

# HONEST DECEPTION IN W.H. AUDEN POEM'S *AS I WALKED OUT ONE EVENING*

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## ABSTRACT

This study aim to analyze honest deception style in poem entitled *As I Walked Out One Evening* by W.H. Auden. This study analyzes three types of honest deception style, namely; Hyperbole, Irony, and Sarcasm. The result of this study is in this poem uses all of types of honest deception. Through this analysis, it is found five hyperboles which relates manmade to the nature, two ironies, and three sarcasms which teach moral value for better life. All of this style has certain function to beautify work and attract reader's attention to seek the deeper meaning of poem.

Key words: Honest Deception, Stylistics, poem

## INTRODUCTION

Language and literature cannot be separated from each other. Language is the basic raw material or medium, through which literature is produced, whether they are novels or poems, plays or films, and others. Language has been defined by Hornby (2000: 752) in his *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area. It is a system for the expression of thoughts, feelings, and so forth, by the use of spoken words or conventional symbols. Literature, whether oral or written, expresses people's thoughts, feelings, views, culture, and others (Hornby, 2000: 783).

Literature cannot exist outside language since language is the medium of expression. Fowler (1994:271) says that literature is the world that was created, built, offered, and realized through words or language. People can only use language to construct poems, stories, plays, films, and others. In other words, literature involves the manipulation of language for creative purposes.

Another way of looking at the relationship between language and literature is as follows: Language is a method of communication, while literature is the content being communicated. Language has been described as a set of gestures and words and phrases with meaning behind them, while literature is the manipulation and use of those gestures and words and phrases for creative purposes. In literature, language is carefully crafted (Benjamin, 2010: 1).

The definition above clearly shows that literature, in all its forms, cannot exist outside language. In literature, language is manipulated for the expression of a people's culture. While

language is the medium used in expressing people's culture, literature is the reflection of this culture. Literature itself has been described as a bundle of material, oral or written, which reflects how people live their lives. As a product of human culture, language can be the medium that presents cultures that exist at that time. How language is used can be investigated to reveal some aspects of particular periods. Each period has its particular characteristics that differentiate one from another and has its own contributions in many aspects of human living and development, including the language. In other words, the language development can reflect the cultural development of each period.

Language evolves and deviates in society as the product of human culture. The phenomena of language deviation are then studied under stylistics. Leech (1968: 1) says that stylistics is simply the study of literary style, even more explicit, the study of the use of language in literature. The tendency is also supported by Trisman (1977: 7). He defines "Stylistics" as a part of linguistic studies which concerns with the variation of language use. It can be defined as the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect. Stylistic analysis can direct attention to specific linguistic features in a text and so provide textual substantiation for the different kinds of literary effect it might have on the reader.

Furthermore, Poetry is literary work in metrical form or patterned language. It can also be said as the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, designed to produce pleasure through beautiful, elevated, imaginative, or profound thoughts. Hornby (1985: 644) defines poetry as "the art of a poet; poems" and defined as pieces of creative writing in verse form, especially the ones that express deep feeling or noble thought in beautiful language, composed with the desire to communicate experience. Poetry cannot really be defined because it involves many different aspects of subject matter, form, and effect. Poetry is filled with meaningful words. The meaning of words in poetry can be interpreted based on the various points of view and the ability of readers in interpret it. That is why to understand how to analyze poetry is very important. Therefore, this study is going to analyze stylistics approach in W.H. poem's *As I Walked Out one Evening* through honest deception style which includes hyperbole, irony, and sarcasm.

