

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis, in the way of finding contribution of the poet toward his work, has put the analysis of the elements and the theme in Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard* as an important part to reveal the essence of the poem intrinsictly. It is not merely to search the theme of the poem then but mostly to get more insight *about what* and *to whom* the "Elegy" was written. Thus, the using of intrinsic approach supported with thematic approach is quite needed to apply in searching the theme whereas a theme is always carried implicitly or explicitly by a poem, and it is necessary to focus on the subject of the theme by studying some elements of the verse.

The "Elegy" itself indicates the closeness of relationship between the poem and the writer that appeared in the very first glance from the title: *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard*. The title suggests the reader that the lines inside the elegy appear to present a direct action of the poet to bear his expression toward something and it was exhibited in the medium of a poem and specified in the form of an elegy. The word *elegy* from the title refers to an expression of feeling of grieve that is by someone – in this case the poet – to praise or to honor something in the form of poetry. The word *written* suggests to the writer of the *elegy* that it is written by him and the poet wants

to express his feeling through the *elegy* so the reader knows the *elegy* belongs to him. The direct expression here is the key to know about the work itself that a poem, especially, becomes a direct experience of creating the thought and feeling in a shape of work of art.

Based on the background of such idea and the fact that there is also a connection between the setting pictured in the "Elegy" to the real place existed in the life of the poet, the expressive theory is considered to be appropriate to be applied on this literary work. The thematic approach in this study significantly conveyed the theme of the "Elegy" since it has an important role to reveal the essence of it. The biographical approach, then, will be used to reveal the existence of the poet in his work and catching the poet's mind to unfold the main idea of the "Elegy" in the thesis analysis.

A. Approaches and Theory

A.1. Intrinsic Approach

The work of art has very significant in the form it was made since the poet has trusted his original idea in a certain appearance of art. The elements appear in the work seems representing his quality in expressing the thought and feeling implied. That is way the use of intrinsic approach has been important to reveal the essence of the work, in this case poetry, to get closer to the work itself and the poet quality as well.

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren had stated that the natural and sensible starting-point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and

analysis of the works of literature themselves (1978: 139). It leads to the understanding that a literary work emphasises, significantly, the analysis in its intrinsic elements. Intrinsically, a poem is built by some significant elements, which, then, carry the basic nature, or the spirit applied in quite particular expression of something. Thus the elements such as imagery, figurative language, tone, point of view have a strong blow to deliver its essence in suggesting the theme.

A.1.1. Imagery

The element of a poem, which seems intimately stimulating the reader's senses most, is the existing of the imagery that the poet uses in his work not merely to decorate the poem but crucial to the fact that the existing of the imagery in a poem more as to bring the vividness of the real world to the nature of the poem. The imagery, which consists of images, pictures, or sensory content found in a poem, refers also to the cleverness of the poet in depicting the scene to make the poem alive for the reader and the work itself to comprehend the essence of the poem. The term of imagery concerns with the fanciful or imaginative descriptions of people or objects stated in terms of the senses that when it comes to the word of imagery it indicates a study on the meaning of the poem dwells. This is the world that the poet has carefully created through his decision to select certain words and images rather than others, (Reaske, 1966: 34). The existence of it then inevitably will contribute to the theme which is tried to bear through the analysis because the imagery

will conduct in influencing the atmosphere the poet wants the reader feels about. For in the patterns of imagery seem to lie the darker and more secret meanings – both intentional and unintentional – which are to be discovered in a poem.

Reaske (1966: 42) also said that theme is the central concept developed in a poem, and the basic idea, which the poet is trying to convey and which, accordingly, he allows to direct his imagery. Most of the images, in other words, are designed to present the central theme, or main idea, of the poem. Thus the imagery occurred in the poem will deliver the essence of the poem through the capability of the poet in describing and arranging the composition of ideas.

A.1.2. Figurative Language

One of the most basic and useful ways in which to approach a poem is to analyse its figurative language. The analysis concentrates its energy and attention on the images and metaphors and various other rhetorical figures which are found in a poem. Perhaps it is obvious that discussions of imagery and metaphor are the most popular; this is understandable, because this kind of examination is generally the most helpful in arriving at general understanding of a poem.

In general, figurative language is that kind of language which departs from the language employed in the traditional, literal ways of describing persons or objects. Using figurative language is making imaginative

descriptions in fresh ways. It is usually immediately obvious whether a writer is using figurative or literal language, (Reaske, 1966: 33).

Almost every poem employs figurative language to some extent, but evidently some poets rely on it more than others. In this analysis the using of figurative language is quite significant that it helps a lot in understanding and probing the theme especially in supporting the speaker of the poem to express what he has in mind. The language which is used by the poet has a dominant role in delivering the ideas he intends to do since if the poet failed to utilise the language, than, the idea which he wants to communicate to the reader can be considered fail also.

