Connotative and Denotative Meaning of a Poem Entitled: ‘Membaca Tanda-Tanda’ on Environmental Devastation: An Ecocriticism

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Abstract: The dependence of human beings on the natural environment for continuance and prosperity is by nature, an accomplished fact. This study sheds the light on the role of a poem in responding to an environmental destruction. It applies a qualitative content analysis method which place the emphasis on the recording, grouping, analysing, describing, and summarizing. It is demonstrated here that the poet conveys the criticism using both connotative and denotative meaning to deliver messages. Taufik Islamail here, had appealed to the government and society that it is so urgent to preserve our nature from natural disaster as there has been a lot of irregularities and misbehaviour in exploiting the natural resources that may cause environment devastation and natural disaster. It implicitly reveal that the power of languages in a poem enable to develop sympathy and empathy of human beings to actively get involved in natural conservation

1. Introduction

The dependence of human beings on the natural environment for continuance and prosperity is by nature, an accomplished fact. Unlike other creatures, the needs not only on biological nutrition, but also on emotional enrichment, such as aesthetic sensations: blooming flowers, green trees and prairies, the flowing of clear and yellowish river, birds’tweeting as well as mental nourishment: necessity for oxygen, fresh air, and clean water which contains sufficient minerals. In the history of mankind, humans have been engrossed and involved in preserving and adapting to natural environment since thousands of years ago [1, 2].

In the last a few decades, however, concerns have been expressed over an observable separation of humans from the natural environment [6]. Such phenomenon consequently has led to the imbalance ecosystem on account of lack of a sense of belonging and responsibility to preserve environment on the part of society. Some factors contribute to this low awareness. Among others are there has been an enormous shift of people move from rural areas into cities. Besides, modern life intrinsically may seclude people from open air natural inducement [5]; the deforestation: land clearance in the form of slash and burn method, illegal logging, and the industrial forest concession where trees are removed for timber and purposely provide specific areas for palm oil plantation.

There have been concerns that even though a lot of efforts and strategies had been made to grapple with the exponential increase of industrialization and urbanization, human, community and cultural well-being have been subsequently afflicted. Habitual models of public health seem not effective for the new facts of health problems posed to populations. This has caused a reconsideration of the interdependence between people, their health, and their physical and social environments. We refer to deforestation in Indonesia, which is thought as one of the highest rates of primary forest loss in the
tropics [8]. Such Irreversible deforestation of course threatens the country’s globally diverse biodiversity and contributes to the nation’s ranking as one of largest GHG emitters globally [9]. Moreover, the related transformation and burning of organic peat soils has led to excruciating air pollution and attendant regional public health crises [3,4].

One of the ways of expressing criticism for the destruction and damage of environment is in the form of literary work. It is fully evident that a concept of issues on ecology of literary work proposed by literary critics usually yield an inseparable relation between nature and literary work. The term ecocriticism therefore is a concept of literary criticism related to both the nature and living environment [8]. The word Eco critic is derived from English ecocriticism which is formed from the word ‘ecology’ and ‘critic’. Ecology is defined as a scientific study which is engaged in the relationship patterns of flora, fauna and human beings with the environment. Studies on environmental mind-set and virtues which put the emphasis on the issues on environmental and social psychology, and empirical education have received scholarly attention [11]. The collaboration between ecology and literature form the so called ecocritic theory. Literary work related to imaginative features which in some occasions also discuss reality. Meanwhile, the ecology itself concerns with the issues of environment, social, politic, and culture [9].

In responding to the environmental damages, some oral literary works, including poems have been released in on line media. The criticisms of environment devastation in the form of poems seems to have attracted readers as they are expressed using poetic languages which in some extent can be a sort of entertainment. In addition, literary works possess capability of changing humans’ perception viewed from diverse perspectives as they were derived from imagination process of the poets in observing their surroundings [10]. The natural phenomena seems to have been part of representation of various literary work including poetry. Their role is not only as a background of fiction stories but also as a main theme of other literary work. A variety of diction, such as water, trees, river, wave, and the other lexicons of a poem reveals that nature has always been the object of playwrights to describe the background or the content of literary work itself. This study seek to answer the research question: What are the messages and criticism conveyed by the poet in regards to the environmental damage?

2. Methodology

The poem which is to analyse in this study is a poem entitled “Membaca Tanda-Tanda” (Reading the Signs) written by Taufik Ismail, one of the legendary poets in Indonesia. This is a literary study which apply qualitative content analysis technique. The central focus of such technique is placed on the data analysis and interpretation of meaning [7]

There are a number of reasons for exploiting qualitative content analysis in this study, among others are: The primary element of social interaction clearly become apparent as we can directly look at communication via texts or transcripts; it provides sufficient perceptions of the unintelligible models of human thought and the language use; it allows to build an intimate connection with the text which modify between specific categories and relationship and also orderly analyse the coded form of the text [12].

To put it briefly, There are various steps are undertaken in this study which is described in the following smart graphic :

![Figure 1. The Steps of Qualitative Content Analysis](image-url)
The first step is to read the poems and record the words and phrases need to analyse. After wards, the analysed words and phrases are grouped or classified in to intrinsic and extrinsic units of meanings. In the the third step, all of the classified words and phrases are analysed and interpreted. After the analysing and interpreting process, the data are clearly described and finally the whole summary of the poems are provided.

