



A Semiotic Analysis on Eldorado Poem by Edgar Allan Poe

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Abstract

The research is entitled “A Semiotic Analysis on Eldorado poem by Edgar Allan Poe”. This study is aimed to know the meaning of the symbols of Gallant knight, Eldorado, shadow, a pilgrim shadow, shade, over the mountains related to the socio-historical issue. This study is also used in the qualitative method and library research. Starting from the writers’ interest in the poem and think that, the poem has a unique word inside it. In this research, the knight who do the long journey to search for “Eldorado”. This study focuses on semiotic analysis, which uses the semiotic approach. Charles Sanders Pierce is the theory that the writers use to analyze “Eldorado” poem by Edgar Allan Poe. The use of semiotic analysis is to find a symbol of Eldorado poem. This study also used the socio-historical approach that correlates with the Eldorado poem.

The symbols of Eldorado poem, a gallant knight, Eldorado, shadow, a pilgrim shadow, shade, and over the mountains represent the meaning, where Eldorado is true of a wealthy city made of gold. However, Eldorado is not a place but a person. The whole journey of Europeans to find a golden city is in vain. Eldorado's poem is related to the symbol of time in 1849 in California, where the attitude of the Muisca tribe is different from the people of Europe who see gold as a symbol of wealth, as well as power. Furthermore, the minds of Europeans who heard the story were only fascinated by how much gold was thrown into the lake or buried in shrines throughout Colombia. Not the meaning of gold itself. That is why Poe revealed a poem entitled Eldorado which means that Eldorado itself was a rich king who had covered his entire body with gold.

Keywords: *Eldorado Poem, Gold Rush, Socio-historical, Semiotic, Symbol*

INTRODUCTION

According to Cresswel (2012), literature is an absorption word from the literary Sanskrit language which means “text containing instructions” or “guidelines”, from the basic word which means “instruction” or “teaching”. Literature is used by an author to submit ideas and experiences. Literature is not just about writing, literature also is like books, records, phonograph records, laserdiscs, cassettes. One of the most literary works is poetry (Woro Kasih, 2018).

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity, the emotions are contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and emotions, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, it is gradually produced and does itself next in the mind (Fadaee, 2011). It means that poetry is a way to express ideas, feelings, and emotions, especially in literary work. It makes poetry has a unique way to express the ideas of feeling by the words. The interest of Poe's literary creation is two points, a work must create unity in the reader to be considered successful and the single effect must be detailed from the subject to be the result of rational consideration on the part of the writers. Therefore, the writers choose Eldorado by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe wrote in 1849 where at that time gold was found in California that caused a massive gold rush (Faris, 1948). The first place where the gold was found in California was called gold land. Every people at that time were very excited to found the legendary city of gold, but most of those pursuing gold in California did not get rich.

As a writer, Poe wrote Eldorado poem in 1849 as a figuratively to described as sort of idealized feeling that a poet seeks. The symbol mediates the artistic image and the concepts of hidden meaning (Firth, 2011). However, the symbol is fuller of hidden meaning than the concept. Unlike, the artistic image, it had a factual meaning. It means that every sign or word has a hidden meaning (Aryangga and Nurmaily, 2017). It is like what Poe wrote on Eldorado poem that has a hidden meaning inside the word. On other hand, symbols are signs based on

conventions, regulations, or agreements that have been mutually agreed upon (Kardiansyah, 2016). Sometimes symbols create out of things that the reader does not know the real meaning in the poem. By reading a poem, the reader can read some words that have a deep meaning inside the word and the reader can know the meaning of the word using the semiotic approach (Nordquist, 2018).

In finding a hidden meaning in Eldorado's poem we need to have semiotics. Pierce (1940) said that signs work only if there is an intelligence capable of learning from experience. It means that semiotics is not only a study about the signs but also it studies the deep meaning inside the word. To use the semiotics approach, Pierce has a theory of semiotic with triadic or trichotomy concepts (sign consists of three elements), a sign (representamen) is something that is shared someone represents something else in several things or capacity (not necessarily material). Something else is called Interpretation of the first sign the idea interpretation in mind and turn refers to the object. Thus a sign (representamen) has a relation direct triadic with the interpretant and the object. This process is called significance. These triadic is to gain the deep meaning inside the words in Eldorado poem.

The writers are interested to analyze the poem using a semiotic approach. The important point in semiotics is the study of signs and symbols. Pierce stated semiotics is not only studying signs but also much deeper than that. Then, it studies how people first of all interpreted a sign. Furthermore, it studies how people then draw on cultural or personal experiences to understand a sign that is shown. It can be interpreted as communication. It means that semiotics is one of the ways to communicate (Samanik and Lianasari, 2016). The writers use semiotic analysis to interpret the meaning of the symbols inside the words. The semiotics approach will help the writers to do the analysis.