## **STYLISTICS**

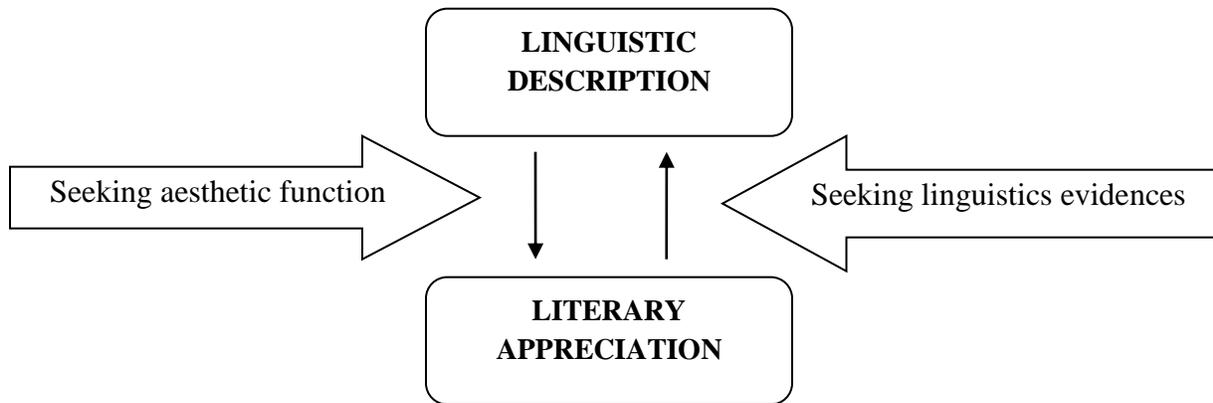
In analyzing literature, linguistic analysis cannot be abandoned. It is because both complement each other. As the basic requirement in understanding literature, the first step is to

know the language used as the medium of the literary works. On the other hand, in learning or analyzing language, people should consider literature as a way of how language is used. Furthermore, Leech (1981:1) asserts that literature cannot be examined in any depth apart from language, and vice versa.

Stylistics is the name of a field of a study proposed to explore language use in literary works. It is said as the combination of linguistic and literary analysis. The statement implies that stylistics cohere the linguistic and literary analysis in analyzing a literary work. It comes from the assumption that those two analyses are strongly related and complemented to one another. Specifically, as the meeting ground of those two related fields, stylistics studies how language is used in literary works. It is the branch of general linguistics that focuses on style, particularly in works of literature. It investigates how a writer or speaker deploys the phenomenon of language to communicate.

As an exercise in describing what use is made of language in literary works, stylistics has two main goals: to explain the relation between language and artistic function, and to discover the author's works of doubtful attribution (Leech,1981:14). This categorizes stylistics into two types: literary and attribution stylistics.

Literary stylistics tries to find sufficient explanation by relating the critic's ideas of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist's ideas of linguistic description. Those two elements, aesthetic appreciation and linguistic description, stand in a cyclic motion in which linguistic observation stimulates the literary insight, and literary insight in its turn does the same thing for a further linguistic observation. This idea is called the 'philological circle' or the circle of understanding and is proposed by Spitzer in Leech (1981: 13).



*Figure1. The Philological Circle*

On the other hand, attributional stylistics tends to involve statistical studies of style to discover author's characteristics through his works. It focuses more on the linguistic characteristics which perhaps relatively are unnecessary in relevance to artistic function. Some examples of the linguistic traits investigated are the range of vocabulary, sentence length, or the frequency of certain conjunctions.

Basically, attributional stylistics seeks the author's habits in using language which becomes his linguistic 'thumbprint', beyond his works. An important concept that differentiates literary stylistics from attributional stylistics is on the issues of selection. The principle of selection is the base for selecting what aspects of language matter in studying style. This principle depends on the purpose that the researcher has. Attributional stylistics takes notes on the language features that remain constant whatever the artistic or other motives of the writer are. On the other hand, the literary stylistics selects the language features determined by artistic motivation as its primary intention of investigation (Leech, 1981: 14).

## **HONEST DECEPTION AS A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STYLE OF LITERARY WORKS**

Leech (1968) in his book *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* defines Honest Deception as the tropes which misrepresent the truth for the sake not of deception, but literary purpose. This section treats three tropes: Hyperbole (Exaggeration), Irony, and Sarcasm. They are connected in that in a sense they miss present the truth: hyperbole distorts by saying too much, sarcasm and irony often take the form of saying or implying the opposite of what one feels to be the case.

