

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer will discuss certain poems of Christina Rossetti which are chosen by him. The first part of this chapter will discuss each of the poems which are concerning their use of imagery. The discussion will be used to prove that the use of imagery reveal another perception of death in each poem. Furthermore, the second part of this chapter will discuss the use of symbol in revealing another perception of death in each of those poems. The discussion of the second part also has the same purpose as the first part. At the end of the discussion of each poem, the writer will give a conclusion to clarify the explanation the analysis.

3.1 The Use of Imagery

3.1.1 “When I Am Dead, My Dearest”

Most of the imagery used in this poem is visual imagery. They are roses, cypress tree, green grass, showers and dewdrops (first stanza, lines 3-6)

“... Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet...”

(Rossetti, 1862, lines 3-6)

The plants mentioned above are the roses and the cypress tree (lines 3-4). They are commonly seen in grave, especially around a cemeteries. When a person dies and then is buried in the cemetery, sometimes, the family will grow some plants around the grave in order to make the cemetery looks fresh and comfortable. They also give an impression that death is as natural as the dewdrops on the green grass.

Other things that do not make the grave look gloomy are the things which are given by the nature, showers and dewdrops (lines 5-6). These things decorates the plants around the grave. This description does not make the grave look vague anymore. These things even freshen the atmosphere around the grave. At this point, the visual imagery given in this poem triggers the readers' mind to imagine what the grave like is. The imagery allows the readers to participate in the poem, in the sense that it makes the readers experience the imagery world in the poem as if the real world where they live now.

There are two other kinds of imagery in this poem which function as the additional things that clarify the understanding of the poem, they are tactile and auditory imagery. In this poem we can see in the second stanza, line 24:

“... I shall not feel the rain;
 I shall not hear the nightingale
 Sing on, as if in pain:
 And dreaming through the twilight”
 (Rosetti, 1862, lines 9-12)

These lines tell us that the dead person is not feel all the sadness anymore. She can not hear the nightingale that “sing on, as if in pain” (second stanza, line

4). So he or she is free from anything that can make him or her sad. He or she is already peaceful there, away from sorrow.

By giving this kind of description, the poet does not convey death as something frightening. In this poem, the grave does not look as gloomy as what people think. The visual imagery which describes the living thing (green grass) shows another scene different from a grave. Other things from nature, showers and dewdrops (lines 5-6), give a fresh and warm feeling toward the readers. They are also the kind of things which bring life other living things such as plants and they come from the primary thing in our life, that is water. It shows that death actually is a part of nature, a common thing which will happen to everybody and is not scare. The poet has another perception of death revealed through the imageries given in this poem. She gives another opinion toward death by giving different description of a situation in a cemetery with this poem, that death is a common thing that will come someday in a person's life.

3.1.2 "Sleeping At Last"

From the title, this poem is clearly conveying another perception of death. However, it is not merely from the title that the matter can be seen. There are also things and words which are used in the poem that can help to support this idea. The visual and tactile imagery can firstly be found in the third line as below:

“Cold and white, out of sight of friend and of lover”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 3)

The words ‘cold’ and ‘white’ here show the expression of the relatives of ‘the dead’ towards her death and burial ceremony. They as if lost of somebody loved from their life. There is another visual imagery that we can find in this poem as below:

“... wring or shifthing fears that hover,”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 6)

With the visual imagery people can see and smell the fragrant of the purple thyme (kind of plant with aromatic leaves which is used for cooking) and the purple clover (small wild plant with usually three leaves on each stalk) around the grave (line 10) in their imagination. They can imagine the person in the poem is lying down under those plants around his or her grave.

“... Under the purple thyme and the purple clover
Sleeping at last.”