According to the background of the study which has been elaborated previously, the writers formulates the problems into; what are the symbols related to the socio-historical issue in Eldorado, and what are the meanings of the symbol from that analyzed poem?. From the research questions, the objective of this research is to know the meaning of the symbols of Gallant knight, Eldorado, shadow, a pilgrim shadow, shade, and over the mountains related to the socio-historical issue.

The writers describe some previous studies and relevant theories that help the writers to conduct this research. The previous studies which have relatable topic can be a guideline. Meanwhile, the relatable theory will help the writers to analyze this research. Thus, the writers also hope that finding the exact previous study with the research problem, will help the writers and give guidance to the writers when the writers conduct the research. "Symbols in Robert Frost's Poems". A thesis by Ichwan Setiawan (2014) from Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. In his study case, the writers aimed to find out the symbol in Robert Frost's poem, which are The Road not Take, Fire and Ice and Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. By using Charles Sanders Pierce's theory about the semiotic can be used to determine the themes and symbols contained in the poetry of Robert Frost. The writers consider using this previous study since it uses semiotic. Further, this analysis uses as the review and example of how to apply semiotics analysis theory. "An Analysis of Symbol Signs in Emily Dickinson's Death Poems". A thesis by Nabila Inaya Jannati (2012) from Sebelah Marat University. In his study case, the writers identify the kinds of the symbol appear in Emily Dickinson's death poems and how Emily Dickinson constructs symbol in her deaths poems. The writers use the semiotic approach and Riffaterre's semiotic of poetry. This theory focuses on poetry analysis and gives the most representative tool to uncover symbolic signs in the poem and it also relates to social and cultural background analysis (Lina and Setiawan, 2017).

Further, the contribution of this research is the similarity in using the theory of semiotic in different experts since there is a symbolic sign in the poem and it relates to social and cultural background analysis. A Semiotic Analysis in Literary work-based Valentine poems by Carol Ann Duffy, a thesis by Fitriana Pertiwi (2010) from State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah. In his study case, the writer uses semiotic analysis to analyze the meaning of symbols and reveal the idea of Carol Ann Duffy's poem. The theory that the writer uses is by Roland Barthes contains a symbol in the words that the poet use. Thus, the writers can see the way semiotic theory being applied since in doing this analysis, the writer needs to find deep meaning. Thus, the semiotic theory is the best method in doing the analysis. "Semiotic Analysis in William Blake Poem". A thesis by Husnul Hatima Adudu, Dahlia Husain (2014) from Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo. In the study, the writers focused on the semiotic of Riffaterre's theory in William Blake's poems, titled *The Sick Rose, My Pretty Rose Tree, and The Garden of Love*. Those poems are about the author's feelings for his wife. In this research, the writers can see the way the writer focuses on the semiotic approach and how to compare in each poem to make the result of the author's feeling inside each poem. This analysis helps the writers to make the result of what happened with the world in that era in the writers' analysis.

METHOD

The writers imply that descriptive qualitative is a method in which the writers give each explanation, fact, and survey to analyze the problem discussed using data in the form of words. The data source from this research is taken from Eldorado poem by Edgar Allan Poe. The Eldorado poem has four stanzas. The poem firstly was published in April 1849 (Arikunto, 2010).

To collect the data, the writers do library research. Some steps that the writers going to do are: read the data sources that support this analysis. The writers read the data sources from journals, researches, and the poem itself to understand deeper and make this analysis conceptualized to be discussed then, finding the data that indicates the semiotics elements (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). After reading the data sources, the writers search the reliable data that show the semiotics elements by taking notes from the texts, connecting, and categorizing the data. In this step, the writers connect and categorize the data to be the main issue of the discussion and arranging the data (Herdiansyah, 2010). The data, which have content or correlation with the semiotic element according to Pierce, are arranged in a systematic process (1986).

