if national flags weren't flags at all, but rather something entirely different, like national bouncing balls. If one could convince people that a certain color of bouncy ball symbolizes their country, individuals jumping around with rubber balls may easily take over national holidays. It would be rational to do the same as hoisting a flag [9].

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

In this research, the researchers observe the meaning of the used symbols in Robert Frost's *Love and a Question* by using descriptive and qualitative research. Burns and Grove define descriptive research as research that is designed to describe and provide a picture of a situation as what it is. By using this kind of research, the researchers would like to describe the used symbols in the poem *Love and a Question* by Robert Frost. This descriptive technique is also intended to give the readers a better understanding through the clearer description of the meanings of the symbolized words used in this poem. This research focuses on the interpretation of symbols that are used in the poem. Books and other scientific writings are used in this library research to bolster the research's neutrality. Finally, to explain the meanings of the used symbols in Robert Frost's poem *Love and a Question*, the researcher uses a semiotic approach and the theory of Peirce's triangle.

4.2 Source of Data

There are two types of data sources in this research: 1) The poem *Love and a Question* by Robert Frost, which was first published by David Nutt in 1913, serves as the main source of information for this study. The data that the researchers used were selected words that have symbolic meanings in the poem. 2) All of the secondary data served to support the primary data. It includes the author's past as well as books, papers, journals, and other sources taken from the internet that support the primary data. The information includes quotes from literary critics as well as relevant sources to back up the interpretation of the poem's symbols [10].

4.3 Procedure of Data Collection

The data is primarily taken from words in Robert Frost's poem *Love and a Question*. The researchers perform certain tasks as part of the data collection process. The process of gathering data begins with closely examining the main and secondary sources. After that, the researchers provided a succinct analysis and noted noteworthy discoveries. From the notes taken, the researchers

do selection over the words in the poem as symbolized words that should find meaning for each word. The researcher chose the data collecting in the second reading stage of a deeper interpretation to determine the significance of the research's primary data. Any records about the original data and provide support for the examination were gathered by the researcher to serve as secondary data.

4.4 Technique of Data Analysis

There are three main steps in the data analysis process. Classifying the data comes first, following the completion of the data collection process. The first step is the classification process was done by intensive reading of the poem. The researchers read intensely and frequently to understand the poem well so that the search for symbolized words in the poem can become easy for the researchers to analyze. To respond to the research questions, the researcher employed semiotic theory in the second step, which involved displaying the classified data. The researcher analyzed the symbolic words in the poem and then the researchers gathered them as selected words whose meaning would be revealed. Determining the meaning of symbols is the main objective of this step within the poem to reveal the moral message that the author of the poem wanted to convey to the readers. The researcher concludes and writes up the findings in a systematic manner in the final phase [11].

5. Findings and Discussion

Love and a Question: An Explanation and Symbol Analysis by Robert Frost

LOVE AND A QUESTION

By Robert Frost

*A Stranger came to the door at eve,
And he spoke the bridegroom fair.
He bore a green-white stick in his hand,
And, for all burden, care.
He asked with the eyes more than the lips
For a shelter for the night,
And he turned and looked at the road afar
Without a window light.*

*The bridegroom came forth onto the porch
With, 'Let us look at the sky,
And question what of the night to be,
Stranger, you and I.'
The woodbine leaves littered the yard,
The woodbine berries were blue,
Autumn, yes, winter was in the wind;
'Stranger, I wish I knew.'*

*Within, the bride in the dusk alone
Bent over the open fire,
Her face rose red with the glowing coal
And the thought of the heart's desire.
The bridegroom looked at the weary road,
Yet saw but her within,
And wished her heart in a case of gold
And pinned with a silver pin.*

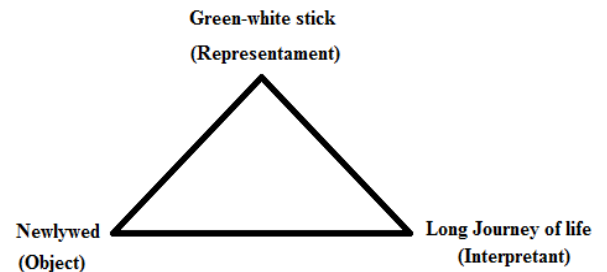
*The bridegroom thought it little to give
A dole of bread, a purse,
A heartfelt prayer for the poor of God,
Or for the rich a curse;
But whether or not a man was asked
To mar the love of two
By harboring woe in the bridal house,
The bridegroom wished he knew.*

