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The Relevance of The Gothic Concept in The Poem When We Two Parted By George Gordon Byron

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Abstract

This study examines the relevance of the Gothic concept in Lord Byron's poem *When We Two Parted*. As a Romantic work, the poem emphasizes the primacy of emotion and individual expression, hallmarks of the Romantic era's reaction against neoclassical rationality. The Gothic undertones emerge through the pervasive atmosphere of gloom, sorrow, and haunting recollections, aligning with the genre's thematic focus on trauma and persistent suffering. By situating the poem within the context of Byron's tumultuous personal life and societal transgressions, the study reveals how the poet's intimate experiences of clandestine love and scandal inform the narrative's emotional gravity. Byron's poem reflects these Gothic elements by portraying heartbreak, loss, and the metaphorical "death of love." The analysis highlights how Byron's personal experiences, particularly his controversial relationships, inform the poem's themes of sorrow. Through vivid imagery and emotional depth, *When We Two Parted* illustrates how Romantic and Gothic elements intertwine, offering a profound exploration of love and loss.

Keywords: *Gothic, Romanticism, Poem, Byron*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas relevansi konsep Gotik dalam puisi karya Lord Byron berjudul When We Two Parted. Sebagai sebuah karya Romantik, puisi ini menekankan keutamaan emosi dan ekspresi individu, yang merupakan ciri khas era Romantik yang menentang rasionalitas neoklasik. Nuansa Gotik muncul melalui suasana kesuraman, kesedihan, dan ingatan yang menghantui, selaras dengan fokus tematik genre ini pada trauma dan penderitaan yang terus-menerus. Dengan menempatkan puisi ini dalam konteks kehidupan pribadi Byron yang penuh gejolak dan pelanggaran sosial, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bagaimana pengalaman intim sang penyair tentang cinta klandestin dan skandal menginformasikan gravitasi emosional narasi tersebut. Puisi Byron mencerminkan elemen-elemen Gotik ini melalui penggambaran patah hati, kehilangan, dan "kematian cinta" secara metaforis. Analisis ini menyoroti bagaimana pengalaman pribadi Byron, terutama hubungan kontroversialnya, menginformasikan tema kesedihan dalam puisi tersebut. Melalui gambaran yang jelas dan emosional yang mendalam, When We Two Parted mengilustrasikan bagaimana elemen-elemen romantik dan Gotik saling terkait, menawarkan eksplorasi yang mendalam tentang cinta dan kehilangan.

***Kata Kunci**: Gotik, Romantisme, Puisi, Byron*

Introduction

Romanticism is a movement or ideology that originated in Germany in the 18th century, the romantic era was the shortest era in the literary period and was characterized by revolution, reaction, renewal in politics, and the discovery of forms or types of imaginative literary works (Chandler, 2009: i-9). The core ideas of the Romantics centered on art as inspiration and nature as the spiritual dimension and beauty, and the Romantics underlined the importance of individual and social expression (Spackeren, 1994:26).

The expression of individual feelings refers to the concept of individualism in the romantic period, in which when individuals and nature are united, the individualism in question is not only self-oriented and means selfishness, but has a social obligation where he can feel and understand the situation of other individuals as a form of unity with nature. The concept of individualism also shows that one of the characteristics of romantic works is self-expression and individual feeling which makes romantic works an expression of the heart, emotions, and imagination of individuals towards their environment.

The development of science has also made humans more logical in reacting to what is happening in nature. However, romantic works do not refer to what humans think, but what they feel. This is because the basis of the romantic movement or understanding is a reaction to neoclassicism which emphasizes reason or ratio, while romanticism emphasizes the power of feelings, imagination, and freedom (Spackeren, 1994: 161).

The emphasis on imagination and emotion/feeling is important in the Romantic era because it can give individuals the power to defy the rules, thus making the element of freedom "freedom" one of the characteristics of the Romantic era. The high intensity of feeling is suffering and this can be found in gothic literary works that can make readers feel suffering or gloom as outlined in the work. Gloom and suffering as the basic concept of Gothic is depicted in the poem When We Two Parted by one of the famous English poets who belongs to the second generation of romantic poets, Lord Byron. The poem is a form of expression of the author's feelings towards his life experiences, especially related to the scandal of his relationship with several women and then he left London. The research question is formulated as: What is the relevance of the Gothic concept in the poem When We Two Parted by George Gordon Byron?

According to Thomson in Byron and Townshend (2014: xxxi) "...the term Gothic as a synonym for the darkness and barbarism...". Therefore, literary gothic works depict the existence of gloom as the essence of the gothic concept which is then able to lead individuals to feel tension, and suffering from traumatic experiences, as explained by Byron and Townshend in the following quote:

> "...Gothic as that which, at its most characteristic, conjures with the unbearable persistence of history, with a traumatic, painful and nightmarish past that, however deep our wishes, will not simply disappear (Byron dan Townshend, 2014: xxxviii).
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> "...Gothic serves negativelyas an epithet for tyranny, darkness, scholastic discord, ... superstition, ignorance and violence, negative values... (Byron dan Townshend, 2014: xxxi).

The emphasis on emotion is an important thing in the romantic era because it can give individuals the ability to challenge regulations and freedom as the characteristics of romanticism. As far as the Gothic concept is concerned suffering and misery become a high intensity of feelings that can lead individuals to feel tension.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited in Moleong (2011: 4), qualitative research is defined as a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observed behaviors. The data collected include words, images, and human behaviors. Furthermore, Koentjaraningrat (1993: 89) defines qualitative research as a method that provides a detailed description of individuals or specific groups, including the conditions and phenomena observed. Therefore, this method is utilized to analyze the relevance of the Gothic concept in the poem When We Two Parted by George Gordon Byron.

