

**NAIVETY AS THE PARADOX AND IRONY OF WAR IN THREE WAR
POEMS: DOUGLAS DUNN'S *AFTER THE WAR*, LOUIS JOHNSON'S
BREAD AND PENSION AND W.H. AUDEN'S *REFUGEE BLUES*.**

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Abstrak

Tujuan pembahasan teks puisi ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana ketiga puisi perang ini menunjukkan kenaiifan *speaker* dalam menghadapi perang. Teks puisi ini dianalisa dengan menggunakan *text-based analysis*. Penganalisaan makna ketiga puisi ini dikuak melalui elemen paradoks dan ironi pada ketiga puisi yang memperlihatkan kenaiifan *speaker* dalam menghadapi perang yang mempengaruhi hidupnya serta masyarakat dimana dia berada. Hasil penganalisaan menunjukkan kenaiifan *speaker* dalam menghadapi perang dilihat melalui tingkah laku.

Kata kunci: perang, kenaiifan, speaker, paradoks, ironi

A. Introduction

Literature is the art of language which has its own way to describe an idea, event or experience or even knowledges. As a writing form, literature differentiates its form from another kinds of writing like newspaper, articles, historical documents and magazines. Also, its aesthetic or artistic values make it different from other writings. According to Erlich (2005: 4), "The act of creative deformation in literary works counteracts the inexorable pull of routine, dislodges the automatism of ordinary perception by tearing the object out of its habitual context". This quotation says that the exertion of several features in literary works such as figures of speech, imagery, paradox and irony create the effect that distinguishes literary texts with non-literary texts. It gives a fresh concept and perception in conveying familiar experiences or ideas within the work in unusual way. In other words, the literary works are able to evoke a familiar idea in unfamiliar ways. Thus, it points out how the language use in literary works are different with ordinary setting.

In addition, literature embraces a wide variety of subject matter or experiences. Albrecht (2012: 425-426) explains that literature is often considered

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as the reflection of society or the mirror of life which identically expresses its society. By some means, that the literature is the product of social culture. Literature is able to influence and shape the way of thinking of society. One of the most common themes is about the war and its complications. It is also known as the war literature. Generally, literature presents the war and its effect to someone's life. War can give a lasting effect like physical and psychological wound. On the other hand, war even brings distinct advantages for certain parties or group of people in the particular community. Consequently, the literature makes it possible to convey the familiar experience within the society into the literary works.

However, in an interesting way, there is another attitude that is raised by literature. One of examples of this attitude is naivety. This attitude refers to the simplemindedness of people in responding the war. As it is depicted by the first war poem, *After the War*, the readers are able to perceive how the literary works present the attitude of someone to see the war as a game instead of a cruel thing. The speaker within the poem encounters the war as a pleasure and amusement. They are amazed with the military activity. In another side, being submissive and uncritical toward the rough life that is experienced by some other group of people in their surroundings is the representation of the naivety of people in responding the situation around them. It is depicted by the second poem, *Bread and Pension*. In the last poem, *Refugee Blues*, depicts the naivety of the speakers whose German Jews that have no enough courage to acknowledge the situation around them. They thought as an equal group of people with another community. In fact, several difficulties and persecution are the reasonable reaction towards their status as German Jews. Consequently, the speakers are stateless and have no place to go.

The origin of the use of term naivety is in the late seventeenth century from French *naïveté*, from *naïf*, *-ive*. This term means the way of someone who poses the simplemindedness in seeing something. An Encyclopedia Britannica Company (2013) defines that to be naïve means simpleminded and uncritical and marked by the unaffected simplicity. For instance: that a naïve belief that all people are good and unsuspecting. In other words, a naïve person is a person who is cocooned in innocence. They are the type of persons that will believe almost anything that is told, see the best in everyone, and do not understand that there are bad things in the world. This could be due to the lack of experience, information or ability that influence how these people judge anything they see or know. Thus, to be naïve means often show a certain ignorance when thinking about a problem.

In addition, naivety refers to the simplicity of people who believe in whatever they are told, without questioning whether it is right or wrong. An Encyclopedia Britannica Company (2013) states naivety as the state or quality of being naïve, ingenuousness and straightforwardness. Naivety is an adjective that describes having naïve or unaffected simplicity. Naivety is also used to describe someone who is considered ingenuous. It means that the naivety is the attitude whose someone is childish and innocent view the world. A naïve person does not demand evidence; they automatically assume a claim is true. People who are naïve are considered as lacking worldly experience and understanding. Thus, naïve individuals possess a quality of being unsuspecting and innocent.

