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ANALYSIS OF PARADOX IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S POEM "I AM AFRAID" USING FORMALISM APPROACH

Alingga Hauri Batamia[1], Lis Sulastri[2],
Sebelas April University, Indonesia
Email: alinggahauribatamia@gmail.com, liss14978@gmail.com

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Abstrak

This study analyzes the use of paradox in William Shakespeare's poem "I Am Afraid" using a formalism approach. The research focuses on identifying the forms of paradox found in the poem and examining how these paradoxes contribute to the poem's overall meaning and message. Previous studies have primarily focused on stylistic, semiotic, and mimetic analyses of poetry, leaving the use of paradox as a central literary device in William Shakespeare's poem "I Am Afraid" relatively unexplored; therefore, this study fills this gap by analyzing its role in shaping the poem's meaning and aesthetic value. This study employs a qualitative method with text analysis and close reading as the main techniques. The data consist of lines and phrases containing paradoxical expressions, which are then categorized into rhetorical paradox, social paradox, logical paradox, and philosophy of science paradox. The findings reveal that paradox plays a significant role in expressing emotional conflict, particularly the contradiction between verbal expressions of love and the actions that follow. Through paradox, the poem conveys themes of fear, uncertainty, and emotional inconsistency in romantic relationships. This study concludes that paradox functions not only as a stylistic device but also as a central element in constructing the poem's meaning and aesthetic value, offering a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's representation of complex human emotions.

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INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a literary form that uses structured, complex language to express a variety of emotions, ideas, and aesthetics (Khoirunnisa, Putri, & Hartono, 2023). In poetry, there are many intrinsic and extrinsic elements, one of which is figurative language such as paradox. Paradox in poetry served as a way for Shakespeare to convey powerful inner conflict. The feelings in his sonnets often stem from an inability to express emotions directly, making paradox a crucial element in depicting complex emotions (Ackermann

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& Schalkwyk, 2023). In addition, a paradox can be understood as a statement or situation that initially appears contradictory, but upon deeper thought turns out to have logic or truth in it (Green, 2020). In this regard, Formalism provides a framework for analyzing poetic devices by focusing on structure, language, and sound, and within this framework, paradox becomes a key device for revealing inner conflicts and creating aesthetic tension in the text (Wellek & Warren, 1956). Paradox in Shakespeare's poem *"I Am Afraid"* reflect the contradictions of human experience that also appear in modern society.

Shakespeare's poem *"I Am Afraid"* reflects the emotional conflicts often found in modern romantic relationships, where one's actions and words do not align (Putri & Sari, 2024). The poem expresses feelings of fear, uncertainty, and contradiction in love, portraying the tension between emotional sincerity and the anxiety of loss. Through strong diction and stylistic expression, the poem presents a paradox between love and fear. The use of paradox which is the focus of this research is highly appropriate for analyzing the poem , it is filled with contrasting meanings and emotions. Through paradox, readers can see how Shakespeare expresses fear, love, and death simultaneously within a unified sense of meaning. Its analysis also helps reveal the depth of meaning and the complexity of human emotions that form the core of the poem.

Several previous studies have explored various poetry using different approaches. For example, Putri and Sari (2024) analyzed Shakespeare's poem "I Am Afraid" using mimetic theory, which looked at how natural events and emotions were shown in the text. Meanwhile, Krisna, Jayantini, dan Resen (2023) examined the types and meanings of paradoxes in Rudyard Kipling's poems and found that rhetorical and social paradoxes were the most dominant. In addition, Jayantini, Umbas, and Lestari (2020) examined paradoxes in Rupi Kaur's poetry collection "The Sun and Her Flowers" using a stylistic approach, and found that paradoxes expressed through diction and description helped readers think more critically about meaning. Finally, Girsang et al. (2024) analyzed paradox in Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" using Riffaterre's method, showing that contradictions in language made the poem more meaningful and enjoyable to read.

Overall, these studies show that most research still focuses on stylistic analysis, classifications of paradoxes, or semiotic approaches in various poems. Although there is one study on Shakespeare's "I Am Afraid," it examines the poem using a mimetic approach rather than analyzing its paradoxes. This indicates a research gap in studying paradox as a literary device in Shakespeare's poem. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by applying paradox to analyze Shakespeare's "I Am Afraid". The novelty of this study lies in its focus on paradox as the main figure of speech and its role in building the poem's meaning and beauty. By doing so, this research is expected to offer a new perspective on understanding Shakespeare's works by showing how paradox functions as a literary device that expresses emotional and social tensions.