### **1. Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is the type of figurative language that contains excessive statements. It is a figure of exaggeration. The excessive statements function as the device in exaggerating something (Keraf, 2008: 135). It tells more than the truth about the size, number, or degree of something without intending to deceive (Willis, 1964: 242). It is an exaggeration of the truth, usually meant to be humorous or funny. The sentence "I can eat one million ice cream cones" is an exaggeration of the true fact that the speaker likes ice cream cones. Writers and poets use hyperbole to get a point across or to be funny.

Leech (1968:168) states that hyperbole is frequently concerned with personal values and sentiments. It relates to the process of making subjective statements, in this case the statements

are somehow exaggerated, that cannot be verified unless the speakers are able to get inside the cranium of the person about whom the statements are made. Leech (1968: 168) quotes Shakespeare's Hamlet as an example of hyperbolic statement:

I loved Ophelia: *forty thousand brothers*  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum.

In the excerpt, Silverstein is using hyperbole to exaggerate Hamlet's love to Ophelia. It means that Hamlet's love is limitless in quantity and quality. While there may be many examples, using the figure "one million" is a deliberate exaggeration used as shorthand for some significantly high number. The same holds true for the extreme threat of jumping off a cliff. By using dramatic wording, the writer communicates an unspoken level of devotion or passion. The use of hyperbole as a figure of speech hinges on deliberate exaggeration for a desired effect. If the statement is objectively true, there is no hyperbole. One might say, "The Sears tower is the tallest building in all of Chicago." without any sense of exaggeration or irony. Another speaker might say, "Our new school is large enough to have its own zip code." Obviously few buildings would actually meet this standard, so the exaggeration is for dramatic effect. However, there is no one who can refute the exaggerated statements upon the speaker as the statements are the result of subjective valuation which actually can be either proved or disproved (Norton, 1990: 1).

## **2. Irony**

Irony is an attempt of delivering meanings that are very different from what is said. Leech (1968: 171) quotes the definition of irony made by H. W. Fowler in *Modern English Usage*, that irony is a mode of expression which postulates a double audience, one of which is 'in the know' and aware of the speaker's intention, while the other is naive enough to take the utterance as its face value.

### **a. The Mask of Irony**

The basis of irony applied to language, as what Leech (1968: 171) states, is human disposition to adopt a pose, or put on a 'mask'. Furthermore, the 'mask' of approval may be called the overt or direct meaning, and the disapproval behind the 'mask', the covert or oblique meaning (Leech, 1968: 171-172). The most valued type of literary irony is that which implies moral or ethical criticism. As an example of ironic statement,

*Your voice is really very beautiful!*

The utterance above is ambiguous. That sentence might mean the way it is said or vice versa. Context plays an important role in irony. If the respondent of that utterance is really good in singing, then the utterance will be a mere compliment. However, if it is not, then the utterance becomes ironical.

#### **b. Innuendo**

Innuendo is an ironic statement that is remarkable for what it omits rather than for what it mentions (Leech, 1968: 174-175). It is an allusive remark concerning a person or thing, especially of depreciatory kind. In other words, much humor has its basis in innuendo. Here, for example, is Sydney Smith's comment on Macaulay's powers as a conversationalist: He has occasional flashes of silence that makes his conversation perfectly delightful. Hence, silence in Macaulay is like sobriety in the inebriate husband, something rare enough to be remarkable.

### **3. Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is derived from the Greek's word *sarkasmos* which means tearing something apart. Sarcasm is a more violent reference than irony. Its reference contains bitter and even rude mocks. Sarcasm might be ironical, in which the meaning is contradictive with the fact, and it might be not. The point is that this kind of figurative language usually creates displeasure to the hearers, readers, or the objects it refers to (Keraf, 2008: 144).

Many people relate sarcasm to irony, but there is a big difference between the two. A person may use irony unintentionally and unconsciously. However, sarcasm must be intentional and conscious. Whoever makes a sarcastic comment knows that they are saying something contrary to what they actually believe or how they actually feel. Negative sarcasm, where positively worded utterances convey negative attitudes, is used frequently in everyday language.