(Rosetti, 1866, lines 10-11)

Auditory imagery also used in this poem. In the poem, there are “... singing birds in their leafy cover” (line 8). These birds are the other things that are used as imagery in this poem. They are singing in the tree near the grave. The writer symbolizes the “leafy cover” which means the leaves of the tree that covers the birds in the graveyard. The tree is not barren, it is so alive and still full of leaves that makes the birds are willing to sing on it. Here, the readers are faced to a different situation at a grave. It shows that there is still life in a graveyard which is symbolized by the singing birds and the leafy cover. In the contrast, the dead person can not even be awakened by a loud sound (line 9). By giving all these

imagery, the situation in the poem will be seen very comfortable. The person in the grave is peaceful there without any disturbances from outside.

The death or grave in this poem is not seen as something horrible and frightening because the use of those imagery and symbol. They show another point of view about death. The purpose of the use of imagery and symbol in this poem are to make the readers see that death is not horrible and frightening. This situation also supported by the singing birds. It will make the readers enjoy the scenery in the poem.

3.1.3 “Rest”

The kinds of imagery in this poem are visual and auditory imagery. The examples of the visual imagery in this poem are in line 1-2 and line 9:

“O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
 Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
 . . .
 Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,”
 (Rosetti, 1866, lines 1-2 & 9)

If a person is already dead and buried, there will be no light for him or her down inside the earth. All is dark around him or her, for he or she is put in a coffin and surrounded by the earth. However, there is something that makes the situation different in this poem. It is said that the darkness there is clearer than the daylight, which means that it is not frightening. We know that there are still so many people

who are afraid of darkness. So this poem gives another perception toward that condition and also tells us that death is not frightening like what people think.

Another supporting thing that gives the readers another perception toward the condition inside the grave is auditory. In this poem, the poet tries to show a very different condition of the dead from the living by using auditory imagery. It is mentioned in the poem that the dead person is not disturbed by any sound from the outside world. This situation can be seen below:

“... Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.”
(Rosetti, 1866, lines 3-4)

These lines can be meant that the earth covers her until she cannot hear any laughter of joy anymore or the sighing sound from any person who is grieved by her death. The situation inside the earth is calm, silent, and peaceful for her. ‘The dead’ can hear no laughter and sighs in the poem and know that there is nothing, only silence, like what has been mentioned in the eighth and tenth lines:

“With stillness that is almost Paradise.
...
Silence is more musical than any song, . . .”
(Rosetti, 1866, lines 8 & 10)

The quotation above shows another point of view toward death, that is not terribly quiet and horrifying. The tranquility of the place gives a more comfortable feeling toward the person, rather than the noisy world outside.

As seen from the poem itself, Christina Rossetti has established herself as the poet who uses simple form and diction in making a poem. Her poem is easily understood by the readers because she gives the right imagery in her poems. A clear example in this poem, “**Rest**”, is the visual imagery in the twelfth line:

“Until the morning of Eternity . . .”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 12)

All of the imagery here can clearly be seen by the readers because the poet uses it as important thing to make the readers understand her poem well. And later, from the use of imagery the readers can see that the poet has another perception toward death.

However, the last two lines of the poem say something different from the death itself. It says that the person is just resting at that place and someday she will be awakened, not think it as a long rest. These two lines quoted from the poem will show the readers what will happen after death:

“Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.”

(Rosetti, 1866, lines 13-14)

It means that the poet believes that there will be a day for waking people who have died or resurrection day and left this world. In this case, Christina Rossetti also gives a peaceful environment around the dead person which supports another perception of death, that death is only a long period of sleep.

3.1.4 “After Death”

The kinds of imagery that is used in this poem are visual and auditory imagery. The visual imagery is shown in the first four lines:

“The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
 And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
 Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay
 Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.”
 (Rosetti, 1862, lines 1-4)

The lines above describe the place where the body of a dead person is placed before buried. A man inside the room sweeps the floor and puts the garnish of plants on the bed where the dead person lays. The plants mentioned are rushes (kind of plant that grows in the marsh) and rosemary. It is common that around the bed or coffin there are flowers for the dead person.

Meanwhile, the auditory imagery is used in this poem to function as a guide for the readers to “hear” what the other person in this poem says toward the dead person. He says “Poor child, poor child:” (line 7) to show his feeling toward her. It does describe something sad, however, what he said to the dead person will change the readers’ perception towards the sadness itself.