Based on the explanation above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the forms of paradox found in William Shakespeare's poem I Am Afraid?
2. How do these paradoxes contribute to the overall meaning and message of the poem?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Figurative Language in Poetry

- **Definition and Nature of Figurative Language**

  Formalism analysis offers a framework for studying how formal structures and poetic approaches influence the meaning and aesthetics of poetry (Khoirunnisa,

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Putri, and Hartono 2023). Meanwhile, Jakobson (1960) explains that in formalist analysis, the study of poetic language reveals how linguistic structures contribute to a poem's beauty and emotional power. Within this framework, figurative language is examined as a structural device that contributes to the internal coherence and meaning of a poem through diction, syntax, and imagery. In poetry, figurative language plays a crucial role in generating imagery, evoking emotions, and constructing layered meanings that cannot be achieved through literal language alone. From a formalist perspective, literary analysis focuses on intrinsic elements such as form, structure, and linguistic devices, without considering external contexts like the author's biography or historical background. Figurative language is defined as any way of saying something other than an ordinary way (Perrine, 1973), It means that figurative language has some meanings that differ from the literal meaning (Lameina, 2022). Figurative language has an essential role in poetry because it helps create imagery, evoke emotions, and convey deeper meanings through the artistic use of language (Leech, 2014).

- **Figurative Language**

  Perrine (1983) classifies figurative language into ten types, namely metaphor, simile, synecdoche, personification, metonymy, allegory, hyperbole, irony, symbol, and paradox. However, this research focuses on paradox, which has a unique function compared to other types of figurative language. Paradox is different from other types of figurative language like oxymoron and irony. A paradox looks like a contradiction but actually shows a hidden truth. An oxymoron joins two opposite words in one phrase, such as "sweet sorrow," while irony shows a difference between what is said and what really happens (Abrams, 2018).

2. Paradox as literary Device

- **Definition of Paradox**

  Abrams explains that a paradox is a statement that on the surface appears contradictory or impossible, but when analyzed more deeply, the contradiction actually reveals the truth. According to Krisna at.al. (2023), paradoxes in poetry can be classified into four types: **rhetorical paradox, social paradox, logical paradox,** and **philosophy of science paradox**.

  - A **rhetorical paradox** is used to emphasize meaning through seemingly contradictory expressions; A paradox is a stereotype that offers an opposition between two established theses in rhetorical analysis. (Poole and Van de Ven 1989, p. 563; italics in original). In the poem "The Sweepers" by Rudyard Kipling, the speaker complains about his job by saying "And five damned trawlers with their syreens blowing." However, although he seems to hate the task, the work is done well, as seen in the line "Sweep completed in the fairway."

  - A **social paradox** reflects conflicts between social values and reality; A social paradox exists when two opposing states exist, such as effectiveness and creativity, collaboration and competitiveness, or new and old (Eisenhardi 2000, p. 703). A paradox is a concept that entails two

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contradictory concepts or statements that, while paradoxical, are equally sufficient to represent a more enforcing, highlighting, life-related, or suggestive insight into truths than either element could gather on its own. In the poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling, there is a social paradox in the line "If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too". The paradox is that one must believe in oneself, but also accept the doubts of others. These two attitudes seem contradictory, but they actually foster social balance and character maturity.

- A **logical paradox** arises from statements that appear logically inconsistent but express a hidden truth;Paradox has a more limited and specific meaning in logic. "Two conflicting or even contradictory conceptions to which we are led by seemingly solid arguments" is how a logical paradox is defined (VanHeigenoort 1972, p. 45). Each notion is unarguable in and of itself, yet when combined, they appear to be erroneous or dissimilar." (Italics in original; Poole and Van de Ven 1989, p. 563). In Rudyard Kipling's poem "Big Steamers," the ship is described as strong and large, "we're iron below and steel-rigging aloft," yet the child still prays for good weather, "Then I'll pray for fine weather." The paradox is the ship is considered very strong, yet is still feared to be in danger. These two ideas are logical separately, but contradictory when put together.

- A **philosophy of science paradox** deals with contradictions in ideas or knowledge systems. "A paradox is an understanding among local analysing observers that a specific duality of real actions is unpredictable," according to a culturally imposed observe-relative narrative analysis. (p. 187 in Johnston and Selsky 2006).Philosophy of science paradox is characterized by the presence of two opposing but coexisting realities or actions. These dualities occur simultaneously and cannot be fully understood using a single logical explanation. In Rudyar Kipling's poem "The Sons of Martha," the Sons of Mary live comfortably without working hard, while the Sons of Martha work hard but live in misery. This is evident in the line "And the Sons of Mary smile and are blessed." The paradox is those who do not work receive comfort, while those who work hard receive no reward. This poem questions the fairness of life and the law of cause and effect.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach because qualitative research emphasizes the interpretation of meaning derived from textual data and language (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research uses natural language, relies on small and purposively selected samples, and focuses on specific individuals, events, or contexts through an idiographic form of analysis (Gerring, 2017).

The data source in this study is the poem "I Am Afraid," which was accessed through digital sources. Furthermore, this research employs text analysis or library research, as the main object of the study is poetry and the analysis is conducted through written sources without involving field data. According to George (2008), library research is a form of structured inquiry that uses specific tools, rules, and techniques to analyze

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written sources. Based on this approach, the main focus of this research is to analyze the forms of paradox in the poem "I Am Afraid" by William Shakespeare using the theory of Formalism. Therefore, the research data consist of lines, phrases, or word choices that contain paradoxical elements, including contradictory meanings, conflicting ideas, or emotional opposition within the text.

