

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The word 'Gothic' originally refers to 'a general and derogatory term for the Middle Ages which conjured up ideas of barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness' (Botting, 1996:22). Thus, it can be inferred that Gothic literature must have something to do with the original meaning of the word 'Gothic' itself, since Gothic literature is defined as 'a style of literature characterized by a gloomy setting, grotesque, mysterious, or violent events, and an atmosphere of degeneration and decay' (www.factmonster.com/ipd/A0460873.html). Gothic fiction also has some prominent features, including 'terror, mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architectures, castles, darkness, death ... secrets, hereditary curses, persecuted maidens and so on' (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_fiction). Moreover, according to Fred Botting in his book, Gothic, 'Gothic condenses... threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption' (Botting, 1996: 2). In addition to the above characteristics, many Gothic novels also contain

some ‘elements of romance, such as: powerful love, uncertainty of reciprocation, unreturned love, the parting of lovers, illicit love or lust threatens the virtuous one, rival lovers or multiple suitors’ (Harris, 1998: 1).

Knowing the characteristics of Gothic literature as mentioned above, I believe that the two novels I choose, which are Victor Hugo’s The Hunchback of Notre-Dame and Gaston Leroux’s The Phantom of the Opera, can be included in the category of Gothic literature, or Gothic novels to be precise. The Hunchback of Notre-Dame was written by Victor Hugo, a famous French poet, novelist, and playwright who lived in the Romantic era of 19th century. Meanwhile, The Phantom of the Opera, was written by Gaston Leroux, a French novelist, playwright, and journalist. Leroux’s mastery of the theatre world made its story convincing for the readers that it became a great success.

I also believe that there are some messages behind such use of Gothic elements in both novels. Therefore, I think it will be a great help for the readers if they know about those messages, because it can help them appreciate the stories of the novels better. In order to find out the messages in both novels, I am going to use historical-biographical approach, which ‘sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work’ (Guerin, 1992: 22).

By analyzing the two novels in this thesis, I hope that I can know the importance and the connection between the authors’ messages in using Gothic elements in their novels and the actual historical and biographical facts of their lives and times. I think it is significant because throughout both authors’ lives and times, important social, economic and political as well as cultural changes had

happened, and ‘Gothic works ... can thus be seen as effects of fear and anxiety, as attempts to account for or deal with the uncertainty of these shifts’ (Botting, 1996: 23). And what’s more, according to Fred Botting, ‘the terrors and horrors of transgression in Gothic writing have become a powerful means to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety...’ (Botting, 1996: 7). Knowing about these things makes me even more convinced that the use of Gothic elements in the two novels I am going to analyze are somewhat related to the historical and biographical facts of both authors’ lives and times, and that the topic of my thesis is really worth analyzing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In analyzing the two novels, I want to state the problems as follows:

1. What are the Gothic elements found in the novels?
2. How do historical and biographical facts help reveal the authors’ messages behind the use of Gothic elements in their novels?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the statement of the problem above, the purposes of the study in analyzing Victor Hugo’s The Hunchback of Notre-Dame and Gaston Leroux’s The Phantom of the Opera are:

1. To show the gothic elements found in the novels.
2. To know how historical and biographical facts help reveal the authors’ messages behind the use of Gothic elements in their novels.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In writing the thesis, I use library research. Firstly, I read Victor Hugo's The Hunchback of Notre-Dame and Gaston Leroux's The Phantom of the Opera. Then I collect more information which is related to the topic from reference books and internet websites. Finally, I use the selected data to make my analysis and conclusion.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

I would like to divide the thesis into four chapters which are preceded by Preface and Abstract. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of Background of Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is the Analysis of Victor Hugo's The Hunchback of Notre-Dame. The third chapter is the Analysis of Gaston Leroux's the Phantom of the Opera. The fourth chapter is the Conclusion. Then the thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which consists of the synopses of the novels and the biography of the two novelists.