In this case, Christina Rosetti allows the readers to enter her imaginary world in the poem “After Death”. She guides them all through the poem by giving the visual and auditory imagery into the poem. In other words, by putting the right words for the visual imagery, the readers will be able to understand the poem easily. It will be very helpful for the understanding of the poem itself. The visual

imagery from the nature in this poem also helps the readers to understand that death is not always frightening as they usually see in the reality.

3.1.5 “Dream Land”

In this poem, the kinds of imagery used are visual imagery, auditory imagery, and tactile imagery. The visual imagery can be found in the whole poem, from first stanza to fourth stanza. They are mostly nature’s scene such as rivers (first stanza), fields of corn, water springs, and the sky (second stanza), the grain which is ripening on hill and plain (third stanza), and a mossy shore (fourth stanza). First, we can see the imagery of the word ‘rivers’ in the quotation below :

“Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,”
(Rosetti, 1894, lines 1-2)

The word ‘rivers’ are included in visual imagery. They have a beautiful scenery, their waves and around natures are able to make people who see it so comfortable and happy.

There is also visual imagery which explains that death is not frightening in the first stanza, that is “a single star” (line 5). Stars are the source of guide in the night. They give light in the night when there are no other light in the sky. Of course for the dead person, a single star becomes the only light in her life which makes her comfortable enough. And also, we can see “shadows” in the seventh line included in visual imagery:

“Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.”

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 5-7)

In the second stanza, the poet uses nature as the visual imagery and in delivering her message. They are the rosy morn, the fields of corn, twilight, water, and the sky look pale, as seen below:

“She left the rosy morn
She left the fields of corn
For twilight cold and lorn
And water springs.

...

She sees the sky look pale”

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 9-12&13)

The words ‘rosy morn’ describes the position or movement of the sun from dark (night) to bright (dawn) so that this movement influences the color of sky from dark to red or rosy. The situation is full of sadness which is strengthened with the use of visual imagery in the words ‘the sky look pale’, we can say sunless, as if nature also feels very sad for her gone or death. In addition, the sad sing of the nightingale also guide her death, as the use of the auditory imagery below :

“And hears the nightingale
That sadly sings.”

(Rosetti, 1894, 15-16)

Such condition of nature may support around people feel sad deeper about this event.

In the poem, the poet gives another visual imagery ‘a mossy shore’ (fourth stanza, line 2) illustrating a specific place where the dead person lays down. The ‘mossy shore’ can be illustrated as a coffin and she takes a rest forever inside.

This can be meant that the poem says something about the end of someone else's life.

In this poem, tactile imagery is less in the use and it is put in the seventh line of the third stanza:

She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand."

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 15-16&)

The tactile imagery above shows that the dead person can not feel the conditions or things in the world anymore because her soul is in the different world, eventhough, her body still on the earth.

We can find again the visual imagery in the word 'the purple land' (line 20). We can assume that there are plants or flowers which make the land looks purple so that it is nice to see or feel. The final use of the visual imagery is in the quotation below :

"She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain

(Rosetti, 1894, 21-22)

The lines above describe what the dead person experiences in the 'purple land' where it is extremely no life there. 'Ripening grain' expresses the life with whole activities in it. It means that the dead person can not see or meet people or family left in her new world or life.

This poem describes a situation when someone is leaving the world to begin the journey to the eternity. It tells about a place between the transitory world

and the eternity. So it is a kind of a waiting chamber for someone who is already leaving the world, or by another saying that the person is already dead. However, the visual imagery is given in this poem does not make death look like something horrible. Although the visual imagery are something gray like sunless rivers (line 1), twilight (line 11), and the sky that looks pale (line 14), they do not give an uncomfortable feeling at all. They even give a feeling of peace, a secured feeling. It seems that this place is very peaceful and not scary place.