For example, one may say "I love James; that jerk slammed the door in my face even though he saw me walking behind him." James' actions would normally not be loved by anyone. However, one may use the word "love" to express their disapproval of him and his actions. Once again, this is a play on words. Sarcastic remarks are usually accompanied by exaggeration, and intensifiers may be used on the words that state the opposite of how one truly feels. For example, in the situation with James, one might put a vocal stress on the word love, resulting in "I looove James".

## HONEST DECEPTION IN W.H. AUDEN POEM'S *AS I WALKED OUT ONE EVENING*

Auden's poem entitled *As I Walked Out One Evening* tells about a man who goes out for a stroll one evening, when he hears two lovers expressing their love for each other down by a river. A lover would say, love has no end, how they will love each other till the end and that their love is eternal. However, this man thinks differently, he does not believe love can conquer all, because he knows time can conquer all. Time will kill them, and their love will die with them as they are being swallowed by time and death. This poem depicts honest deception style for conveying the remarkable message to reader through hyperbole, irony, and sarcasm which will be explained in these following points.

### I. Hyperbole

Hyperbole uses in literary work by the purpose to impress others or to emphasize something, such as a feeling, effort, or reaction. It is frequently concerned with personal values and sentiments. It is related to the process of making subjective statements, in this case the statements are somehow exaggerated, which cannot be verified unless the speakers are able to get inside the cranium of the person about whom the statements are made. In a creative work, hyperbole is an extremely effective literary device. It is used to gain a dramatic effect and to get a point across or make a desired effect.

In this poem, there are several hyperboles which are depicted to emphasize the feeling of lover. This poem focuses around two lovers and how they believe that their love can conquer all. They also believe that their love will cause magical matter happen. The evidence can be seen in the third stanza, "*I love you, dear, I will love you*

*Till China and Africa meet  
And the river jumps over the mountain  
And the salmon sing in the street."*

From that stanza, Auden attempts to describe how deep their love is by using the style of hyperbole to create reader's sense in understanding the word 'love' which wants to explore in this poem. At glance, that stanza is deceiving the reader by the phrase "*China and Africa meet*", it refers to the movements of continents. This is a time frame that will take a long time. It is kind of impossible thing which will never happen. However, this phrase could help the reader imagines that China and Africa meet is the big tragedy which symbolizes mankind's love. In this

case, Auden uses personification to create hyperbole, that China and Africa is just a country which could not meet each other.

Then, in the next line, Auden wrote “*river jumps over mountain*”, it also kind of hyperbole which uses personification to serve it. Logically, that matter will never happen, except there is disaster in this world such as *Tsunami* which can make sea can jump over to the mountain. This line actually attempts to describe that their love will be eternal even though there is disaster happened like as elaborated before. Another line also bring out honest deception style by using the phrase, “*salmon sing in the street*”, which actually implies of eternally love. It is kind of foolish thing that salmon can sing, instead it can live in the street. This line attempts to deceive the reader in imagining salmon can sing and live in the street. Salmon belongs to river which impossible to live in street and it could not sing. This hyperbole also uses personification through the salmon which sing as the mankind does. Those all serve just to beautify the poem and strengthen the feeling of love which wants to be conveyed to the reader.

Furthermore, Auden also bring out the concept of hyperbole in the fourth stanza,

*I'll love you till the ocean*

*Is Folded and hung up to dry*

*And the seven stars go squawking*

*Like geese about sky*

That stanza contains of four lines which is fulfilled by honest deception style to help the reader get deeper meaning about speaker's feeling. As in fourth stanza above tells that the speaker will love his lover until “*the ocean is folded and hung up to dry*”. This refers to timelessness and makes love seem more powerful that it can fold up the whole ocean. It kind of excessive matter which is strongly attempts to deliver the meaning of love through hyperbole case. It can be imagined that when ocean folded and dry, how can love can be survive even mankind could not alive anymore due to there are no lively sources in this world. It is clearly encourage the reader to seek the real meaning in poem which uses honest deception style in arranging word pattern because it often serves illogically matter which actually could not be accepted directly by mankind's thought and feeling.