Moreover, there are so many studies and analysis that examine the three war poems in this analysis. They focus on analyzing the historical and biographical background of author of the three war poems. On the other hand, some critics elaborate the language use and the analogy that used by the poem. This analysis, however, focuses on keeping the originality of thought or ideas through examining the elements within the poem. It seeks the interplay of paradox and irony within the three war poems that evoke the naivety of the speakers in responding the war.

Furthermore, Margaret Melicharova (2011), entitled “Violence against Human Beings: Poetry and War’s Douglas Dunn’s *After the War’s*, Louis Johnson’s *Bread and Pension*, Evangeline Paterson’s *Dispossessed*, and W.H. Auden’s *Refugee Blues*, connects the historical and biographical background of the poet and the critical commentary or ideas of her perspectives to evoke the meaning. Melicharova analyzes that these four poems have a connection with the First and the Second World War. This analysis presents the idea of violence against human beings as a result of the cruelty of the war. The war has already put people into suffer and being victimized by the war itself. Thus, this analysis emphasizes the history and biography of author to give contribution in revealing the idea of violence within society as the effect of war.

Moreover, John Keats (2012) analyzes the poem, *Refugee Blues*, entitled *Poetry Analysis: Refugee Blues’s W.H. Auden*. This analysis discloses the laments the plight of the Jews who were forced to flee Europe when the Holocaust started and they were rounded up and killed or imprisoned under the cruel regime of Hitler. In this analysis, Keats examines the word choices or diction within the poem. It also deals with the analogy that has been used in this poem. He analyzes the refrain at the end of each stanza, customary for a blues song, a dejected realization in its own by the narrator. He elaborates that in figurative way the chaos of the political in Hitler’s reign. While the analogy used to convey the low position of the speaker as the German Jews. Thus, this analysis emphasizes the idea of miserable life that has been experienced by the speaker as German Jews.

For the sake of this study, it is necessary to employ the techniques of seeking the interplay of paradox and irony as a device or function to reveal the idea of naivety within the three poems. Paradox is a device which creates a contrast. Kirsznner (2000: 528) states that paradox is a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to a common sense yet it perhaps true. For instance: they have ears but not hear; deep down she’s really very shallow. It attracts the attention of reader and gives emphasize. Thus, the paradox is a statement or situation that apparently contradictory but makes sense with more thought.

Paradox is a kind of irony that is profoundly true. Authors from different genres use this element to force the reader dig deeper and search for a meaning which is not visible in plain sight. O’Brien (2010: 2) states that “paradox usually refers to the contradictory statement that is nonetheless true, or an inexplicable phenomenon that is nonetheless real.” By some means that paradox is a statement that states idea seems contradictory but it perhaps true. However, a paradox is much more complex rather than irony. It works like a puzzle and contains philosophical and symbolic meaning which the author intends the readers to find.

By making the readers think and work to get the real meaning, the author disposes the monotony in conveying ideas within the works. Consequently, the literary paradox reveals the truth, though at first may look contradictory or even weird.

Irony is the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite. According to Kirszner (2000: 598), irony occurs when a discrepancy exists between two levels of meaning or experiences. In other words, irony is a statement or the situation where the meanings are contradicted by the presentation of the idea. An Encyclopedia of Britannica Company (2013), states that the irony is a technique of indicating, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually stated. The literary device uses the incongruity of what it said and what is meant or understood as its basis. The actual meaning lies beyond the obvious. Thus, the irony is relying on the readers' intelligence to discover the hidden meanings.

There are some kinds of the irony. It includes dramatic irony that an irony which occurs when the speakers believe in one thing, but the reader realizes something else. The second is the verbal irony. It is created when the words says one thing but mean another often exactly the opposite. Verbal irony uses the word that in such a manner that there is a disparity in expression and intention. In literature, when a character makes statement that has an underlying meaning in contrast with the literal meaning of the sentence. The last is situational irony. It occurs when the situation itself contradict reader's expectation. It is a style employed when the author creates a situation and leads the readers to believe that a certain ending is expected, when the actual ending is in contrast. Thus, irony deals with the situation that reverse with what it expected.

B. Discussion

The three war poems, Douglas Dunn's *After the War*, Louis Johnson's *Bread and Pension*, and W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues*, implicitly evoke the idea of naivety of the speakers in responding towards war. The naivety itself is revealed through the attitude which occurs of each speakers within the three poem to respond war.