3.2 The Use of Symbol

3.2.1 “When I Am Dead, My Dearest”

In showing another perception of death, Christina Rossetti is very careful in choosing words to be put in this poem. She uses roses, cypress tree, green grass, showers, and dewdrops (first stanza) to convey and support her opinion about death. Those are daily things that can be identified easily by the readers. Furthermore, they give a vivid sense of life to the readers’ feeling.

“... Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet...”

(Rossetti, 1862, lines 3-6)

Beside as the ‘additional decorations’ in this poem, the word ‘rose’ and ‘cypress tree’ also have symbols in it. The word ‘rose’ symbolizes love, peace, affection, and also grief. In a burial ceremony, the giving of roses in order that the dead person will peacefully go away while the closest people will always love her. It means that ‘the dead’ should not be afraid if his or her family or closest people will forget her. But, in this poem ‘the dead’ conveys that people do not have to

sorrow about his or her gone because she just go away or sleep in the short time. While the word ‘cypress tree’ also has the meaning and it has a close relation with ‘rose’. We know in reality that cypress tree is shade and comfortable enough. On the contrast, if we analyze it in the connotative meaning, cypress tree in the cemetery illustrated as expression of mourn. It is clear in line 3-4 that ‘the dead’ will get a sadness if people feel very sad about her gone. As a result, she does not want people to plant roses and cypress tree. On the other hand, the poet here wants to show that death is not something to be grieved.

The use of the word ‘green grass’, ‘showers’, and dewdrops here have meaning and relation each other. The ‘green grass’ has the meaning piece, freshness, and life, while showers and dewdrops symbolize freshness too. It can be concluded that ‘showers’ and ‘dewdrops’ support and strengthen the use of ‘green grass’ so that all of them symbolize full of joy, piece and happiness.

“... I shall not feel the rain;
 I shall not hear the nightingale
 Sing on, as if in pain:
 And dreaming through the twilight”
 (Rosetti, 1862, lines 9-12)

In the connotative meaning, ‘the shadows’ illustrated as people who come to the burial ceremony which they wear black suit as an condolence expression and ‘the rain’ symbolize the tears from people in it. It means that the ‘dead person’ will not feel a sadness from her relatives, there is only joy, happiness, and sincerity or willingness as long buried. Then, she also uses the word “dreaming” to say that the person is sleeping, eventhough, she or he is already dead, while the

word ‘the twilight’ symbolizes the situation when she is burying into the hole. Consequently, by giving all those things as symbols in her poem, Christina Rossetti is able to convince the writer that death has another meaning, that is sleeping.

3.2.2 “Sleeping At Last”

First at all, we can find the use of symbol of this poem in the third line of first stanza:

“Cold and white, out of sight of friend and of lover”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 3)

In the connotative meaning, the word ‘cold’ has symbols, such as hopeless, resignation, stiffness, and sadness. In this poem, this word means that her friends or around people are very sad about her gone. And, it is impossible to hope that she can relive anymore. They just can be resigned and handed to God without being able to do anything. They just can rigidly stand watching her brought down through the hole. While the word ‘white’ has the close meaning with ‘cold’, and it is used to strengthen the word ‘cold’ or the people condition towards her death.

“. . . wring or shifthing fears that hover,”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 6)

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word ‘hover’ has the meaning as “a person who wait about, in an uncertain manner”. In the writer’s opinion, in this poem, ‘hover’ illustrates that the ‘dead person’ is just sleeping and waiting about her waking up to the eternity.

This poem gives the readers a clear imagination about the situation in the graveyard. The location clearly show the place itself by using the readers' imagination. The part where it can be known that it is a grave that is put in the line 10 :

“Under the purple thyme and the purple clover ”.

(Rosetti, 1866, line 10)

This part does not show that it is a horrible and frightening place. The supporting things which show that the grave is not frightening are the plants around the grave. The color ‘purple’ has become a conventional symbol in writing poems. It symbolizes royalty, bruising or pain, while ‘thyme’ is a plant which has a good smell and usually used as a fragrance of cuisine. So, the writer concludes that ‘the purple thyme’ symbolizes fragrance, joy or happiness in a pain, where the ‘dead person’ covers her pain with a joy or happiness. And, the words ‘the purple clover’ also has the same meaning with ‘the purple thyme’. The plants are alive, they are not like the plants usually seen in a neglecting graveyard where there are no trees and wild grass grows around the grave itself.

