

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Literature is the art of using language creatively to tell stories or express ideas, providing insight into the human condition (Lodge, 1994). Literature is any collection of written work that is conveyed communicatively about the author's intent for aesthetic purposes. Arthur Schopenhauer defines literature is the art of expressing thoughts, ideas, and emotions through the written word (Schopenhauer, 2004). It expresses humans in the form of experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, passions, beliefs in a form of picture of life, which can evoke charm with language tools and are described in written form.

According to Jim Meyer, the concept of Literature could be described as:

"written texts that are marked by careful use of language, including features such as creative metaphors, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, alliteration, meter are in a literary genre (poem, prose fiction, or drama) and are read aesthetically as intended by the author and also contain many weak implicatures (which are deliberately somewhat open in interpretation)" (Meyer, 1997).

In conclusion, written texts that are carefully written with precise language and literary devices are intended to be appreciated aesthetically by the reader. These writings often contain hidden meanings that make the reader thinks to interpret and analyze the meaning behind the words. When a reader reads, they go on a journey to find deeper meaning. Therefore, writing is not just about telling

something but about creating an experience that allows readers to explore and appreciate the beauty of language.

Literature has long been a subject of study and has attracted the attention of scholars and critics for centuries. Different approaches to literary analysis have emerged over time, each with its own set of theories and methods. These approaches range from historical and biographical criticism to psychoanalytic and feminist analysis. One approach that gained prominence in the early 20th century is New Criticism which focuses on the objective analysis of the text, treating it as a self-contained artifact that can be examined through formalist methods (Richards, 2017). It emphasizes close reading which paying a lot of attention to the words and how they are used in a story or poem. Close reading focuses on the formal elements of a literary work, such as how the words are put together, how the story is built, its language, structure, and imagery.

John Crowe Ransom, an influential New Critic defines New Criticism is a re-reading of the text, a reading of the poem in its final form; it is the poem 'as it is' that is read, without trying to figure out what the writer meant or what people first thought about it when it was written (Ransom, 1941). This way of thinking emphasizes the importance of analyzing the text itself rather than external factors, such as the author's biography or the historical context of the work's creation. It is all about focusing on the words and sentences to see how they create meaning, instead of digging into the background.

A key figure in New Criticism, Cleanth Brooks defines the approach as focusing on the work of art, specifically the poem, as the main object of study (Brooks, 1947). New Criticism are primarily interested in understanding the poem itself as a work of art, rather than focusing on external factors like the author's intentions or historical context. This critic interested in figuring out the meaning of the poem by looking closely at the words and how they create a work of art.

Based on this concept, the principles of New Criticism can be applied to analyze a poem, in particular exploring the ambiguity and symbolism of the poem. The analysis will focus on close reading of the text examining how the writer uses literary devices such as figurative language, imagery, and symbols to reveal how these elements contribute to the poem's overall meaning. Through a New Criticism analysis, this study aims to provide a fresh perspective and offer a more nuanced understanding of the poem's meaning.

In the last few years, social media has become a popular stage for poets to show their work to a broader audience. It has made it simpler for poets to link up with fellow writers and readers, fostering a more connected poem community. Platforms like *Instagram*, *Twitter (X)*, and *TikTok* allow poets to share their verses instantly, reaching people from various backgrounds and interests. This digital landscape has transformed poem into a more interactive and communal experience. Poets can receive immediate feedback, engage in conversation about their work, and explore diverse styles and perspectives. Social media has played an important role in democratizing poem, breaking down traditional barriers and creating a space where poets and poem enthusiasts can unite, and exchange ideas.

In recent times, there has been a renewed interest between poem's relationship and the public, as well as a growing awareness of poem's social and political relevance. Many poets are now using their work to address issues such as race, gender, and social justice. Through their verses, poets are becoming advocates for change, highlighting important social issues and triggering conversations in public. Poets are proving that their words can be a powerful force to evoke understanding, empathy, and meaningful change in society. This is raising awareness of the power of poem to engage and inspire audiences.

A large number of poems with literary devices, figurative languages, and symbolism like *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot, and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald are titles of poem that can be analyzed using New Criticism.

In *Ozymandias*, Shelley uses vivid imagery and symbolism to explore themes of power and human achievement. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is one of the modernist masterpiece that known for its complexity and the use of literary device, making it an interesting subject for New Criticism. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a novel, but it is also filled with symbolism and complex narrative techniques, making it suitable for analyze in New Criticism.

Through the lens of New Criticism, scholars and audiences can investigate the intricate details of these works, closely examining how literary devices can contribute to the overall meaning of the poem or novel. This approach allows for a

focused exploration of the text, highlighting the importance of words, symbols, and structure to uncover deeper layers of meaning within these literary works.

