

IRONY DESCRIBING ABOUT ADULTHOOD AND CHILDHOOD IN EMILY BRONTE'S *MILD THE MIST UPON THE HILLS*

Ossie Ardiles

English Study Program, the Faculty of Letters
Catholic University of Widya Mandala Madiun
osieardiles.95@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aimed to discuss the irony describing childhood and adulthood in Emily Bronte's "Mild the Mist Upon the Hills". This research also had a purpose that is to explain the situational irony related to childhood and adulthood in the poem. The theories that were used in this research were the theory of figure of speech and irony. The approaches that were used in this research were formalistic approach and structural approach. Moreover, descriptive method and library research were used to help the writer to find some data needed. This research figured out some situational ironical statements dealing with the speaker's childhood and adulthood. In this poem, the speaker tried to reveal some ironical situation that she faced in her entire life. How she pictured the future in her childhood was so great, but after some situation, there were some problems that she might face. However, she still could not have solved it yet. Then, it inspired her to write this poem, because she wanted to express what she felt about her ironical situation.

Keywords: Irony, Childhood, Adulthood, Ironical Statement

1. INTRODUCTION

Every human experiences every phase in their whole lives, that is, childhood and adulthood. In the childhood phase, human faces their entire lives without any pressures from the world. They are very happy doing everything, feeling like life is a beautiful moment because they do not know how life really runs. According to Michelle A. Dart in *Developmental Stages of the Learner*:

childhood era is divided into two stages, there are early childhood and middle and late childhood. Early childhood is when a child is at the age of 3-5 years of age. Besides, middle and late childhood is when a child is at the age of 6-11 years of age. Moreover, adulthood is also divided into three stages, that are Young Adulthood (20-40 years of age), Middle-Aged Adulthood (41-64 years of age), and Older Adulthood (65 years of age and older) (2007:1).

The point is, childhood is an era when a child feels happy. He feels like life has no problem. What a child knows is only how to enjoy his life without any pressure, and time when his life is full of protection, caring and affection from his surroundings. Sometimes, a child has so many dreams, as he thinks that it will be easy to make his dreams come true. He has too much wonderful expectation when he grows older.

When a child moves to the next phase, which is adulthood, there will be a condition which makes him shocked. However, in the middle of these two phase, there is an adolescence era (12-19 years of age). In this era, a child tries to adapt himself to his surrounding, after he experiences an era which is full of happiness and affection. He will be shocked because what he has dreamed at his childhood era sometimes does not easily come true, as he faces so many troubles in reaching his dreams. What he has imagined in his childhood is not as beautiful as in reality. Then, he feels restless and dissatisfied in trying to build his dreams. The experience of each phase that has been discussed above suffered by Emily Bronte, an English poet, in her poem entitled "Mild the Mist Upon the Hills".

The poem “Mild the Mist Upon the Hills” portrays a heartsick Emily Bronte as she gazes out on the familiar sight of her childhood. She can be hardly said to be childish, but what she is pining for was the security and the simplicity of life in her childhood. This is a quite sad poem to read, and many people can relate to Emily’s sentiments. It also presents the idea that an aspect of the natural world, here a misty damp evening, can transport one back to an earlier time when such a misty day occurred in the happier days of childhood.

“Mild the Mist upon the Hills” is a free verse with four lines in each four stanza. This poem is about Emily's feeling in the past that she wants to express her sadness about her childhood. This poem uses 1st person point of view, as she uses “I” in her poem. The contrary point of view between childhood and adulthood in the poem will be revealed through one of poetic sense devices, that is, irony. Here, the writer wants to analyze the irony that describes childhood and adulthood in this poem.

Irony is one of figure of speech. Perrine states that, “The figures of speech is language that should not be taken literary.” (1982:28). Figure of speech uses word association to convey emotion and mood in a non-literal sense. It adds beauty, colors, emphasis, irony, and luxurance to English language and it is used by famous poet as a poetic devices. A literary work will be boring if its language uses same style of language, or the word which has only literal meaning. In this case, some expressions are needed to make a writing more beautiful. Moreover, a poet usually uses figure of speech to emphasize the meaning, make a poem interesting to read, and even to impress the reader about the poet's intention. Figure of speech is divided into many kinds, such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, and simile. Here, the writer uses only irony as the applicable kinds of figure of speech to this poem.