In doing the analysis, the writers apply a technique as well. In this data analyzing technique, the researcher conducts some stages as follows: Classifying the data. In the first step, the writers classify the data which contains the symbol. To make the analysis easier to be analyzed then, interpreting the data. In the second step, the writers attempt to understand the data by interpreting the data taken from the data sources and relates it to be objectives of research questions collaborated with the formulation of problems, analyzing the data. After classifying and interpreting the data, the writers analyze the data based on the theory of the semiotic elements by Pierce and evaluating the data. The entire data had been analyzed and evaluated. To ensure the formulation of the problems and objectives of the research have been answered clearly. In the last step, the writers categorize the symbol and interpret the meaning of that symbol to convey the idea.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this analysis, the writers describe the symbol of Eldorado poem by looking socio-historical approach in 1849. At that time, California was a place where everyone sailed to find gold. Therefore, in 1849 is called a gold rush. Initially, Poe made an Eldorado poem seeing the symbol of time. Before 1849, there was a golden legend in America in 1492 relating to Eldorado poem. Then, the symbol that shows the meaning of Eldorado poem is related to the socio-historical approach of the gold rush.

This research focuses on the symbol of Eldorado poem by looking socio-historical approach before 1849. This incident in 1849 is also related to the creation of a poem entitled Eldorado by Edgar Allan Poe, in which the poem describes so many people who came to find gold in California to make it rich. However, it is precisely the opposite of the people who flocked in part to not get gold and in vain. The poem Eldorado made by Poe has words that have a meaning related to the events of 1849 in California. Symbols of words related to the event of 1849 in Eldorado poem are:

Symbol of Gallant Knight

Based on the symbol of Eldorado poem that related to the event in 1849 the word of Gallant knight has a deep meaning inside the word. In the first stanza, the writers analyze the word Gallant knight:

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
 In sunshine and in shadow,
 Had journeyed long,
 Singing a song,
 In search of Eldorado.

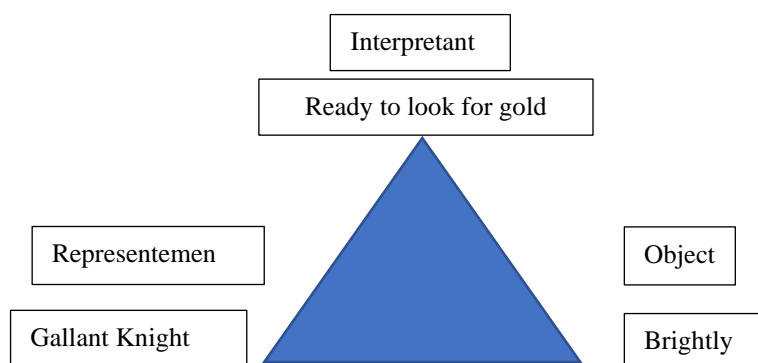


Figure 1. The Process of Triadic

In the first stanza of the word, the gallant knight can be seen as a knight, fresh, and ready to go, start the journey, or maybe we can even think of it as a quest. The knight is full of hope and in good spirits. This is proven by the line “singing song” in the first stanza of the fourth line. The word gallant knight has a symbol that the knight at that time has a journey to search for gold. The word of gallant knight itself represents the meaning of what Poe wants to reveal seen from the socio-historical in 1849. Then, when gold was discovered on the American continent, soldiers and explorers flocked to find the presence of gold at the time. This evidence can refer to the conquerors from Spain and then sent at least five large expeditions to search for El Dorado.

Symbol of Eldorado

Another symbol in the first stanza that represents the tragedy in 1849, is Eldorado. Eldorado itself is a rich king in Bogota, Colombia. The writers analyze the symbol of the word Eldorado that has a relatable with socio-historical background:

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of **Eldorado**.

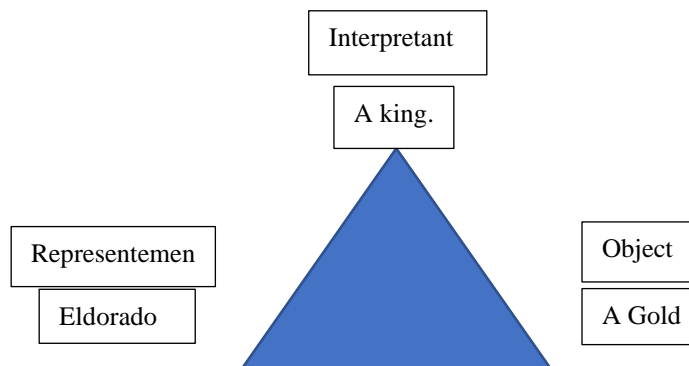


Figure 1. The Process of Triadic

The triangle above shows that there is a correlation between sign or representamen, interpretant, and object. The word Eldorado stands for a symbol that relates to dreaming land as its object. The real meaning of Eldorado is the king, called Zip, will be covered with mud which will then be changed again with gold dust. After that, he and other tribal elders would pedal a raft of gold and other jewelry to the middle of the lake. After reaching the middle, they will throw the silver-gold into the lake. Then the king will jump into the lake to clean up from the gold dust and mud that surrounds the risk. In Eldorado Poe wants to reveal in that era that place as a legendary city of gold. This is proven looking in the socio-historical approach of Eldorado poem.