1. After the War

Douglas Dunn's poem "After the War" begins with illustrating the image of war and its effect. The title suggests that the poem is about the situation of the aftermath of the war. The word 'after' here gives a clue about the time that there has been a war. In addition, this sequence of time suggests that the poem would deal with the horrible situation as the effect of the war. However, after the second and later readings, it becomes apparent that the poem depicts about the attitude of people in responding toward war. Deeply, this poem implicitly exposes the idea of naivety of its speaker to view the world around them.

The notion of naivety of its speaker in responding the war is reveal through several paradoxes and the irony in the poems. It is traced by the illustration of the poems that create the paradox and irony of it. How the speaker encounters the war as a game, a kind of amusement and its army shows the naivety of the speaker. It is obvious that the reality of the war is totally different. In every conflict, children tend to be put as the major priority to be protected

because the effect of it was harmful and destructive to them. Moreover, the respond of children towards the presence of soldiers assume their enjoyment to war, represents the naivety of them in seeing the world around. In the same time, it evokes the ironic situation within the poem which put the contrast image about how the people in responding toward war. People used to think that war full of violence and cruel, whereas there are some people encounter it as a pleasure. Thus, this poem exactly exposes an anomaly or uncommon reaction towards the war itself.

Moreover in line eleven to twelve, this part exposes the idea that the speaker or children has already became another person who being victimized by the war. As it says "*it's warm yolk on the green grass, and pine cones like little hand grenades*" shows that unconsciously the speaker points out or rises that the war is cruel and full of violence. Yet the speakers show the unusual attitudes or responds toward war. To the speakers, it is a cheerful thing. The speakers are amused about the combat. Line fourteen to seventeen as the third paradox evokes another idea related to the war.

A grenade well-thrown by a child's arm, 14
And all these faces like our fathers' faces
Would fall back bleeding... 16

This part emphasizes that the real war apart from the naivety of the speaker has already brought a trauma to the victims of it. The people start to lose their family members and gives a deep wound physically or mentally to others as it says *...like our father faces would fall back bleeding.* In the same time, it also suggests that the family members may be also being a part of the military service. They could be victimized by the war. For this, what had already happen might triggers the traumatic event to the family members in the present day. This idea then represents how the speakers unconsciously disclose that the grenades that being played could be the one which is killed its father and another family members. It again depicts the naivety of its speakers to encounter the war. Thus, innocently their attitudes suggest the simplemindedness to react towards the war.

This poem juxtaposes the contrasting image between the speakers and another small boy in community. It reflects the irony of the war itself. They have different attitude or reaction in responding the war itself. It emphasizes the ironic situation which is speaker thought the war as an enjoyment, in fact it is really destructive. There are some boys that are interested in playing like a real soldier, while another boy does not looking forward to it. This idea is exposed by the seven last lines of the poem:

But one of us had left. I saw him go
Out through the gate, I heard him on the road
Running to his mother's house. They lived alone, 25
Behind a hedge round an untended garden
Filled with broken toys, abrasive loss;
A swing that creaked, a rusted bicycle.
He went inside just as the convoy passed. 29

The sentence *running to his mother's house and live alone* gives clear pictures that there is no mention of a father. This attitude suggests that the presence of real soldiers may affect the boy, who might have a traumatic event about the war

itself. It can be a father or brothers who also take a part in the real combat; then become the victims during the war. The words *untended garden, broken toys, abrasive loss, swing, creaked, and rusted* suggest the loss, ruin of life and frustrated. In other words, it is the prove of the effect of the war which is really destructive. The boy has no intention in knowing everything relates to the military activity. Thus, these contrasting images assume another idea of the speaker who being naïve in criticizing the reality that happen surrounds them. In fact, there are another people who pose different reaction about the war.

2. Bread and Pension

Bread and Pension by Louis Johnson exposes the perspective of the former guard towards the life in the prison. This poem represents the point of view of the former guard which then reflects the naivety of its speaker about the circumstances of the prison that they are dealing with. This idea deals with the things that can support someone's life financially. Both of them give a clue about the things that can support someone's life which can be possible to obtain through having job.

This poem illustrates how paradox and irony clearly shows the naivety of the speaker. All of the paradox is traced in the entire stanza of the poem. At first glance it seems contrast, yet it is true that the speaker could not do anything to stand against the State, since it was told that they just have to guard, and no question ask. These three stanzas evoke about the same thing about how cozy and comfortable life that the speaker has been through. In the first stanza, it clearly suggests that bread, pension and the fairish estate are the things that the speaker could take in return to guard. In the same time, this paradox intensifies the idea of the speaker who being submissive and feared about the job that they did. It is strengthened by the second stanza which says "guardroom fire" that suggests the speaker is provided with comfortable places in their job. Further, the third stanza states that "there were cards for such occasions and good companions who truly were more than home" depicts another pleasure that is given to the speaker. Thus, it points how delightful the life that has been experienced by the speaker.