The next thing is that the poet often uses the word “sleeping”. This word is used repeatedly in this poem and can be found in all stanzas. Christina Rosetti does not mention directly that the person in this poem is dead. She says that the person is only “sleeping”. The purpose is to tell the readers that the person will be resurrected at the end of the world by God. So, probably, it means that the dead

person is only sleeping and waiting to be lived again or to be resurrected in different world.

3.2.3 “Rest”

In giving the readers another perception toward death, the poet had chosen the right and simple words to be used in the poem. She delivers their opposite words directly into the sentence in order to lead the readers directly into that condition and see what it is like to be in that situation.

There is the use of symbol in the sixth line:

“Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth”

(Rosetti, 1866, line 6)

On the other word, the words ‘blessed dearth’ can be said as a cross. It can be assumed that there is a scratch of cross in the coffin. The use of these words support the explanation above, eventhough, she is in the silent and calm condition, she will be kept by God with the holy condition so that ‘the dead’ should not be afraid of the condition inside the earth.

So, as the result of the imagery and symbol used in this poem, the readers can see that the poet has another meaning of death. She delivers it by giving just common dictions which are used daily like “blessed dearth”, “Paradise”, “musical”, and “morning” (lines 6-12). These words sounds mery, although, actually they explain something gloomy and sad, that is death. The readers will see something different about death itself in this poem by identifying the imagery

used in the poem. Therefore, the thesis writer is convinced that Christina Rossetti has another perception of death by giving certain symbols in her poem.

3.2.4 “After Death”

Symbols in Christina Rossetti’s poem here are presented in simple words, as mentioned in the poem in the fifth line:

“He leaned above me, thinking that I slept”
(Rossetti, 1862, line 5)

Which means that the speaker is sleeping, not dead. Christina Rossetti here tries to say that death is not frightening as people think. That is why she uses the word “slept” instead of dead. In this case, she succeeds in stimulating the readers’ mind to evoke the emotions that surround the symbolized thing. As the result, the readers will consider that the child is sleeping, too. So, Christina Rossetti has got the purpose in conveying the readers another meaning of death to make the readers feel the right responses toward the word in the poem, that they will see in their imagination that the child is sleeping, not dead. The word ‘slept’ supported by the visual imagery in the first four lines, shows that death is not as horrible as it always looks.

It can be seen in this whole poem that her words can simplify the meaning of death. She gives the precise word that symbolizes another perception of death, that death is only a long period of sleep. In the poem, the speaker says that the man thinks that she is sleeping (line 5). It emphasizes the point Christina wants to

show that death actually is just a temporary condition where the dead person later will continue his journey into a new life.

The statement from Maurice Bowra in his book The Romantic Imagination that it is only a temporary condition also convinces the thesis writer that Christina Rossetti has another perception of death, which means that someday the dead will enter a new life after live in the world.

3.2.5 “Dream Land”

From the beginning of the poem, we can find a symbol, “sunless rivers”, in the lines 1-2 of the first stanza as seen below:

“Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,”
(Rossetti, 1894, lines 1-2)

In the past, rivers had main roles, such as transportations, trade accesses, and fishery so that from its roles people built their own houses near the rivers. From the illustration above, ‘rivers’ can be described as a source of life or civilization for human. In the contrary to the fact, in this poem, ‘rivers’ have different meaning. Here, they are symbolized as a group of the crying mourners who come to the burial ceremony. They can not hold the tears when the dead person burried in. It is supported by the word ‘sunless’ which describes their facial expression in their sadness. There is no any happiness, joy, and pleasure in their faces. Certainly, the arrangement of two words ‘sunless rivers’ illustrate how

deep the feelings of the mourners toward her death. From the use of these words, we know that Rosetti is good at choosing the diction in her poem.