A.1.3. T o n e

Tone is one of the most important concepts to understand and describe in the study of literature. Ideally, tone refers to the means by which an poet conveys attitudes. The analysis of tone is, in effect, the analysis of the poet's mind at work, and through this, the analysis can get into the awareness of the vitality of literature – the profound, alive creativity of the poet's mind as seen in his words. Thus tone becomes significance in the process of comprehending and finding the theme of the poetry.

Reading a work of literature without perceiving its tone is like watching a speaker on television with the sound turned off; without tone you can guess at meaning, but cannot understand it fully, (Roberts, 1973: 152).

The tone here has a very eloquent role in delivering the atmosphere in the sense of embracing the meaning and through the atmosphere which is built together with the imagery and the figurative language used. Thus it appropriates with the theme conveyed in the poem because it is very helpful in supporting and emphasising the idea of which the poet tried to convey.

A.1.4. Speaker of the Poem

The "Elegy" uses first person point of view that "I" in the poem refers closely to the poet, Thomas Gray. Especially if a close look is taken to the title that it has a strong impression of subjectivity. Most of observations about the *persona* and *voice* in the poem will be based upon the attitudes and feelings expressed by the speaker. The point of view from which an experience is described is central to our understanding of that experience, (Reaske, 1966: 47).

In considering the point of view, then, it is, basically, outlining the poet's attitudes and physical relationship to the experience; at the same time; however, the analysis must make some conclusions about the voice or persona of the poem. The conclusion, which is taken about the speaker whether he is the poet himself or he is just a character who is actually totally created by the poet as someone who does not represent at all of him, can be derived from the other works of the poet. Gray's other poems helps a lot in determining the speaker of the poem. Gray mostly wrote or expressed his own private feeling and mind in poems that he wrote such as *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton*

College, where he expresses nostalgia for the schoolboy years; *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West*, he mourns his dead friend while knowing that much of the universe is happy; *Ode on the Spring*, the speaker, watching carefree springtime insects, reflects that he is himself but “a solitary fly”, who, like the beautiful insects, will survive only briefly; *Hymn to Adversity*, he sees suffering as real as happiness; and some others that he almost always put himself close to the works that have quite personal relationship with his life.

Thus, the speaker in the “Elegy” has a very significant role in directing the poem to the theme or the idea of which the poet wants to reveal. The poet, then, can freely also express his idea through his own self that he considers him self as not only to witness about what is going on but also he takes some time to contemplate about what he has just experienced toward his life.

A.2. Thematic Approach

The theme rises from the poem that it comes in the reader’s mind when it is conceived through intense reading. The theme becomes the rope which binds the work in one unity and then appears to give a particular perspective of its purpose in directing the reader to catch something or message which is tried to send by the poet through his work in a more specific understanding. Especially the theme is drawn from the poem itself in a brief “mind’s full” on any particular subject; that is, it presents and considers the subject in several of its various aspects, (Roberts, 1973: 4). More concerns are needed to convey the quite-short-sentence of theme in characterising the

poem in a scope of its own existence, thus the poem will be felt as more general and also specific in the idea of its well-constructed-shape, the being of the artwork itself.

In thematic analysis, the term of theme is out to be thought by recurring throughout all poetry in all languages. The poet's view of himself lies at the heart of most poetry and every poet must suggest possible views, either directly or indirectly. Obviously, the indirect statement poses more problems. The thematic approach necessarily is used in directing the analysis so that all existences of the elements of the "Elegy" will lead but to the theme of the poem. The theme, in other words, is emphasised or strengthened, or even built, by the elements which are present in the poem. The elements, here, have the most significant aspect directly or indirectly in connecting the reader to the theme which is tried to be expressed by the poet.

The using of some elements, in this thesis: imagery, figurative language, tone, and through the speaker of the poem, considered as the most significant aspects without trifling other elements existing in the poem that build the theme of the "Elegy", is expected to be able to reveal the theme suggested in the poem. Those elements to be analysed are the significant parts in organising the environment in which the world of the elegy dwells, and also connected with the nature of meaning the poem implied they stand in a direct stage to describe the theme. The theme is, in another light, the poet's reason for writing the poem in the first place. It is usually an abstract concept, which becomes concrete through the idiom and imagery. The problem that

risers, then, about the reaching of the theme will be answered objectively through the analysis of those elements.

A.3. Biographical Approach

Everything written, spoken, painted, or composed reflects to some degree the historical period of its composition. Indeed, we cannot open our mouths without showing attitudes, idioms, and customs of our time and place, (Roberts, 1973: 211). In addition, it might be also assumed that artists themselves desire to create new ideas from existing ones and to press for improvement and reform in society.