The elements of the poem and its significances expose the dramatic irony of the poem. The speaker considers that what they have done is just the part of the job. No question asked, just did what have been told and they got much compensation for it. Yet, the readers may find out how naive the speaker in responding the situation around them since there was no criticizing. In the same time, the attitude of the speaker which is being submissive and has no courage to criticize the reality of the prison itself implies the naivety of the speaker within the poem. "Did as they were told," becomes the sole reason of the speaker to defend the job that they have done as if nothing awkward towards it and the torture of its prisoners was a common thing at all.

3. Refugee Blues

W.H. Auden's Refugee Blues talks about the miserable life that the speaker has been experienced as the refugee. The title of poem gives a picture of what the poem wants to articulate. As the title of the poem-'refugee blues'-according to Merriam Webster (2013) states that refugee means person involuntarily displaced from his or her homeland. Until the late 19th century and

the emergence of fixed and closed national boundaries, refugees are always absorbed by neighboring countries. The word 'blues' itself represents a slow and a sad song. The Blues were first sung by African Americans working on the slave plantations in the southern states of the USA; these blues or melancholy ballads express the unhappiness of slaves' life. By some means, this poem wants to show the pathetic life that had been through by the speaker as the refugee.

Moreover, several devices that being analyzed in this poem reveals the idea of naivety of the speaker. It clearly shows that this poem being formed by the paradox and irony. In one side, this poem attempts to the power of one's politic who own the reign or dominance and its complications. On the other hand, as this poem applies a dramatic irony which occurs since the speaker believes in one thing, yet the readers find something else. The speakers considered themselves as an equal with any other communities outside Jews. Well, in fact, they are never got any recognition. Consequently, this poem depicts that the speaker emerges as a naïve person. The speaker noticeably comes up as one who naïve in responding and assigning how the public executes them. It was equitable to be treated unfairly in the recent country considering their status which turns out as an enemy of the authority. Thus, it obviously represents the naivety of someone's life.

This poem presents paradox in every stanza. The strongest part that disclose the idea of naivety in responding the war of its speaker is traced through three stanzas that have a common topic about the politics at that time that persecute the German Jew. They have no admission in the recent country, yet could not back to its own country. They even consider as the minority and a thief. It is true that as an inferior group of people, Jews are often defined as thief and misfortune to others. The last paradox that this poem shows is in the eight, nine and ten:

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they
weren't German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the
human race.

These quotations emphasize that the animals at that time live happier and have more freedom to express themselves than humans. After all, those paradoxes that appeared in the poem help the poem to set and create the tone of misery. All of them show how miserable the life of German Jews was. They are being homeless, stateless, have nowhere to go, and no one care about them. It is sad and desperate. Yet, in another circumstances, what happen to them is also a paradox. No wonder, as a German Jew, refugee and the inferior experienced several injustice and

persecution within their life because it always does. The German Jew never considered as a matter. Since the speakers are identified as German Jew, it is obvious why then the speaker is being rejected in every community.

They have no enough courage to acknowledge the circumstances as German Jews that they had experienced. They seem very insensitive and still feel that there is nothing wrong with them. The speaker was fully aware and realize that they are German Jews as it is stated '*but they weren't German Jews, my dear*' implicitly shows that the speakers are part of German Jews. The speakers basically understand that they remain a nation or group of people who never admitted and will always be the part of people who desolate since they live in the country of having nothing. So that no wonder if somehow the speaker could not find any place to live since they are defined as German Jews. Through all of the ideas within paradox, it clearly depicts the naivety of the speakers.

C. Conclusion

The three poems, Douglas Dunn's *After the War*, Louis Johnson's *Bread and Pension*, and W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues* represents the issue of war. These poems illustrate the naivety of the speakers in responding war. This idea is captured through the paradox and irony of the war within the poems. The naivety itself is reflected through the attitude of the speakers to respond toward war and the people who are affected by war in the neighborhood. Thus, paradox and irony are the elements that reveal the naivety of the speaker in responding the war.

Paradox and the irony war imply no matter how destructive and violence the war in the reality, people still have its own way in dealing with the war. The analysis of the three poems, Douglas Dunn's *After the War*, *Bread and Pension's Louis Johnson*, and W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues*, reveal that in fact there is an interesting part which depict the naivety of someone to respond the war as convenient. Thus, it points that the literature itself is able to present this familiar experiences and the readers perceive its own perception towards it.

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