Additionally, irony is a literary technique and rhetoric device that has been used for many years in speech, art and everyday life. Although irony has been used for a long time, there hasn’t been an exact definition of irony. There have been hundreds of definitions suggested over the years, however, a general explanation is that irony is a figure of speech which is a contradiction or incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. Most of the definitions of irony are something along these lines, though there is often disagreement about the specific meaning of this term. In the poem “Mild the Mist upon the Hills”, irony appears in each stanza. Irony can be divided into three kinds, there are verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony.

a. Verbal Irony

Verbal irony is kinds of irony that is based on what the speaker regularly uses. It indicates something in a spoken language, and it is quite difficult to understand if we do not pay attention what the speaker says directly. Based on {Types of Irony, Page 1 of 1 (<http://typesofirony.com/>) accessed on June, 20th 2017 } , it states:

Verbal irony is the use of words to mean something different from what a person actually says. The main feature of verbal irony that sets it apart from the other different types of irony is that it is used by a speaker intentionally. It occurs in a conversation where a person aims to be understood as meaning something different to what his or her words literally mean.

So, it can be said that verbal irony implies a statement spoken is different from what the speaker means. There are two kinds of irony, that is overstatement and understatement. Overstatement is when a person exaggerates the character of something. Understatement is when a person undermines the character of something.

b. Situational Irony

In situational irony, there is a contrast between what is expected and what the reality

happens. A webpage {Types of Irony, Page 1 of 1 (<http://typesofirony.com/>) accessed on June, 20th 2017 } states that:

It involves a discrepancy between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. Situational irony occurs when the exact opposite of what is meant to happen, happens. An example would be when someone buys a gun to protect himself, but the same gun is used by another individual to injure him. One would expect that the gun would keep him safe, but it has actually caused him injury. There is however a difference between situational irony and coincidence or bad luck. When someone washes his car and it rains, that is just bad luck; nothing led him or her to think that it would not rain. However, when a TV weather presenter gets caught in an unexpected storm, it is ironic because he or she is expected to know the exact weather changes. For situational irony to occur there has to be something that leads a person to think that a particular event or situation is unlikely happen.

So, in the situational irony, it will make a person ready to expect something over what he or she knows. This form of irony is commonly used to emphasize important scenes and to make unusual images more vivid. The choices of diction are also included in this kind of irony to make the poem more interesting.

c. Dramatic Irony

In the dramatic irony, the readers usually know the story before it is explained by the characters. As {Types of Irony, Page 1 of 1 (<http://typesofirony.com/>) accessed on June, 20th 2017 } states:

A plot device to create situations where the reader knows much more about the episodes and the resolutions before the chief character or characters. Dramatic irony is a stylistic device that is most commonly used by storytellers, in plays, in the theater, and in movies.

There are three stages of dramatic irony, that is installation, exploitation, and resolution. Installation is when the audience is informed of something the character does not know about. Exploitation is when the writer uses this information to develop curiosity among the audience. Resolution is what happens when the character finally finds out what is going on. This irony creates a big contrast between the situation of the character and the episodes that will follow, and generating curiosity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

There is an approach that the writer use in this research. The writer uses structural approach as the main approach. Wilbur S. Scott (1962) in his book entitled "*Five Approach of Literary Criticism*" discusses about five extrinsic methods of studying literature; moral approach, psychological approach, sociological approach, formalistic approach and structural approach. Here, the writer uses structural approach. Approach that is used by the writer is structural approach. According to Scott in the book of *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*, states that, "structural approaches is used to analyze the word constituent. The appreciation and evaluation will be clear and easy to understand, so we will discover the truth" (1962:83). So, this approach is used to master the structure of the poem. The writer chooses structural approach because this kind of approach is applicable for this poem which has some poetic meaning of the words and some words which emphasizes what the poet wants to say.

This research is categorized as a descriptive research based on its characteristic. It is used to to get detailed information about the observed object. Vredenberg states that, "Descriptive research is conducted to describe accurately, systematically about an object, a set of conditions, a certain group of people; system of thought or even a set of occurrences" (1978:31). So the writer uses descriptive method to get the description accurately. Also, the

writer uses library research to collect the data, as the data is in the written form. Djajasudarma states, “ Library research involves the relationship between a research and books as sources of data” (1993:4).