Symbol of Shadow

In the second stanza, the writers found a word that has a symbol related to the socio-history. Shadow is a dark area that happened when the knight was upset. The explorers were desperate to drain Lake Guatavita to find the gold they sought as wealth. It representing an illusion. For these explanations, it can be described as follows:

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a **shadow**—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

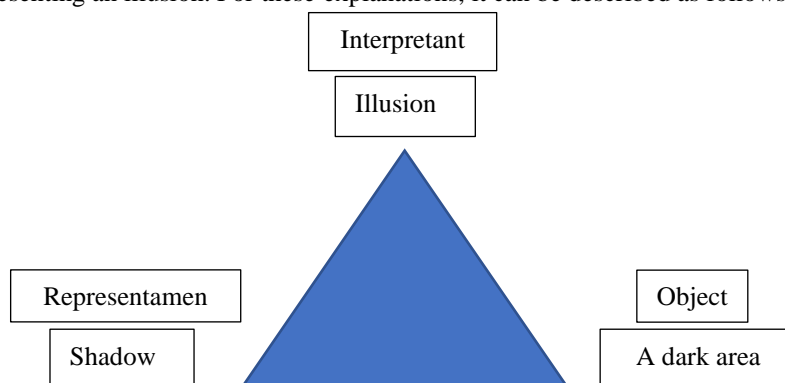


Figure 3. The Process of Triadic

The triangle above shows that there is a correlation between sign or representamen, interpretan, and object. The word shadow stands for the representamen which relates to a dark area as its object. The meaning of the word shadow is the illusion which something that looks real and exists but doesn't exist. It is like a shadow. Poe's meaning word shadow is an illusion. These illusions include hopes, thoughts, feelings, emotions, opinions, and everything received from the five senses, namely information from the eyes, nose, ears, skin, and tongue. All of these things have no real form in us. It is a shadow of illusion as if there is, but does not exist.

Symbol of Pilgrim Shadow

In the third stanza, the writers find a symbol that has a symbol. Then, analyze the word a pilgrim shadow. Pilgrim shadow means death. When the knight on his journey, nobody people live there but he met a pilgrim shadow that gave him a direction to death. For these explanations, it can be described as follows:

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a **pilgrim shadow**—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

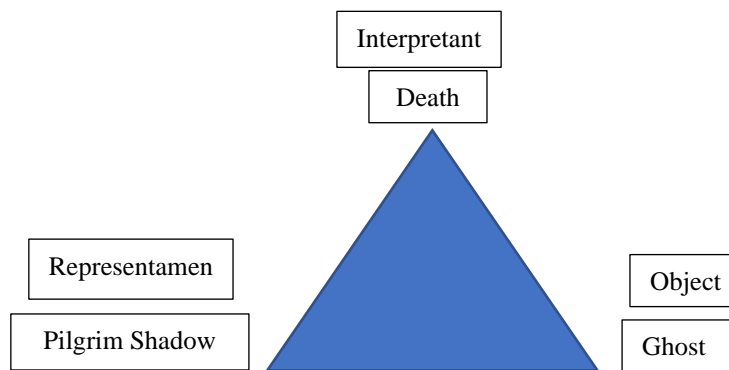


Figure 5. The Process of Triadic

The pilgrim shadow means signs of death for knights. Pilgrim shadow, a phrase that further highlights the connection between the knight's wanderings and his death. The last stanza moves from life to death, completing the cycle of human life when the shadow tells us that the knight continues his search for death. In the third stanza, showing failure implies that he was dead or near death where the knight never found his destination. Until finally he met the 'Shadow of Pilgrims' signs of the possibility of his death, which showed the way to Eldorado who did not exist.

Symbol of Shade

In the last stanza, the writers find a symbol that is related to the socio-history. Then, the writers analyze the word shade. Shade means a ghost. When no one alive there but a shade replied to the knight without knowing who is talking. For these explanations, it can be described as follows:

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The **shade** replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

