

Lincoln's Death in 'O Captain! My Captain!' by Walt Whitman: American romantic poetry analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article discuss the use of imaginative language style from a famous poem in the romantic era in American literature which has the title 'O Captain! My Captain!'. This literary work was written by a poet who was also famous in the romantic era, Walt Whitman. This article will also explain the meaning of the language style and imaginative word choice found in this poem.

Introduction

Poetry is the author's imagination generated from the reality they see or feel packaged as creatively as possible using the esthetic word to produce stylistic of work (Hasyim & Brilian, 2023). Poetry from the romantic era contains many images and nature's concepts. Romantic poets discussed the role of nature with unsimilar views in conveying important ideas into it human attitude (Ibrahim, 2020). The famous writers love to write about the beauty of nature foldstone. This is what its unique about this romantic era, where writers can describe their best imagination in words of poetry, prose and even drama.

An author of poetry is able to record and photograph everything that he feels, hears, and sees as his field of inspiration in the form of words that are presented by involving aspects of reasoning and aspects of logic that are reflected in the use of words, sentences, and writing mechanism (Nurul Azizah & Basid, 2022). Almost all romantic poets touched on the suffering of the soul and every natural scene beauty. The existence of literary works is not only an identification mark of a country's culture, But also as a forum for authors to express all the creative ideas they have. Literary work is a tool that can be used as a means to convey intentions of author. An author can communicate with readers the reason of his work. Literature is also a medium of communication for everyone the form of expression clearly contains a purpose. So, the existence of certain literary works in a certain era Can describe the atmosphere of life and that time. The aim is to convey values life, convey criticism and many more.

Whitman's poems mostly use repetition and written to create beautiful poetry. He used anaphora constantly because several verses begin with the same word/phrase. O



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Captain! My Captain! use the words 'father' and 'heart' to mourn the death of the assassinated Abraham Lincoln. Bipoem was written by Whitman after the death of American President, Abraham Lincoln, in 1895. This poem is part of his famous controversial poetry collection *Leaves of Grass* (Williams, 2006). Whitman was someone who really admired the 16th American president. When he heard about his idol's death by being murdered. He was moved to write several poems inspired by the figure of he admired, One of which was *O Captain! My Captain!*. This poem has an overall melancholy tone. Walt Whitman was a poet of the new age, a poet who was ready to break free from the shackles of established poem (Williams, 2006). *O Captain! My Captain!* consists of 3 stanzas, each stanza has 8 lines so total of this poem has 24 lines. This poem was published in his work titled *Leaves of Grass*.

The method used in this research is quasi qualitative. the use of qualitative descriptive terms is considered incorrect, which is actually quasi-qualitative (Rahardjo, 2022). The researcher wants to describe the facts or circumstances which occurs in the poem '*O Captain! My Captain!*' by Walt Whitman in the form of how irony in poetry and epic word choice by Whitman. The choice of qualitative descriptive research is also based on the fact that this method attempts to describe all existing symptoms or conditions, namely the condition of the symptoms according to what they were at the time the research was conducted. To collect data in this research, the author used library study techniques and data available on the internet, the activity of reviewing books and data that has been spread on the internet related to research.

The purpose of this literature study is to find out how the appropriate use of language can describe the irony of the death of a leader contained in the poem '*O Captain! My Captain!*' by Walt Whitman. Literature study can be done by; First, read carefully the entire contents of the poem. Second, mark the part of the word that will be analyzed. Third, make notes on the words that have been marked. Lastly, group the data.

Discussion

While analyzing the depiction of Lincoln's death in the poem '*O Captain! My Captain!*' by Walt Whitman, several words, phrases and sentences were found in direct and indirect quotations that illustrate the irony that occurs. In his poetry, Whitman makes it seem like he is present in his writing. In '*O Captain! My Captain!*' He was present as someone who was close to the captain, sailing beside the captain as his loyal follower. Even, he remained there for the leader until his last breath. Whitman clearly described how he felt he had lost this figure. A figure who has always been his idol, a figure he has always followed. That figure is Abraham Lincoln.

The poem

O Captain! My Captain!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;

The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While following eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and online:
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up-for you the flag is flung-for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths-for you the shores acrowd;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It's some dream that's on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.
My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful thread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead. (Spielberg, 1900)

Analysis

In the first stanza, Whitman uses the words 'Captain' which refers to Abraham Lincoln and 'Ship' which refers to the United States. He wrote 'a fearful journey' referring to the Civil War that had ended. The people finally achieved the victory they were looking for. Even though the ship had not yet arrived safely at the port, because the ship was close, the people seemed happy to see the captain had returned home. Someone told the captain that the 'Port' which represented home was in sight and now he could hear the sound of temple bells and also the enthusiastic shouts of people who couldn't wait to welcome them. The screams grew louder as the ship reached near the port. The excitement increases as the boat approaches the harbor. The keel had been pitched to stabilize a moving ship.

In the following lines, gloom covers the enthusiasm of the people. As the ship got closer to the port, something that no one expected happened. *..grim and daring* are terms for mood swings. the ship brought news that the waiting crowd had never imagined. The Captain was dead now, blood could be seen flowing from his body. Then the poet exclaims *O heart! heart! heart!*. The captain, who should have been praised by the people for his bravery, was now motionless and lifeless. Emotional devastation surged from the sailor as well as the civilians as his fallen captain lay beside them, in all his glory but already dead.

In the second stanza, Whitman seems to be trying to talk to the captain, who is already dead. The poet depicts himself as a sailor who begs the dead captain to rise from the dead. The poet asks the captain to rise, as he does, there bells are rung, flags are raised, musical instruments are sounded, flowers are rolled, and so on. People were eagerly awaiting his coming, but now he is gone. The poet called the captain as a father because, he, Lincoln was not only a military leader but also the father of the nation and it is regrettable to lose him.

In the third stanza, there is a duality of emotions. Whitman experienced the euphoria of their victory but at the same time mourned Lincoln's death, which was a great loss for everyone. The poet says that now the captain is dead. The captain does not feel anything, the poet describes it *My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still; My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will*. It was then that the ship had arrived at its destination. *fearful trip*, the horrors of the Civil War, has now ended and society is starting to feel relief. The poet mourns Lincoln's death. The 'Deck' refers to Lincoln's funeral. Everyone regrets his death. This poem ends with victory and loss.

Conclusion

At the end of the poem, Whitman expresses his inability to fully celebrate the victory because the captain (Lincoln) is gone. Even though the ship (United States) had overcome all the problems faced and achieved the destination, the joy was dampened because the captain could not celebrate the victory. Deep sadness and loss are depicted in the final lines, where the captain lies cold and lifeless.

The poem describes the mixed feelings that arise in a situation of victory as well as a situation of sadness because of losing a leader who was loved by everyone. The concluding poem 'O Captain! My Captain!' by Walt Whitman combines conflicting feelings of triumph and loss, with greater emphasis on sadness over the death of Abraham Lincoln. This poem shows the journey of a ship which is full of struggle and finally reaches the destination, but the feeling of happiness at victory is substituted by the sadness of losing the figure of the leader who was waiting for his arrival.

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