Furthermore, the writer does some steps to write this research. First, reading the poem repeatedly to get better understanding about the poem. Second, choosing the topic of the research. Third, finding out the ironic statement that exist in the poem. The last, writing the conclusion of the research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

“Mild the Mist Upon the Hills” written by Emily Bronte is a poem that describes Emiy’s ironical situation and sentiment about life. It is Emily’s expression about her condition which dreamed everything as well, but there are some problem in reaching her dreams. Here is the poem:

Mild the Mist upon the Hill

*Mild the mist upon the hill
Telling not of storms tomorrow;
No, the day has wept its fill,
Spent its store of silent sorrow.*

*O, I'm gone back to the days of youth,
I am a child once more,
And 'neath my father's sheltering roof
And near the old hall door*

*I watch this cloudy evening fall
After a day of rain;
Blue mists, sweet mists of summer pall
The horizon's mountain chain.*

*The damp stands on the long green grass
As thick as morning's tears,
And dreamy scents of fragrance pass
That breathe of other years.*

In the poem above, there is a Emily Bronte’s sentiment about her life. She rushes back to the day when she was a child. Her feeling was about feeling peace in her life, reaching her dreams, and imagining her dreams come true. But in reality, she faces so many trouble in her life.

a. The Ironical Statement Describing Adullthood and Childhood in Emily Bronte “Mild the Mist upon the Hills”

As it is written in the introduction, there are some steps for human in suffering his life. The main thing is, there are two phase for a man to be experienced, there are childhood and adulthood. Childhood is an era when a child is at the age of 3 to 11 years old. Meanwhile, adulthood is an era when a man is at the age of 20 to 65 years old. Childhood is the time when a child gets so many affection from his surrounding, especially from his parents and family. It is a phase when a child’s life is full of happiness, there are so many lovely things that he can get and play, and also the time when he has no problem about life. This usually happens to a child at the age of 3 to 11 years old. In the first stanza, it is stated:

*Mild the mist upon the hill
Telling not of storms tomorrow;*

These two lines symbolize the poet's feeling peace about her life. There is no problem in her life, as she imagined that life is so beautiful. She thinks that there will be no obstacle in making her dreams come true, as she said "telling not of storms tomorrow". If we talk about storms, we all know storms can cause someone afraid of it. So, it may be said that it causes a problem. Then, in the third and fourth stanza, there are two lines which she felt a dilemma about her future, that are:

*No, the day has wept its fill,
Spent its store of silent sorrow.*

She was sure that there would be no problem because she would little by little be able to solve it all. She believed that her unpleasant imagination about future was not much bad. But, it was still an anxiety about her future that hung over her imagination because she had not experienced it yet.

a.1 The Statement Describing Childhood

Additionally, the speaker wants to picturize her childhood which is full of happiness. She can feel safe, happy, and enjoyable. A child never thinks about a problem of life. What a child knows is that his/her life is happy. The speaker emphasizes it in the second and third lines in the second stanza:

*O, I'm gone back to the days of youth,
I am a child once more,
And 'neath my father's sheltering roof
And near the old hall door*

It can be said that she misses her childhood, whenever she feels safe because of her father's protection. Childhood is a phase in which a child tries to enjoy his/her life happily, without thinking of a problem that happens in life. What she knows is only how to play everyday without any disturbance. When she has been already in her adulthood, there is a dilemma so that she really wants to rush back to this time. There is so much affection in her childhood that she can not feel anymore. She is longing for her parent's protection. In reality, she experiences problem that she has never imagined before.

a.2 The Statement Describing Adulthood

In "Mild the Mist upon the Hill", the speaker wants to reveal her feeling about her adulthood which is beautiful and good. What she imagines in the future seems so good as what she has expected. It means that there is a stunning reality in life in the future, as it is shown in first and second line:

*I watch this cloudy evening fall
After a day of rain;
Blue mists, sweet mists of summer pall
The horizon's mountain chain.*

(She experiences a problem as she imagined in the past. But it is only "rain", not a "storm"..... and she realized that everyone around her takes care of her, that she realizes that she is not alone....)