The poem chosen for analysis is “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, which is widely regarded as one of the most important works of twentieth century poet. The poem “The Road Not Taken” first published in the August 1915 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and later published as the first poem in the collection *Mountain Interval* of 1916. It is one of Frost’s most famous and widely studied works which contains several ambiguous elements that led to multiple interpretations of the poem.

“The Road Not Taken” have stirred considerable attention and given rise to diverse interpretations due to their ambiguous elements. It discusses the themes of decisions, nature, disaffection, and existence and provides many symbols to convey meaning. It defines the emotions that arise when making decisions and how those decisions often cause regret.

Previous study entitled *An Analysis of Robert Frost’s Poem: “The Road Not Taken”* conducted by Ankit Tyagi in 2015. This study provides an understanding of the basic concept of the poem that presents a contrast between right and wrong choices in life. The author examines the poem through the title of the poem, style of the poem, metaphor, and the analysis of the meaning (Tyagi, 2015). In contrast to Tyagi’s analysis of the poem’s overall meaning, this research will concentrate on ambiguity and symbolism in the context of the issue of choices in life.

Ambiguity and symbolism are elements found in many poems. Many poets use ambiguity to evoke the readers' emotions and ideas through the literal meaning of the words. Symbolism used makes the reader have different interpretations. Both of these need to be analyzed more deeply so as not to cause misunderstandings in the poem's meaning. In addition, the analysis of symbolism is to interpret the poem's context. It can make the poem more dynamic and interactive, creating a more meaningful and memorable experience for the reader.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to answer several questions relating to the issue of ambiguity, symbolism as stated below:

1. What is the theme of “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost?
2. What are figurative languages used by Robert Frost in “The Road Not Taken”?
3. How does ambiguity reflect the theme of choices in life in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost?
4. What are the symbolisms found in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and how do they contribute to the exploration of the themes—choices in life?

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study attempts to reemphasize several of the questions that are raised as stated as follows:

1. To find out the theme in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost.
2. To find out figurative languages that used in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost.
3. To reveal the reflections of figurative language by ambiguity in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost to create multiple interpretations.
4. To find out the symbolisms in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and its contribution to the exploration of themes—choices in life.

1.4. Scopes of the Study

This study examines a poem written by Robert Frost entitled “The Road Not Taken.” To conduct the study, the researcher focuses on the intrinsic elements of the poem, which are figurative language, ambiguity, and symbolism in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the broader field of literary criticism by demonstrating the effectiveness of the New Criticism. By focusing on the text itself, the New Criticism provides a close and thorough examination of the poem’s meaning and significance.

New Criticism provides a deeper understanding of the poem by revealing the intricacies of its literary techniques and devices. Readers can gain a more nuanced comprehension of the poem's theme and message, as well as appreciate the ways in which the poets use language to convey complex emotions and ideas.

This study aims to engage scholars, researchers, and students in the analysis and interpretation of poem, leading to new insight, theories, and discussions within the field of literary studies.

1.6. Approach of the Study

The approach used in this study is a text-oriented approach that focuses on analyzing and processing data with special emphasis on the textual content of a text. This approach recognizes that textual elements play important roles in conveying meaning and shaping the overall message of a literary work.

This research applies qualitative data analysis techniques to delve into the textual content. By using this method, this research seeks to uncover the contribution of figurative language, ambiguity and symbolism to the overall context and meaning in the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

This study examines Robert Frost "The Road Not Taken" using New Criticism theory by John Crowe Ransom. This theory emphasizes close reading of the text and focuses on the formal elements of a literary work (Ransom, 1941).

This research adopts a close reading methodology, which involves a careful examination of the poem. By paying close attention to the details of language, ambiguity, and symbolism, this methodology aims to identify and analyze the subtle nuances, multiple interpretations, and hidden connections that contribute to the meaning of the text. The data was obtained by reading the entire poem first then listing the findings related to figurative languages, ambiguity, and symbolisms. Then the data are classified based on the category then the poem was interpreted.

1.7. Organization of the Paper

This study is arranged into five chapters. Chapter one is introduction which contains background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, scopes of the study, significance of the study, approach of the study, and organization of the paper.

Chapter two is interpretation of the poem which is “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and biography of Robert Frost.

Chapter three is theoretical framework that deals with the underlying theory related to the research; previous study, definition of literature, poem, poem’s intrinsic elements which are theme, figurative language, ambiguity, symbolism, and specific theory used which is New Criticism.

Chapter four is findings and discussion. In this chapter, the findings of the analysis are discussed. It explores the implications and significance of the findings.

Finally, chapter five is conclusion and suggestion to summarize the key findings of the study and suggest future actions for further research supported by this study.