The primary data source for this study is the poem *When We Two Parted* by Byron. The research methodology utilized involves an observation approach paired with a note-taking technique. The observation process entailed reading and thoroughly examining the poem's lines, specifically those related to Gothic elements. These lines were meticulously analyzed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

The data analysis process began with organizing and classifying the recorded data into a single repository. Subsequently, the data were analyzed with a focus on the use of personification as a stylistic device. This analysis was conducted descriptively, providing a comprehensive and detailed explanation aligned with the observed phenomena. Upon completion of the analysis, the findings were synthesized into conclusions, which addressed the research questions outlined in the problem statement.

Discussion

Through the poem When We Two Parted, which consists of four stanzas, Byron conveys a poem about love differently. Whereas love poems generally depict the beautiful side of love, in this poem Byron depicts that love will become sad when love does not go well and results in separation.

This poem with the theme of love and sadness has two time settings, the first is the past when he describes the separation and the second is the time when the poem was written (present). Based on these two-time settings, we can see the characteristics of the gothic concept as an expression of painful experience. *"Gothic most characteristically deals: the spaces in which we have been hurt and wounded, but to which we obsessively return, the sites we remember in painful and horrific recollection, the spaces that return unwittingly to us in moments of lurid, traumatic recall..."* (Byron dan Townshend, 2014: xli).

The first line of the first stanza "When we two parted" refers to the past time setting, and the thirteenth line of the second stanza refers to the present time setting.

Thy vows are all broken

(Byron, 1816: 13)

Based on the title of the poem, it can be interpreted that a relationship has ended. The end of the relationship then causes the atmosphere to become gloomy and the heartache felt by the author until he is left in sadness that he can only express in silence and tears. This can be seen in the first stanza:

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,

(Byron, 1816: 1-4)

Furthermore, there is the word "*vows*" in line 13, which can refer to marriage vows or relationship vows. Therefore, when the author writes *"Thy vows are all broken"*, it means that there are promises in the relationship that have been broken.

Byron then describes death in the poem. However, it is not physical death that is described, but the death or end of a relationship (the death of love), where a partner who is supposed to be warm has turned cold. This is seen in the first stanza:

Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;

(Byron, 1816: 5-6)

The last two lines of the first stanza and the first five lines of the second stanza show that there are signs of death or the end of his relationship before he suffers the grief he then feels:

Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.
The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my bro —
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now,
Thy vows are all broken,

(Byron, 1816: 7-13)

Furthermore, in lines 23 and 24 there is the word *"rue".* He wanted to regret the presence of the woman who had made him feel very sad. That sadness can only be felt if he has a great love for the woman. Through his love, he knows her very well and no one else can know her as well as he does. This can be seen in the third stanza:

They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

(Byron, 1816: 21-24)

Then in the last stanza, it appears when he still feels sadness in his silence, but the woman he loves can forget and leave him. If he were to meet her one day, he would only be able to greet her with silence and tears.

In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee? —
With silence and tears.

(Byron, 1816: 26-32)

Lord Byron, whose real name is George Gordon Byron, was born in London on January 22, 1788. He was one of the English poets of the Romantic era. Byron had a complex love affair that was even considered a scandal. Byron once had a special relationship with his half-sister Augusta, until they had a daughter named Allegra. Byron also had a special relationship with Lady Caroline Lamb, a British aristocrat and novelist. Lamb was also a cousin of Annabella, Lord Byron's wife. Based on this, it can be said that the poem When The Two Parted is an expression of Byron's feelings towards his painful experience of separation from Lamb. In the third stanza, it can be seen that the woman referred to by Byron is a figure known by many people, but the one who knows her better is Byron. This can represent Lamb as a writer and aristocrat.

They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well—

(Byron, 1816: 21-22)

At the end of the stanza, Byron states that *In secret we met* can refer to Byron's relationship with Lamb who had a clandestine relationship, this is because Lamb's background is aristocratic, and has a husband named William Lamb Melborne. Moreover, Lamb is a cousin of Byron's wife, Anne Isabella.

Conclusion

Romanticism emphasized the power of feeling, imagination, and freedom as a reaction to neoclassicism which emphasized reason and ratio. The emphasis on feelings is an important thing from the Romantic era because it is able to give individuals the power to defy regulations, making freedom one of the characteristics of the Romantic era. As for the gothic concept, which is characterized by suffering, misery becomes a high intensity of feelings that can lead individuals to feel tension.

The gothic concept which is characterized by gloom and suffering is depicted in Lord Byron's When We Two Parted, in which the poem describes the sadness, and depression caused by separation from a loved one.

As a romantic work characterized by self-expression and individual feelings, Byron expresses his feelings towards love that do not go according to his wishes. Through the poem, it can be seen that love, which would make one happy or is often described as something pleasant, can make one feel deep pain.

The tense feeling of pain expressed by Byron through his poem reflects the gothic concept that is not always related to physical death. In this poem, there are also some symbols of death, such as the words "pale" and "cold", but this does not refer to physical death that separates the spirit or soul from the body, but the death in question is the end of the relationship or "the death of love".

The comprehension of Byron's poetry will not be separated from the elements or information contained outside the work because literature is essentially a representation of human life. Especially, when looking at the background of Byron's life, which became a scandal related to his relationship with women who did not conform to the norms of society. Byron had a relationship with his half-sister that resulted in a child. In addition, he also had a relationship with a married woman who was none other than his wife's cousin. The line In Secret we met seems to reinforce that the poem When We Two Parted is an expression of Byron's feelings towards his scandalous relationship.

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