In this stanza, the speaker shows her intention to reveal the adulthood condition. She has already been able to adapt her surroundings, as it is symbolized by the phrase "horizon's

mountain chain". In this case, it can be her relationship between her neighbourhood with herself. She has already experienced her day that she visualizes in her childhood. The day that she has imagined is not as bad as her past visualization. Although it is not much bigger, she still feels disturbed with the problem that happens in life. She can get some good understanding from the problem she faces. She can mingle with her surrounding after passing her childhood era. This condition occurs when she has experienced some problems within her childhood and adulthood phase. Someone will be shocked when she passes two phases in her life. This phase can be called adolescence. It happens when someone's age is between 12-19 years old. Someone does not fully move from her childhood, but he experiences adulthood. Therefore, it will be a shocking feeling because the emotional condition is not really stable.

b. The Ironic Situation Statement Describing about Adulthood and Childhood

When the speaker was a child, she imagined that there would be a beautiful or good things that usually happens in her life. But unfortunately, it becomes worse when she comes to her adulthood. The contrast is stated in the first and second stanza:

*Mild the mist upon the hill
Telling not of storms tomorrow;
No, the day has wept its fill,
Spent its store of silent sorrow.*

*O, I'm gone back to the days of youth,
I am a child once more,
And 'neath my father's sheltering roof
And near the old hall door*

First stanza tells about the bad condition in her life, as marked by the word *storms*. In the second stanza, it tells about her childhood which is full of happiness and safe condition, as marked by the phrase *And 'neath my father's sheltering roof'*. So, it indicates that there is an irony, when she has expected that her childhood does not really happen in her adulthood. There is a different perception between what she imagined in the past and what her day happens. The relation between these two stanzas is the speaker tries to trace back to the day which is beautiful. She feels restless when there are some problems in her life that she can not fix yet. Although the problem is not as serious as she has everthought, it still makes her think that it is true. She also misses the time when she gets affection from the surrounding in her childhood.

4. CONCLUSION

The source of data of the research is every lines of the poem entitled "Mild the Mist upon the Hill" written by Emily Bronte. This poem tells us about the contradictive condition between adulthood and childhood. Such condition is revealed using one of the poetic sense devices, that is, irony. The research portrays the irony that pictures the different life phase between the childhood and the adulthood. The speaker of the poem tries to emphasize her feeling through this poem. She feels like there is happiness in the adulthood, whenever she imagines it in her childhood. However, when she comes to her adulthood, she faces problem in her life. Then she tries to go back to her childhood, the time when she could shelter to her father. It is the time when she feels warm protection and affection from her surroundings. This ironical conditon is always called as a situational irony, when what is expected by someone does not really happen in reality.

5. REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Massachusetts: Heinle and Heinle.
- Attardo, Salvatore. 2000. *Irony as Relevant Inappropriateness*. Youngstown: Elsevier Science B.V.
- Bastable, Susan B. 2007. *Developmental Stages of Learner*. Jones and Barlett Publisher
- Berk, Laura E. 2007. *Development Through the Lifespan*. Boston: Illinois State University.
- Dunwoody ISS Lab Writing. 2000. *Figures of Speech*. Georgia: Perimeter College.
<http://depts.gpc.edu/~duniss/FIGURES%20OF%20SPEECH.pdf>
(June 10th, 2017.)
- Estabrook, Leigh. 1984. *Sociology and Library Research*. New York: Syracuse University
- Giora, Rachel. 1998. *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publ. Co.
- Heller, Daniel. 2011. *Figurative Speech as a Representation of Meaning*. Praha: Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences.
- Hudson, William Henry. 1965. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.
- Kennedy, X. J. 1979. *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Boston : Little, Brown and Company.
- Knupfer, Nancy Nelson & Hilary McLellan. *Journal of Educational Communications and Technology*. 2001. *Descriptive Research Methodologies*. Indiana: Kansas State University.
- Kreus, Roger J. 2002. *Asymmetries in the Use of Verbal Irony*. Memphis: Sage Publications.
- Langer, Susanne K. 1953. *Felling and Form*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Robinson, C. Oliver. 2013. *The Holistic Phase Model of Early Adult Crisis*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media
- Sokol, Justin T. *Graduate Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 2009. *Identity Development Throughout the Lifetime: An Examination of Eriksonian Theory*. Marquette: Marquette University
- Vancova, Hana. *Journal of International Scientific Publications*. 2015. *Irony in the Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde*. Slovakia: Trnava University
- Wilson, D. & D. Sperber. 2004. *On Verbal Irony*. University College London: Theory Online Course
- Yoon, YoungEun. 2014. *Connecting Irony and Humor with Witticism and Lightheartedness*. Seoul : Ewha Womans University
_____ (<http://typesofirony.com/>) accessed on June 7th, 2017