
**THEMATIC ANALYSIS IN WALLACE STEVENS' POEM
DOMINATION OF BLACK**

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Abstrak

*Semua kritikus sepakat menyatakan bahwa penyair Wallace Stevens menggunakan sejumlah kata dan gambar dalam puisi *Domination of Black* untuk mewakili kematian. Misalnya kata malam, senja, api yang berarti 'kegelapan' atau kematian. Kata 'daun jatuh' dan 'hemlocks' di mana gelap dan daun yang gugur merupakan firasat buruk, yang selalu dikaitkan dalam pikiran budaya dunia barat dengan kematian, khususnya bunuh diri. Nah, semua ini adalah misteri kehidupan misalnya adanya kata kematian, malam, perubahan, mengubah, kegelapan, mimpi, dan kosmos.*

Puisi dimulai dengan menggambarkan situasi waktu malam, dengan perapian di dalam ruangan. Kemudian dijelaskan bahwa warna daun yang jatuh di luar sudah berubah warna. Hal ini dilihat oleh penulis di dalam ruangan dekat perapian. Hal ini mengingatkan si penulis akan warna cerah burung merak yang memiliki suara aneh dan parau. Si penulis merasa takut melihat keluar jendela di mana planet-planet berubah bagaimana daun yang katuh diterpa angin. Ia merasa takut karena kenyataannya bahwa semua warna dari benda-benda yang memberikan kesuburan bagi kehidupan dunia akan menjadi gelap seperti api yang akhirnya akan padam dan daun-daun akan gugur dan hancur lalu lenyap.

*Dalam studi ini, karya penyair Amerika Wallace Stevens yang berjudul *Domination of Black* dipilih untuk dianalisis dan penulisan studi ini menggunakan sumber data primer dari syair tersebut di atas dan menggunakan teori sastra berdasarkan buku *Theory of Literature* yang ditulis oleh Rene Welek and Austin Waren (1962) dan buku *Interpreting Literature* oleh Knickerbocker, K.L. 1963*

Kata kunci: daun, burung merak, kegelapan.

1. Background of Study

Generally, literary works can be grouped into four types; they are drama, poetry, fiction and essay. From those four types of literary works, poetry is considered the most

interesting to analyze since the language used in a poem is in the form of artistic language.

Knickerboker & Renninger, (1963; 307) say that “poetry is the hymn of praise. Good talk about poetry is nevertheless rare and even the best of it will rest on fallow ground until we ourselves have learned how to penetrate the inner life of a few poem”. Poem is a medium not only to express the feeling of the poets but also to make us enter into these feelings about things, persons, situations or ideas in the poem. Poetry can give entertainment, satisfaction, pleasure and enjoyment to the reader. This is because there is a great difference between language in a poem and our daily language, in that poetic language is stylized with aesthetic or artistic effect.

Actually, there are a lot of things we can talk about poetry. But in this study, the historical background is focused. Sometimes metaphorical language or in Greek ancestor “metaphoric” means to carry meaning beyond its literal meaning (Knickerboker, 1955:637) which is also discussed. Generally, there are some figurative languages in literary work such as: antithesis, hyperbola, idiomatic expression, irony, metaphor, metonymy, paradox, personification, simile and synecdoche.

In this study, a poem entitled *Domination of Black* by Wallace Stevens who is one of America's most respected poets is analysed. The poem shows how night turns simple things into our greatest fears. At night a cat running by, or wind blowing through the trees can scare us because our imagination takes flight. It is in this way that darkness rules us and gives strength to those who fears and allows them to take over us.

2. Problem of the Study

The problems of the study are formulated as follows,

1. What objects are implied in *Domination of Black*?
2. What does Wallace Stevens want to show through his *Domination of Black*?

3. Aims of the Study

This study has three aims; they are the general, specific, and academic aims. The general aim of this writing is to apply theories related to Stevens' poem *Domination of*

Black and the specific aim is to find out what message the poet wants to deliver to the readers.

The last is an academic aim that is to apply the theory of literature learned in the English Department and write a scientific article to contribute to this department. Besides, this writing can be used as a reference for the student who likes to write about literature.

4. Research Method

There are three points in this section: data source, method and technique of collecting data, and method and technique of analysing data.

4.1. Data Source

The data of this study were taken from Tomas Hardy's poem entitled *After a Journey*. The primary data analysed in this writing were cited from <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/domination-of-black> of Wallace Stevens' poem entitled *Domination of Black*.

4.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data are the object of the study. The method that was applied in this study is library research because this method is reliable and relevant to the process of collecting the data. The important one is to get some books in the library and some articles on internet as data sources and references in order to find out more data related to the topic of study.

4.3 Method and Technique of Analysing Data

The data were analysed based on *Theory of Literature* by Warren and Wellek. 1962 and Knickerbocker's *Interpreting Literature* (1969). And Smith's theory in his book *Inside Poetry* (1985) was also applied to support this study.