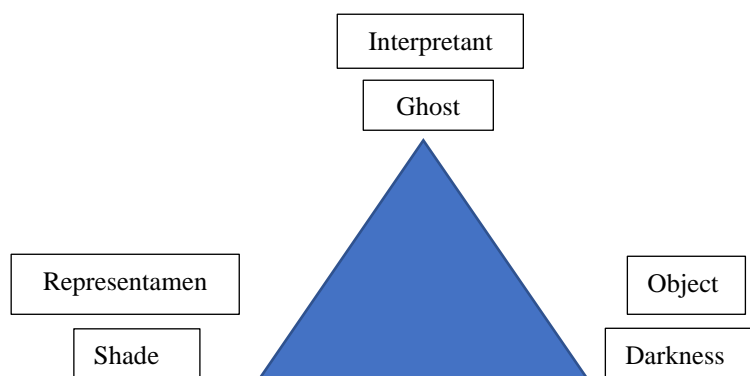


Figure 6. The Process of Triadic

The word of shade in Poe's poem is literary a ghost because it related to the previous stanza that no one lives there. The word shade is something that unseen which is darkness it means that it is a ghost. It is proved, most of them died in search of gold, trapped by the fierce nature of tropical rain, killed in accidents in the mountain range and valleys. However, still did not find the bright spot of the discovery of gold.

Symbol of Over the Mountains

In the last stanza, the writers find a symbol that is related to the socio-history. Then, the writers analyze words over the mountains. Over the mountains means the mysterious place that everyone searches for. For these explanations, it can be described as follows:

'Over the Mountains

Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

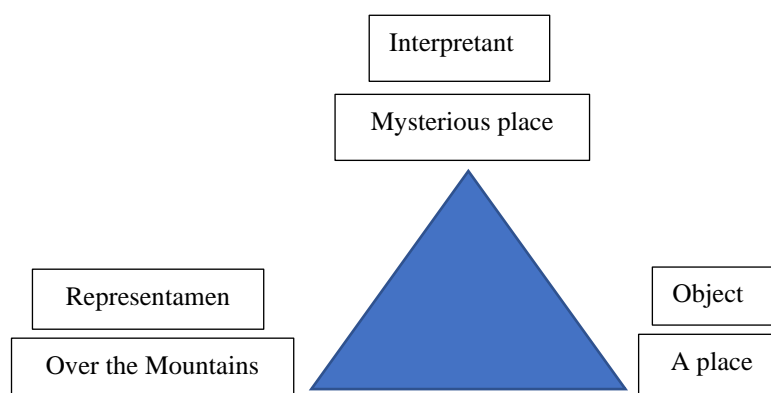


Figure 7. The Process of Triadic

This can be proven by the Chibcha tribe, which is a tribe that inhabits the highlands in the Andean territory of the Columbia mainland. The explorers and gold hunters mostly died while exploring, because they traced the mountains, fought the tropics, and died of exhaustion. Symbol of over the mountain has the meaning as the main mysterious sought so far.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion from the previous chapter, the writers conclude that Edgar Allan Poe reveals his idea in his poem Eldorado by using great semiotic elements. However, the writers find a symbol of Eldorado poem by looking at a socio-historical approach. To find the meaning of the symbol, the writers describe the meaning with socio-history. The use of semiotic in each stanza is to find out the true meaning of the word. As writer Poe wrote Eldorado in 1849 as figuratively to described as sort of idealized feeling that the poet seeks.

In Eldorado poem, the writers find out that in the socio-historical approach. Poe wrote Eldorado poem in 1849 where at that time gold was found in California that caused a massive gold rush. The first place where the gold was found is in California it's called gold land. Every people at that time was very excited to found the legendary city of gold, but most of those pursuing gold in California did not get rich.

Eldorado poem symbols are gallant knight, Eldorado, shadow, a pilgrim shadow, shade, and over the mountains. That symbol has a deep meaning inside the word. Those symbols are considered to represent Poe's view about the place where there is not any, instead, they pick up their death to look for a place that is considered to enrich life with gold. Those symbols are the form of manifestation of what Poe wants to convey in his poem until the reader can conclude and understand what Poe's tells and conveys in his work.

By looking to the socio-historical approach of Eldorado poem. The writers can find a symbol or word that has a meaning related to the sociohistory. They describe a symbol itself. The writers using a theory of semiotic analysis by Pierce. Then, the symbols of the gallant knight, Eldorado, shadow, a pilgrim shadow, and shade shows the meaning related to the socio-history. Those symbols represent the meaning, where Eldorado is true of a wealthy city made of gold. However, Eldorado is not a place but a person. The whole journey of Europeans to find a golden city is in vain. Eldorado's poem is related to the symbol of time in 1849 in California, where the attitude of the Muisca tribe is different from the people of Europe who see gold as a symbol of wealth, as well as power. Furthermore, the minds of Europeans who heard the story were only fascinated by how much gold was thrown into the lake or buried in shrines throughout Colombia. Not the meaning of gold itself. That is why Poe revealed a poem entitled Eldorado which means that Eldorado itself was a rich king who had covered his entire body with gold.

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