Meanwhile, in the next line of fourth stanza also emerges hyperbole concept by telling that “*the seven stars go squawking*

*Like geese about sky*”

It means that until the planets and the stars move in the sky, he still loves his lover. This is type of honest deception which attempts to show toward the readers which there are seven stars which are going to squawking like goose for sky. It is hard to understand what is the true meaning actually. It is kind of hyperbole which uses personification and simile all at once in the one stanza to strengthen the meaning of love which wants to interpret. Unreasonable, it is kind of impossible matter which is logically happened, as be known that star is only thing in sky which cannot go squawking. This is a nice imagination in composing a personification and simile with a bunch of hyperbole.

Auden serves several hyperbole in his poem entitled *As I Walked Out One Evening* by relating manmade versus nature, it kinds of imagery which completes this poem is gorgeous to be comprehended in world of literature. Auden is deliberately exaggerates the reality matter by the intent to intensify, enhance the impression of power and influence, both the number, size, and properties. Not only in literature, is it unknowingly the case of hyperbole often fills mankind's conversation. It could be, the message to be conveyed is mediocre, but became greater when the sentence is formed in such a way by honest deception type of hyperbole. To get a dramatic impression of a sentence, the author often uses hyperbole. The impression of hyperbole (greatly exaggerated) in communicating something to do with the deliberate purpose, which is attempted to get reader's attention more in the arranging word which is exaggerated in the poem, the style of honest deception concerning hyperbole uses in this poem because the author wants to make this poem seems attractive by using exaggerated word which encourage the reader to understanding deeper what actually the author's intense feeling.

## **II. Irony**

Irony is a disagreement or incongruity between what is said and what is understood, or what is expected and what actually occurs. Irony can be used intentionally or can happen unintentionally. Authors can use irony to make their readers stop and think about what has just been said, or to emphasize a central idea. The reader's role in realizing the difference between what is said and what is normal or expected is essential to the successful use of irony. Authors use irony as a literary device to make readers think about something or to emphasize a point in the story. For irony to be used correctly, the reader must be able to clearly understand the difference between what is being said and what is expected. There are many literary works which serve irony to get reader's attention more to investigate the language of literary work which

concerning with stylistic analysis, especially in poem, which is compose implicit meaning within arranging word pattern that often deviates the rule.

In the poem entitled *As I Walked Out One Evening*, is found some irony which depicts the contradiction, as in second stanza “Love has no ending”. It is ironic that say Love has no ending. It indicates that based on the speaker love is eternal, but in reality love is perishable. People who are falling in love always say that love is eternal, it is clearly describes in this poem that there is a man who is blossom by his love said such was the case. However, love will be vanished by the time. There is no eternally love actually. As can be seen in the real world that when people die, their love also gone following his death. It is strengthen by this poem in the last stanza, “ *it was late, late in the evening,*

*The lovers they were gone;  
The clocks had ceased their chiming,  
And the deep river ran on”*

From that stanza, it deconstructs the statement “love has no ending” in the second stanza, because time can conquer all. It is ironic when people say that love has no ending, because everything in this world will be ended in its time. Actually everything is about time, time conquer all even love. Auden is deliberately uses honest deception style in irony concept in order to point out to the reader about perishable matter in this world. Based on the last stanza above tells that love was gone, clocks are ceased, and deep river is ran on, this moment describes that everything will be vanished as their time. So that it really ironic that people say there is thing eternally in this world, really ironic.

The other irony which is found in this poem is when speaker tells that life is merely about blessing, but in reality mankind could not bless for anything. This is depicted in thirteenth stanza,

*“O look, look in the mirror?  
O look in your distress;  
Life remains a blessing  
Although you cannot bless”*

From that stanza, it asserts that life which has been given to human is a blessing from God, by hoping that human can bless and fulfill their life by goodness. In fact, not a few people who spend their life in badness. It is ironic when people is given opportunity to life is a blessing, but they could not bless their life anymore. When time will take life-sustaining principle, it is too late

for human to realize that life is a blessing. It kind of situational irony that happened in humankind's life. Being human in good thing, human is best creature ever, but they could not bless their life because they deceive by the beautiful world that is actually perishable.