5. Analysis

Domination of Black (by Wallace Stevens)

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room, 5
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. 10

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,

In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room, 15
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry -- the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves 20
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire, 25
Loud as the hemlocks

Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks? 28

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind. 32
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks
I felt afraid.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. 36

Domination of Black can describe about a man sitting at night watching a fire. The flames remind him of the colour of fallen leaves, which in turn, reminds him of the bright colour of peacock and the strange and harsh cry. Finally, after the passage of terror, the man looks out the window and becomes

aware that the planets turn like the fallen leaves in the wind. He is afraid because of his realization that all colours and all the qualities that give richness and life to the physical world, must yield to the darkness, just as a fire which must finally die, and leaves must from trees and, they are rich in colour crumble and vanish. The poem's effectiveness depends on the suggestive qualities of the objects, such as leaves, hemlocks, peacocks that are included in the rhythm of the poem.

Although the poem does not follow any regular metrical pattern, Steven's control of the rhythm of the poem is very sure and very important to the poem's effect. The poem begins slowly and firmly, there is a definite pause at the end of each line. The reader is gradually pulled into a rhythm which increases in speed, revolving as the colour of the flames which revolve around the wall of the room. "*Like the leaves themselves/ Turning to the wind*" (line 6-7). This rhythm is broken by the heavy rhythm beginning in line 8 "*Yes: but the colour of the heavy hemlocks/ Came striding*", a rhythm which suggests the stride of the hemlocks in the room.

The second section begins by resuming the revolving rhythm of the opening line, but his rhythm is soon replaced by more forceful rhythm in line 15 “*They swept over the room*”, which suggests the birds sweeping through the room and the poet’s rising terror. Then in line 21 “*Turning in the wind*”, the circular movement is again picked up in a passage of increasing intensity which draws together in one powerful whirling motion of the leaves, the flames, and the tails of the peacocks. The final line of this section also departs from this intense rhythm to indicate a pause. The poem has passed its emotional and rhythmic climax, and in the question “*or was it the cry against the hemlock?*” (line 28). It prepares to point up the meaning of the poem.

The final section begins with a rhythm that is similar to the rhythm of the poem’s opening lines. The poet looks out of the window at the planets beyond and perceives that they also turn like the flames and the leaves.

As in the first stanza, the turning rhythm is broken “*Came striding like the colour of the heavy hemlocks*” (in line 34), this time by a powerful, pulsing rhythm which suggests the onrushing night and the fear of the poet.

Stevens’ skilful use of repetition is important. The phrase “*Turning in the wind*” (line 22) is used several times with increasing forcefulness. Consider the effect of repeated words and sounds in the following lines:

Turning in the wind,	21
Turning as the flames	
Turned in the fire,	
Turning as the tails of the peacocks	
Turned in the loud fire,	25

the poem grows out of a repetition of objects which gradually develops in meaning. The fire, for the example, seems at first warm and comfortable and is compared to leaves pleasantly turning in the wind. But before long the wind has become the twilight wind and associated with the cry of peacocks. And the fire is transformed into the ominous “*loud fire*” (line 25) which is related to both the tails and the cry of peacocks.

Another notable change is in the significance of the title. It seems innocent and harmless at first, but gradually it gathers significance. By the end of the poem, black is the cause of both the fear of the poet and the cry of the peacocks. It is the colour of the onrushing night which seems to threaten the continued existence of the universe itself.

6. Conclusion

Stevens' particular poem, *Domination of Black*, is a representation of decay and death. The poem takes place on an early autumn night, focusing at one point on a person in room thinking about darkness, while a

fire is going in a fireplace nearby. A few images appear repetitively, which tie the poem together more clearly.

The poem begins by describing the setting: night time, by a fire indoors. Then explaining that the colours of the fallen leaves and bushes nearby outside have changed colour. This is visible to the person inside by the fireplace. From a deeper meaning, this may be explained by the way leaves and branches appear different as they are looked at while pulled upward or about in the wind. Here a different appearance is achieved before falling back into place as normal. From here a reference is made to the colour of the large hemlocks. Their colour is said to be striding, in other words walking, almost as if they are getting closer to the indoors. "*Yes: but the colour of the heavy hemlocks came striding.*" (line 68) From here an image of a cry of peacocks is heard. Finally, it can be said that it's best to think of it more like a musical tone poem or as an abstract painting with words rather than paint. There are some meaningful trends in the text: night is coming on, and it is autumn, both of these have symbolic associations with death or its approach. The poem is hypnotic in its repetitions, and builds from leaves turning in the wind all the way to the stars turning in the heavens. A dark mood prevails and the poet feels fear. And then there are those haunting cries from the peacocks.

7. Bibliography

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