The analysis of the “Elegy” is never far from the fact that the poem has a very close relationship with the life of the poet, Thomas Gray, whether from the lyrics inside the verse or through the background of the poet’s life. The setting he used – it refers to the certain place –, the subject he used – he was known as a man who loved the humbles –, and the fact that he often wrote poems which were a tribute to something or someone he loved that he became so expressive in uttering his feeling toward them. What Gray depicting in his “Elegy” is never far from the environment he lived on: the church, the country, the humbles, the noble, the rural, the education, the struggle of life, even the faith which he considered not so fair to some people.

Gray’s expression toward something had come to be strong in the way he described his mind and his feeling, which he exposed it to a very personal

thought and feeling though in the basic idea it still be considered as having universal appearance or meaning.

A.4. Expressive Theory

Poetry as a piece of art, which conveys the state of mind of the poet, generates the link between the things behind the writing and the things in front of the writing. The things behind the writing have the relationship with the being, the life and the experience of the poet that though not connected directly or emerged as a pure contribution of his feeling or thought, they appear to stimulate and to shape the nature of the artwork that can be considered as the characteristic of the feeling and the thought of him, just like what M. H. Abrams (1953: 21) had stated that:

Poetry is the overflow, utterance, or projection of the thought and feelings of the poet; or else (in the chief variant formulation) poetry is defined in terms of the imaginative process, which modifies and synthesises the images, thoughts, and feelings of the poet. This way of thinking, in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged, I shall call the expressive theory of art.

The things in front of the writing are the being of the work of art itself, which appear representing the poet, the projection of the perspective communicated by the artwork and also the audience which is contributed then by choosing the form of medium in which it is produced.

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts and feelings, (Abrams, 1953: 22).

Wordsworth once said also that the poetry proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world. Thus the outburst of feeling becomes the eminent of the field of art to the world outside, the art which exists then, comes forth directly or indirectly represented the poet.

Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard* stands in a very close place to the expressive theory that emerged in the pre-romantic movement. The theory here is applied in the sense of the close involvement of the poet to the poem, it can be seen from the first impression in reading the title of the poem that the poet himself wants to be involved in the part of his work through the speaker of the poem. The using of first person point of view reinforces the character of the poem through the appearance of the poet himself to give first sensation in conducting the direction of the poem that it becomes a monologue. And the fact also that the setting depicted in the "Elegy" looks very like to a place, a cemetery, where Gray visited several times; the cemetery where he was buried after his death.

The "Elegy" emanates the expression of the poet to the matter which is filled with the nature of the existing consideration to the subject of death connected to the life of the humble and without neglecting that it becomes

also a reaction to one of world's other face, the face which only explores mostly for status and nobility. It is reflected in the medium of art that he considered as the best way in contributing what he had in mind to the world outside of which identifies the poet, as the central intention, or like a *well* from which the *water* of conception flows.

The work ceases then to be regarded as primarily a reflection of nature, actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet itself, (Abrams, 1953: 23).

Consequently the work gets along with the poet's state of mind and becomes eminent offspring which is born to represent the existence of the poet in a very particular characteristic. It is then in the analysis of the thesis appeared to comprehend the atmosphere from which it is put together as a way to acknowledge the global reflection of the poet in revealing the existing of him and the poem to which comes into our view to portray the expression of his thought and feeling.

B. Related Studies

Dr. Johnson (1709-1784), an English poet, essayist, critic, journalist, lexicographer, and conversationalist, regarded as one of the outstanding figures of 18th century life and letters, had to put aside his dislike of Gray and 'concur with the common reader' toward the "Elegy":

'The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo', (Bush, 1952: 89).

Images and sentiments are general, and poetic diction and abstractions still abound, but if any theme justifies generalities, it is the life and death of the humble and the unknown. A scholar-poet's feeling for such people may have been 'pre-romantic', but Gray did not know that; he did know that death, worldly fame, poverty, frustration, and contentment were universal facts and feelings, and the "Elegy" is a mosaic of traditional motifs, classical and modern.

One obvious reason why the "Elegy" remains a great poem while its many congeners are dead, Douglas Bush (1952: 90), in his *English Poetry: the Main Currents from Chaucer to the Present*, had written that:

...A power of style which makes almost every line an example of 'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd'. Images, though generalized, can be none the less evocative. The antitheses are more than antitheses; they are a succession of dynamic and ironic contrasts between ways and views of life. And all this inward force comes from a full sensibility working under precise control. In its combination of personal detachment and involvement, as well as in its generalized texture, the "Elegy" is in some sense an eighteenth-century *Lycidas*.

CHAPTER III

SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR AND THE POEM