Regarding to the analysis of irony above, honest deception style namely irony is served in this poem by the purpose to remind the reader about moral value, and in order to do not deceive by this perishable word. Besides, this style is emerged because it can beautify the work and make the reader interest to seek the deeper meaning of the statement which is served contradictory with the reality.

### **III. Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is actually an ironic or satirical remark that seems to be praising someone or something but is really taunting or cutting. Sarcasm can be used to hurt or offend or can be used for comic affect. An author may use sarcasm in literature to add humor or cynicism. It can also add variety to an author's writing. The use of sarcasm can make the reading more interesting to the reader. Finally, an author may use sarcasm to help develop a character. The reader may learn more about the character and his or her viewpoint by the sarcastic comments he or she makes.

Auden's poem entitled *As I Walked Out in One Evening*, contains of sarcasm in conveying message to the reader. This kind of stylistics which concerning to the expression to critic everything, actually it is closely related to irony, but it serves a difference in their own way. sarcasm style which is found in this poem is in the fifth stanza, "***The Years shall run like rabbits***". Actually it refers to time which run fast, but it is kind of sarcastic language by using simile which compare the years run with the rabbits that can run quickly. It is really sarcastic that comparing time with an animal. However, it bring out deep meaning about how time run in this world through this sarcastic word.

The other sarcasm can be found in sixth stanza, the speaker actually attempts to describe about the power of time in this life by using sarcastic phase, "***O let not Time deceive you***

***You cannot conquer Time***"

Through this sentence, it shows to the reader that time is everything, so that people ought to not deceived by time, means that people must use time as well as they can because time will kill everyone everywhere and every when if they can save it well. This sarcastic sentence actually attempts to teach moral value to the reader in managing time well. Life is useless if people could

not manage their time to do best activity. In that stanza the word 'Time' uses capital word; it is strengthening that time is powerful in this life.

Henceforth, the last sarcasm which is identified in this poem can be seen in fourteenth stanza, "*O stand, stand at the window*

*As the tears scald and start;*

*You shall love your crooked neighbor*

*With your crooked heart"*

It kind of sarcasm which attempts to describe the badness side of people. this sarcastic sentence tells that people can love their bad neighbor by the bad way also. In daily life, human's life could not be separated with their neighbor, and not all of them is a good man, so that this poem sarcastically shows the bad character of neighbor, and indirectly the speaker encourage to the reader to treat the bad neighbor in bad way. it actually just a sarcastic sentence which implicitly have another meaning that is people ought to not follow this rule. Honest deception style concerning sarcasm also help the reader to understanding the message which is conveyed through the deception, it make the reader thinks more about the meaning which actually want to be explored.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that language and literature is related each other. Since language is a method of communication, while literature is the content being communicated. Language has been described as a set of gestures and words and phrases with meaning behind them, while literature is the manipulation and use of those gestures and words and phrases for creative purposes. This study analyzes stylistic approach of poem entitled *As I Walked Out One Evening*, because stylistics as a part of linguistic studies which concerns with the variation of language use. It can be defined as the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect. Stylistic analysis can direct attention to specific linguistic features in a text and so provide textual substation for the different kinds of literary effect it might have on the reader. This study concerns identifying three tropes of honest deception style namely hyperbole, irony, and sarcasm.

It is has been found that in the poem *As I Walked Out One Evening* by W.H. Auden uses three tropes of honest deception style in order to impress others or to emphasize something, such as a feeling, effort, or reaction. It is frequently concerned with personal values and sentiments.

There are five hyperboles, two ironies, and three sarcasms which are found in this poem. All of honest deception style which contains of that poem has certain function in beautify this work. Besides this style also helps the reader to seek the deeper meaning and teach moral value which contain of this poem.

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