Robert Frost wrote a poem titled "Love and a Question" that was included in his 1913 book *A Boy's Will*. Frost, an American poet, was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. This poem is divided into four stanzas, each with eight lines in it. Frost began his poem with a stranger who approached a house. The house is a bridal's house. He came with his green-white stick begging for a place to stay one night. However, the bridegroom who came to see that poor stranger started being confused about whether he would let the stranger stay one night in their house or not. The groom then considers the condition of the road which shows that it will be raining outside. Meanwhile, his bride is still waiting for him she is full of desire of passionate love for their newlywed's night. At the end of the poem, Frost pictured the poem with the groom who finally decides to give bread or money

to the stranger since he does not want to disturb his newlywed's night with his lovely wife. However, the groom remained confused and afraid of whether or not his decision to not let the stranger stay might be wrong. This poem was examined using the four communication aims of informing, entertaining, persuading, and questioning as a framework for how the media should convey ideas and emotions to audiences. Robert Frost used some symbols within this poem to deliver the reader's moral message through this poem. Some of the symbols in this poem are *Green-White-Stick*, *A Stranger*, and *The Rich a Curse* and *Sky*. Each of those symbols in this poem must have its importance [12]. These images are thought to depict Robert Frost's perspective on starting a new life as a spouse or groom. It is not as easy as someone might predict that the life of a spouse is just as simple as it is. There must be happiness which often takes turns to sorrow and obstacles that should be faced together as people who just come into the life of a newlywed. The symbols of *Green-White-Stick*, *A Stranger*, and *Till readers can draw their conclusions and comprehend what Frost meant, the Rich, a Curse, and the sky are representations of what Frost intended to say in his poem*. Using Charles Sander Peirce's triangle theory of semiotics, the scholars attempted to understand the symbols employed in the poem "Love and a Question." The theory's goal is to decipher the meaning of the three symbols—representation, interpreter, and object—found in this studied poem.

5.1 Explication and Symbol Analysis of the "Green-White Stick"

A *Green White Stick* means a stick that is colored in green. In this poem, the *Green-white stick* is a symbol of a long journey of life. Frost expressed his picture of a newlywed who is going to face and live a new life as a spouse. For this explanation, it can be described as follows:

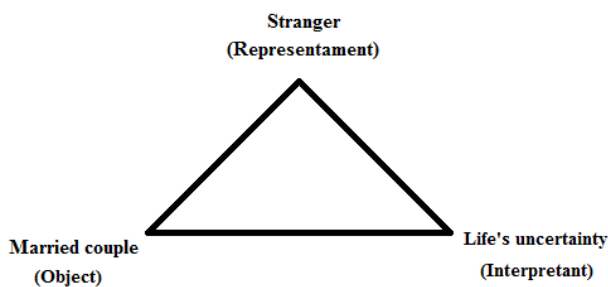


Explanation: The term "Green-White Stick" refers to a symbol that has a newlywed as its focal point. The poem "Green-White Stick" by Frost refers to the protracted journey of life (as interpretant). Frost pictured the coming of the stranger: "*He bore a green-white stick in his hand/ And, for all burden, care*" (lines 3-4). He tried to carry the attention of the readers into the journey that has been traced by the stranger with his *green-white stick* which is not only a usual *stick* but a symbolic meaning of someone who has walked through a long journey and the journey was a journey of life. In this poem "Green-white stick" means a long journey of life. In this poem, Frost says a stranger has approached a newlywed's house then he met with the owner of the house which is the bridegroom. Since the stranger came with his *green-white stick*, the author of this poem wanted to convey to the reader that the *green-white stick* is something that is strongly related to a journey. It is a journey of life. The stick in real life is a tool for helping people who are difficult to walk or for those who are blind, it functions to help them detect objects as well as obstacles in front of the people and also to direct someone to walk. It is slightly similar to the stick that was carried by the stranger. The stick helped the stranger to walk so that he could approach the bridegroom's house for shelter for the night. In this poem, the bridegroom and his wife just married which means they just began a new life as spouses. The *green-white stick* symbolizes the long journey of life that they have to face. The journey started from the day they married until their death separated them both. The symbolic meaning of the *green-white stick* is not only focused on the stick itself but

the colors of the stick. The green color of the stick symbolized new life. On the other hand, the color white of the stick symbolizes death. This combination of stick colors symbolizes the journey of life as in this poem the new life of a newlywed which started from a new life (as a spouse) that will end with death. As a newlywed, they would live this life with many things in life, they will face both things of happiness and sorrow as well as obstacles of life [13].