The research instruments used were textual analysis used to mark parts of the poem containing paradoxes, as well as a categorization table used to group the data into different types of paradoxes, such as rhetorical paradoxes, social paradoxes, logical paradoxes, and philosophical paradoxes. Furthermore, the researcher used data codes to maintain consistency throughout the analysis and to facilitate data tracking throughout the research. The codes are as follows: rhetorical paradoxes (RP), social paradoxes (SP), logical paradoxes (LP), philosophy of science paradoxes (PoSP).

Table 1. Categorization Table

No	Quotations	Code
1.	"You say that you love rain, but you open your umbrella when it rains."	RP, LP
2.	"You say that you love the sun, but you find a shadow spot when the sun shines."	
3.	"You say that you love the wind but you close the window when the wind blows."	
4.	"This is why I am afraid; you say that you love me too."	

Data collection techniques are carried out through close reading. This research employs close reading as the method of analysis. Close reading involves careful and repeated engagement with the text in order to identify significant patterns and meanings (Ohrvik, 2024). In this study, close reading is applied through a systematic data collection process. The poem is read repeatedly to ensure a thorough understanding of its content and context. Lines or phrases that contain paradoxical expressions are then identified and marked. Relevant quotations are recorded in a data table and given initial codes.

Finally, the data are grouped based on the types of paradox identified for further interpretation. The data was then analyzed using content analysis with a deductive qualitative approach. This data analysis allows researchers to use existing theory to examine meanings, processes, and narratives of interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena (Fife & Gossner, 2024).

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that paradox plays a significant role in shaping meaning in the poem "I Am Afraid." Through qualitative analysis, the identified paradoxes categorized as RP, SP, LP, and PoSP, reveal how contradictory expressions are structurally embedded in the poem to convey complex emotions and ideas. By applying a deductive content analysis, this research highlights the function of paradox as a literary device that deepens interpretation and enriches the poem's thematic complexity.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

No	Quotations	Code
1	"You say that you love rain, but you open your umbrella when it rains."	**RP, LP**
2	"You say that you love the sun, but you find a shadow spot when the sun shines."	**RP, LP**
3	"You say that you love the wind but you close the window when the wind blows."	**RP, LP**
4	"This is why I am afraid; you say that you love me too."	**RP**

Line 1

"You say that you love the rain, but you open your umbrella when it rains."

This line introduces a rhetorical and logical paradox by juxtaposing verbal affection with contradictory behavior. Rain conventionally symbolizes freshness, romance, or emotional depth, yet the act of opening an umbrella represents avoidance and self-protection. This contradiction suggests that the claimed love is shallow and performative rather than sincere. Through this paradox, the poem establishes its central concern: love that exists only at the level of language but fails to manifest through genuine acceptance or sacrifice. The line implies that true love requires enduring discomfort, not merely admiring something from a distance.

Line 2

"You say that you love the sun, but you find a shadow spot when the sun shines."

The paradox in this line reinforces the theme of selective affection introduced earlier. While the sun often symbolizes warmth, happiness, and life, seeking shade indicates a rejection of its intensity. This contradiction reveals that love is conditional embraced only when it is pleasant and convenient. The line suggests that the subject loves the idea of the sun rather than its reality. By repeating the pattern of verbal claim versus physical avoidance, the poem emphasizes the inconsistency of the beloved's emotions and deepens the critique of superficial love.

Line 3

"You say that you love the wind, but you close the window when the wind blows."

This line intensifies the logical paradox by portraying an even more deliberate act of rejection. Closing the window is an active resistance, symbolizing emotional withdrawal and a refusal to engage. Wind often represents freedom, change, or

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unpredictability, and shutting it out implies fear of disruption or discomfort. The repetition of this paradoxical structure creates a rhythmic accumulation of evidence, portraying a consistent pattern of unreliable affection. As a result, the speaker's doubt becomes increasingly justified, preparing the reader for the emotional revelation in the final line.

Line 4

"This is why I am afraid; you say that you love me too."

The final line transforms the earlier natural paradoxes into a deeply personal and emotional paradox. The speaker's fear arises from recognizing that the beloved's pattern of conditional love toward nature may extend to human relationships. By equating love for the speaker with love for the rain, sun, and wind, the poem suggests that this love may also disappear when faced with discomfort or emotional difficulty. This line serves as the poem's emotional climax, reinforcing the message that unproven love, love that is not demonstrated through consistent action cannot be fully trusted.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that paradox is a central literary device in William Shakespeare's poem "I Am Afraid." The study identifies several forms of paradox, including rhetorical paradox, logical paradox, social paradox, and philosophy of science paradox, which are embedded in the poem's structure and diction. These paradoxes highlight the contradiction between spoken expressions of love and the actions that contradict them.

Furthermore, the paradoxes significantly contribute to the overall meaning and message of the poem by emphasizing emotional conflict, fear, and uncertainty in romantic relationships. Through a formalist perspective, this study shows that paradox enhances the poem's aesthetic quality while simultaneously deepening its thematic complexity. Ultimately, the use of paradox allows Shakespeare to convey the fragility of emotional sincerity and demonstrates that true meaning in love is revealed not through words alone, but through consistent actions.

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