However, in the first and fourth stanzas Christina gives another symbol to put all the sad feelings which are built by the second and third stanzas. She mentions the words “a charmed sleep” (first stanza), which means that the person sleeps soundly as if affected by some kind of magic, and “perfect peace” (fourth stanza) to replace the readers’ gloomy feeling by something more comfortable, more secure. Furthermore, she uses the word “rest” a few times in the poem in exchanging for the word “dead”. In other words, Christina Rosetti considers death as sleep or rest, from which the person will wake up again sometimes in the future. Here, she also wants to say that joy means the joy in meeting her God. Mostly, from her poems which have the theme of death, she wants to show that at the end of death will turn to joy because it is the unity of God :

“Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.”

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 7-8, fourth stanza)

We also find other symbols in this poem, like “single star” and “shadows” as seen below:

“Led by a single star...”
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.”

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 5-7)

According to the writer’s opinion, ‘a single star’ here symbolizes an angel who guides and brings the dead people to one place, Eternity. The word ‘shadows’ above is symbolized as souls of the dead people in the graveyard. The first line

clearly explain the poet's purpose, that there is an angel illustrated with a star which leads them if the time to leave this world has come. So, it is clear that the poet wants to say that death is not a frightening event in everybody's life.

In the second stanza, the poet uses nature as symbol in delivering her message. They are the rosy morn, the fields of corn, twilight, water, and the sky look pale, as seen below:

“She left the rosy morn
 She left the fields of corn
 For twilight cold and lorn
 And water springs.
 . . .
 She sees the sky look pale”

(Rosetti, 1894, lines 9-12&13)

The ‘rosy morn’ here explains that the ‘dead person’ will not see the morn in the world anymore because she has gone to her new world, Eternity. Then, the ‘fields of corn’ as an illustration from the whole life of her as long as live in the world. Due to the fact that the ‘corns’ may give life or energy for people consuming it. The word ‘water’ has the same meaning with the word ‘rivers’ in the first line, which symbolizes tears that springs from the mourners.

The use of the word ‘rivers’ and ‘single star’ (first stanza) and also ‘rosy morn’, ‘fields of corn’, ‘twilight’, ‘water’, ‘sky’, and ‘nightingale’ (second stanza) or even all visual imagery in this poem symbolize the joy things in the world but there is one word that opposites with them, that is the word “west” in the third stanza. As we know, west is the direction where the sun sets, the sign of the

decreasing life activities of humans. It is also supported by the sentence in third stanza in the first line :

“Rest, rest, a perfect rest”
(Rosetti, 1894, line 17)

Here, the poet also uses choice of color, purple, in expressing her meaning because we know that each color symbolizes different meaning. We can see in the lines below:

“Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.”
(Rosetti, 1894, lines 19-20)

We can assume that there are plants or flowers which make the land looks purple so that it is nice to see or feel. But, in the conventional symbol, the word ‘purple’ has a contrast meaning with the explanation above. It symbolizes royalty, bruising or pain so that ‘the purple land’ in this poem shows a dark place where there is no spirit or pleasure in it. If we compare to the word ‘west’ (line 19) at a glance, they have a close relation each other in describing the meaning.

Therefore, the readers are given a different scenery about the death of someone. It is true that the person in the poem leaves those places in the second stanza (fields of corn) to a place where everything is shadowy in the first stanza (sunless rivers). However, Christina Rosetti invites the readers to ‘see’ something else through those imagery and symbol used in the poem, that is, another different point of view about death. As the result, it can be seen that the use of imagery and

symbol in Christina Rossetti's poems is very smart. It has a remarkable result toward the understanding of the poem itself. The readers are able to understand the poem more deeply through the use of imagery and symbol. The symbols and the dictions of the visual imagery in this poem which are also beautiful and lively, give the readers another perspective about death itself. So, it can be said that the poet is successful in revealing the perception of death through her use of imagery and symbol.