5.2 Explication and Symbol Analysis of "Stranger"

The literal meaning of a *Stranger* is a person with whom one has had no personal acquaintance, but in this poem, the *stranger* represents life's uncertainty. "A *Stranger* came to the door at eve/ And he spoke the bridegroom fair." (Line 1-2) indicates that a stranger here is something uncertain about what happens next in the newlywed's life. It is when a *stranger* meets with the bridegroom represents the uncertainty of life which the newlywed faces in their future household life. For this explanation, it can be described as follows:

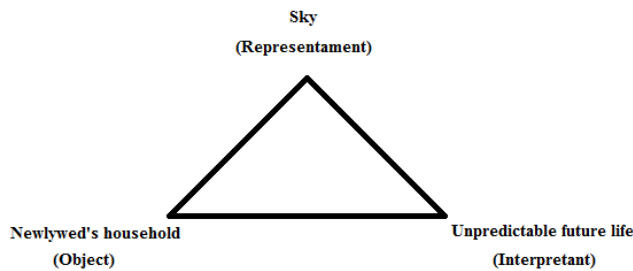


Explanation: The married pair is the symbol's object that the word "Stranger" refers to. The meaning of the word "Stranger" in Frost's poem is the unpredictability of life. The poem's first and second lines suggest that the stranger represents something that is still unknown regarding the newlyweds' future. The word 'stranger' means a person with whom one has had no personal acquaintance, but in this poem, the word 'stranger' has a symbolic meaning of life's uncertainty or unpredictable future. In the poem *Love and a Question*, it is told that there is a stranger approached a newlywed's house and met with the

owner of the house which is the bridegroom. The *stranger* is an old man who is recognized by the stick he carries with him and some loads over his shoulder. The *stranger* came to the bridegroom's house to beg a shelter for one night. He showed a pity expression to beg the shelter from the bridegroom. However, the bridegroom is still considering the request while he pays attention to the condition outside the house without any light to irradiate roads. As what has been explained a *stranger* here symbolized such uncertainty of life. Life must be uncertain, no one knows what will happen in the future like the newlywed who doesn't know what their marriage life will be like [14,15]. The bridegroom is someone who just came into a new phase of life that is a new phase as a married couple. To walk into a new phase of life is not as easy as what is imagined. There outside many things that should be considered related to future life that is going to be built in a household's life as a married couple [16]. *The stranger* here represents a picture of the future of a newlywed's life. Joy as well as fear of a newlywed is very clearly described when the bridegroom observes the condition of outside his house when meeting the stranger. He did not know what his household life would be which he just married on that day. Would it end in happiness or otherwise, end with sorrow like the life of a *stranger* who had nothing even the house to live in?

5.3 Explication and symbol analysis of "sky"

The word 'sky' means the area above the Earth, in which clouds, the sun, etc. can be seen, but in this poem *sky* represents **unpredictable future life**. "The bridegroom came forth into the porch/ With, 'Let us look at **the sky** / And question what of the night to be / *Stranger, you and I*.'" (Line 9-12). These lines show that *the sky* whose meaning gives the idea of future life is an unpredictable thing, especially for those who just married and live as a newly married couple. Moreover, in line 12 "*Stranger, you and I*" which indicates that the bridegroom asked himself about what kind of life he and his spouse would face in the future. It can be explained as follows in light of these explanations:

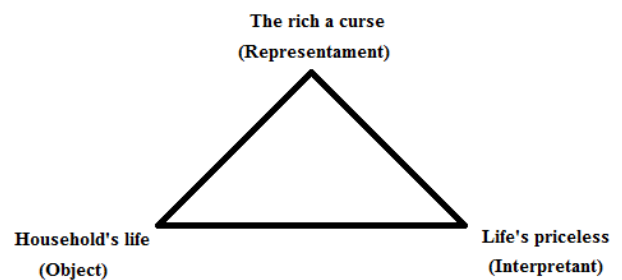


Explanation: The word "sky" refers to a symbol that has the newlyweds' home as its focal point. The word "sky" in Frost's poem refers to an interpretive, uncertain future existence. In this poem, Frost wanted to convey to his readers that the sky in his poem symbolizes the meaning of life and that it cannot be guessed what it would be like. It is like the future of a newlywed's household life. The word *sky* in this poem symbolizes the unpredictable future life. It is said that this poem is about a newly married couple who just started their life as a spouse. A newlywed means they just started to build their household. They just do not know what will happen in the future, especially in their household's life. In lines 9 until 12 in this poem: "*The bridegroom came forth into the porch/ With, 'Let us look at the sky,/ And question what of the night to be,/ Stranger, you and I'.*" It directs the reader to have a deeper understanding of the word *sky* as one of the symbolized words in this poem. As the bridegroom invited the stranger to look at the sky, there must be a hidden meaning of such action. The bridegroom tried to consider his future life related to his status as a newlywed. As we know the sky in real life often changes, there is sometimes sky is bright and clear in the summer or may be cloudy in the rainy season. The action of the bridegroom who looks at the sky is perhaps because he is also studying what changes his household will experience as the sky changes depending on the season change [17].

5.4 Explication and symbol analysis of "The Rich a Curse"

The rich a curse means becoming a rich person is a curse, but in this poem, *the rich a curse* represents life's priceless. "A heartfelt prayer for

the poor of God,/ Or for **the rich a curse**" (Line 27-28). In Frost's poem *Love and a Question, the rich curse* is described as a situation where wealth is not only a measure of happiness because life is priceless for wealth to be supposed as something that can guarantee happiness in life. Happiness often comes just because people have been grateful for what they have in life. For this explanation, it can be described as follows:



Explanation: The phrase "The rich a curse" stands for a symbol that relates to a household's life as its object. In Frost's poem, the meaning of the phrase "The rich a curse" is life's priceless (as interpretant). Through *the rich a curse*, Frost intended to convey the real meaning of life that life should not be measured by wealth because it is enough to be grateful to reach happiness. *The rich a curse* in its literal meaning is becoming a rich person is a curse, but in this poem, the meaning of *the rich a curse* is not the same as the literal meaning. Instead, it means life is no longer about how people earn money or become rich people, fully equipped by wealth but how to become a person who always is grateful for what we have. In the first line of the poem, "*The bridegroom thought it little to give / A dole of bread, a purse, / A heartfelt prayer for the poor of God, Or the rich a curse.*" (Line 25-28). Although the bridegroom in this poem did not allow the stranger to stay in his house he still showed his respect and sympathy by giving him some bread and money to make himself feel better about his decision. Besides, the bridegroom also prayed for the stranger so that he was safe along his back to walk through the road. In this poem, *the rich curse* symbolizes the

bridegroom who always is grateful for the life he lives with his wife. The prayer that's given to the stranger means prayer for his married life. He hoped his life with his lovely wife was always tranquility and happiness without the touch of ambition for reaching worldly things such as wealth [18,19]. Living this life happily without being spoiled by such wealth is enough for his married life. He did not want such copious wealth to make him blind to this temporary life. The bridegroom felt enough with his unpretentious life regarding the measurement for living life as happily as possible. Finally, *the rich curse* represents the picture of life that becoming rich does not guarantee a happy life but rather can bring someone's life misery because of greediness over wealth as in the picture of the *stranger* in the poem who had nothing but a miserable life without a place to live.

6. Conclusion

Poetry is a kind of literary work that is the reflection of a poet's thoughts and feelings. It reflects what the poet feels about the reality through written form of a poem. Poetry can increase humans' sense of awareness and stir emotions through the use of language. It is also a kind of literary work whose words are chosen and imaginative. With the imaginative words make poetry different from language and words that are used as everyday language. In poetry, it contains multiple meanings in it. Therefore, in poetry, multiple interpretations can occur. In poetry, it is commonly connotative meaning and words that are symbolized something else. Therefore, it causes poetry to be difficult to understand. To reveal the meaning of words in poetry, it is not enough to focus only on the elements but it is also needed to reveal the symbolized meaning of literature within those words. To analyze the meaning of symbolic words in poetry it is needed to use an approach. One of the suitable approaches in analyzing Robert Frost's poem *Love and a Question* as an object of this research is the semiotic approach. The semiotic approach that is used here is a semiotic approach that is proposed by an American poet, Robert Frost. In Peirce's semiotic, to understand the meaning of