3. Results and Discussion
Following are the analysis of a poem “Membaca Tanda-Tanda” (Reading the Signs) by Taufik Ismail:

**Membaca Tanda-Tanda**

*by Taufik Ismail*

Ada sesuatu yang rasanya mulai lepas dari tangan dan meluncur lewat sela-sela jari kita Ada sesuatu yang mulanya tak begitu jelas Tapi kini kita mulai merasakannya

Kita saksikan udara abu-abu warnanya kita saksikan air danau yang semakin surut jadinya

burung-burung kecil tak lagi berkicau di pagi hari Hutan kehilangan ranting ranting kehilangan daun daun kehilangan dahan dahan kehilangan hutan

Kita saksikan zat asam didesak karbon dioksid itu menggibles paru-paru

Kita saksikan Gunung membawa abu Abu membawa batu Batu membawa lindu Lindu membawa longsor Longsor membawa air Air membawa banjir Banjir air mata

Kita telah saksikan seribu tanda-tanda Bisakah kita membaca tanda-tanda? Allah ampuni dosa-dosa kami

This analysis are classified in to two parts: connotative and denotative meaning.

3.1 Connotative Meaning
* Theme (sense)*
The poet would like to convey a poem about environmental damage in this poem. He wants to make an appeal to the government and community for being sensitive with the surrounding phenomena. The significant changes occurring to their environment which is gradually getting worst. The nature which used to be beautiful, calm, comfortable, and peaceful, It currently have been on the verge of disaster as a consequence of irresponsibility and greedy of humans. In this poem, Taufik as a poet confides that he regrets for the absence of a natural and pure environment
* Feeling
The expressed feeling in this poem is a sadness and frightened as when such unprecedented scale of environmental destruction is neglected by the relevant parties: government and society. Some persons appears to have lost of care and prioritise their both individual and group interests to go hunting and shooting wild animals, commit illegal logging, and forest burning.

* Tone
The tone which raised in this poem is an allusion to the people who tend to be trapped and persuaded by their temptation and lust to get much profit which may lead to natural devastation to the people at large.

* Diction
One of the features attached to a poem is the use of alluring words to demonstrate its aesthetic impressions. In exploiting the words, the choice of words or dictions become the essential element of a poetry. Taufik, in this poem purposely uses the words kehilangan (lose) in the fourth stanza to indicate the lost of peaceful and beauty of nature. The dictions, such as air (water), danau (lake), burung (birds), hutan (forest), and gunung (mountain) to develop a close relation with the environment. The words longsor (landslide), banjir (flood), gempa (earth quake) to describe the natural disaster.

* Figurative Languages
To build a sort of aesthetic and poetic effect on their poems, most poets, including Taufik always exploit figurative languages. Besides, they serve as a source of expressing imagination and pleasure, and provide supporting meanings. Some figurative languages used here are hyperbole: banjir air mata (in flood in tears); sixth stanza, line 8). In this expression, the poet use the word banjir (flood) which implicitly says that many people have been concerned and sad for the destruction of nature; metaphor: Ada sesuatu yang rasanya mulai lepas dari tangan dan meluncur lewat sela-sela jari (there is something which is slowly removed from the hand and slide down through our fingers.). Taufik here makes a metaphor where something like a living object removing itself from hand and slide down between fingers. He indirectly says that the disaster occurs because of a cause and there will be an effect as a result; allegory which is the expression derived from parable, holy books, possess a hidden meaning. The phrases: ‘Kita saksikan air danau yang semakin surut jadinya burung-burung kecil tak lagi berkicau pagi hari’ (we can see the water on the lake has receded. Consequently, the little birds are reluctant to chirp in the morning).

3.2 Denotative Meaning
This Denotative meaning of a poem is usually derived from the poem itself. It is based on the words and phrases used by the poets. It is also classified as extrinsic units which exclude the feelings and ideas that people may connect with that word. The extrinsic units of this poem that can be interpreted are as follows:

Ada sesuatu yang rasanya mulai lepas dari tangan(There is something gradually remove from the hand)
dan meluncur lewat sela-sela jari kita (and It slide down through our fingers)

These phrases mean that at the beginning, the devastation does not affect us but gradually we closely feel it. Such distraction is not clearly observable as the consequences may not be fully evident in s short time.

Kita saksikan udara abu-abu warnanya (we see the colour of the air become grey)
Kita saksikan air danau yang semakin surut jadinya (we see the water lake which gradually recedes)
Burung-burung kecil tak lagi berkicau pagi hari (the little birds do not want to chirp anymore in
The forest loses its trunks
(The forest loses its trunks)

The poet described the effect in the form of grey colour. The receding of water lake has made the little birds to be reluctant to chirp in the morning. In addition, the deforestation has caused the forest become barren, dry, and arid. Taufik here describes an example of the effect of forest burning on a tree where all parts of a tree have lost their capability to naturally grow.

The verses above reveals that the non-living objects which represent nature: stone, ash, water, mountain have demonstrated their severe devastation when the environment has been heavily damaged. The above stanza indirectly further conveys that the poet has reminded people that the nature seems to have been angry and furious. Such signs sometime are not carefully noticed which may lead to sudden disaster and havoc here and there.

Finally only God the most knowing and the exalted in Might whose capability to read the sign.Implicitly, the nature is a sort of a mandate given by the God to human being to preserve the environment. All the abundant natural resources are the manifestation of God’s love to the human beings and it is the responsibility and duty of people to preserve it for their own good.

4. Conclusion
To sum up, this poems were written using the familiar words and phrases which has made easy for the readers to understand it. Moreover, Taufik would like to develop an awareness of the importance of maintaining the balanced ecosystem and life cycles which in turn bring the good impact on the life of human beings and other creatures. Human beings do depend on the healthy, clean, and fresh environment to survive and the sustainability and preservation of nature is a prerequisite. Besides, as a
poet whose educational background in agriculture and biology, Taufik appears to have capacity and insights into the knowledge, information on the role of the diverse biodiversity and ecosystem in the world.

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