the poem's symbols, the Triangle theory is given. Interpretant, Object, and Representation make up Peirce's triangle theory. The form that a symbol adopts is called its representation. An interpretant is the meaning that is derived from the sign; they are not interpreters. Additionally, the symbol refers to an object [20]. The significance of the symbolic words in the poem *Love and a Question* is revealed via Peirce's triangle theory. The meaning of the symbolic words are as follows; the *green-white stick* symbolizes the long journey of life, the *stranger* symbolizes life's uncertainty, *the rich curse* symbolizes life's priceless, and the *sky* symbolizes unpredictable future life. All the symbolized words in the poem have meaning that is strongly related to the essence of life. The real meaning of life is how to live life as a newly married couple and build a household. It also included the meaning of life that is no longer measured by wealth because wealth is often related to greediness which sometimes ends with misery in life.

7. Acknowledgments

The authors are thankful to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sukardi Weda, SS., M.Pd., M.Hum., M.Si., MM., M.Sos.I., MAP (State University of Makassar), and Yan Chen (Instructional Technology, Northern Illinois University's Department of Educational Technology, Research, and Assessment) for their invaluable assistance with this article. Furthermore, special thanks are extended to Dr. Gail Jacky (University Writing Center, Northern Illinois University, USA) for her kind cooperation. The Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia is acknowledged by the author.

References

- [1]. Abcarian, R., & Klotz, M. (Eds.). (1988). *Literature: The human experience*. St. Martin's Press.
- [2]. Peirce, C. S. (2014). Charles Sanders Peirce. *Information Theory*, 181.
- [3]. Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2010). *Understanding nursing research*-eBook:

Building an evidence-based practice. Elsevier Health Sciences.

- [4].Chandler, D. (2002). The basics. London, UK: Routledge.
- [5].Deely, J. (1976). The doctrine of signs: taking form at last. *Semiotica*, 18(2), 171-193.
- [6].Muhammad, H. M., & Isah, A. U. (2023). Indicting Frost for Androcentric Speciesism: An Ecofeminist Reading of Robert Frost's "The Most of It".
- [7].No, r. (2017). Women identity in Henrik Ibsen's The Doll's house and Robert frost's home burial: A Comparative Study (doctoral dissertation, university of Calicut).
- [8].Guth, H. P., & Rico, G. L. (1997). Discovering literature: stories, poems, plays. (No Title).
- [9].Heller, K., & Rulik, B. (2016). *Ctenosciara alexanderkoenigi* sp. n.(Diptera: Sciaridae), an exotic invader in Germany?. *Biodiversity Data Journal*, (4).
- [10].Hermawan, A. (2010). A semantic analysis of Kim Addonizio's poems based on CS Peirce's theory.
- [11].Campbell, M. D. (1960). Art Education in Other Countries. *Art Education*, 13(7), 10-23.
- [12].Kaznu.kz. "Kaznu.Kz." [http://pps.kaznu.kz/ru/Main/FileShow/471793/116/124/1641/Карагойшиева Данель Алмасбековна/2016/2](http://pps.kaznu.kz/ru/Main/FileShow/471793/116/124/1641/Карагойшиева_Данель_Алмасбековна/2016/2).
- [13].Miller, J. H. (1965). Poets of reality: six twentieth-century writers. Harvard University Press.
- [14].Wrigley, R. (2017). Nemerov's Door. *The Missouri Review*, 40(1), 156-172.
- [15].Panuti, S. (1984). Kamus Istilah Sastra. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- [16].Williams, V., Joio, D., Barnes, W., Coleridge, M. E., Smart, C., Hughes, L., ... & Tagore, R. San Francisco Lyric Chorus.
- [17].Zaemakhrus, M. (2010). Metode penelitian sastra: analisis struktur puisi tahun 2010.
- [18].Sobur, A. (2003). *Semiotika Komunikasi*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya. Subair, S.(2019). *Simbolisme Haji Orang Bugis Menguak Makna Ibadah Haji Bagi Orang Bugis Di Bone Sulawesi Selatan*.
- [19].Study.com. "What Is Semiotics? - Definition & Examples." <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-semiotics-definition-examples.html>.
- [20].Zainuddun, F. *Telaah Sastra*. Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2000.