

Analysis of Wordsworth's Lucy Gray

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ABSTRAK

Lucy Gray karangan penyair Romantisme William Wordsworth, menceritakan seorang gadis muda yang tersesat dalam badai salju ketika dia diperintahkan ayahnya dengan membawa lampu untuk menjemput ibunya yang ke kota. Kedua orang gadis itu mencarinya sepanjang malam tetapi tidak bisa menemukannya. Setelah hari berganti siang, kedua orang gadis itu tiba di sebuah jembatan di mana mereka melihat jejak-jejak kaki Lucy, tetapi mereka tetap tidak menemukan Lucy. Dalam bait akhir puisi *Lucy Gray*, orang-orang sekitar tempat tinggal Lucy percaya bahwa Lucy tidak mati tetapi masih hidup dan sering kali mereka mendengar Lucy menyanyikan lagi yang bercampur dengan suara angin yang bertiup. Dalam puisi ini Wordsworth mencoba untuk mengeksplorasi lingkaran hidup dan mati. Ia memakai simbol-simbol yang jelas dalam tema puisi tersebut. Misalnya jembatan disimbolkan sebagai transisi antara hidup dan mati, dikatakan pula bahwa kehidupan Lucy telah menjadi satu dengan alam. Wordsworth tidak membahas tentang kematian Lucy tetapi ia justru ingin mencampurkan kehidupan dan kematian dalam suatu pergerakan dan tidak henti-hentinya.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his short poetic work, a poem entitled *Lucy Gray*, Wordsworth recounts the disappearance of Lucy Gray, a young girl who is sent to town with a lantern to show her mother's way home safely through the snow.

Wordsworth has love and sympathy for this little girl because she is a source of inspiration for the poet to compose this poem. The poet's love and sentiments for this little girl is because of aesthetic elements.

Oxford Dictionary defines aesthetics as "a set of principles concerned with appreciation of beauty and a branch of philosophy which deals with the question of beauty and artistic task.

There are aesthetic elements in the poem *Lucy Gray*. An object of nature is either seen, heard, felt, touched or tasted for aesthetics. There are five senses

which are prerequisites for the enjoyment of beauty: sight (visual), sound (auditory), smell (olfactory), touch (tactile) and taste (gustatory).

2. ANALYSIS

In his poem, *Lucy Gray*, Wordsworth, in showing the helplessness of both child and parent, demonstrates the futility of man's ceaseless warring against nature and the dominance of primitive forces. At the very outset of the poem, Lucy sets out to show her mother through the snow before a winter storm rolls in. Her sole mission is to navigate a path through the dark, winter-clogged landscape, only the artificially manifested light of the lantern to illuminate her path. She is forced to subject this primeval world to a sensible, labeled world of order by the need of her familial unit, which, through their very existence, is at war with the forces of the natural world. This imposition represents the arrogant, over-reaching attempt to pacify the surrounding environment, the brutal, yet unbiased, force of nature. She leaves early—"the minster-clock has just struck two"—lantern in hand, sure of her success (Line 19). "That, Father! will I gladly do," she cries, agreeing with giddy self assurance when asked to head to town, unaware of the looming danger (Line 17). Away from the shelter of civility, the storm falls upon her quickly. Lucy is disoriented and she wanders through the premature snow and quickly becomes lost.

Another aspect of "Lucy Gray" that expresses Wordsworth's disdain of human interference in nature is the circumstances under which the reader is led to believe Lucy perishes. She does not simply freeze in the wilds, overcome by the sheer force of nature. The child is led astray by the bulky creations of men. The next morning, the parents track Lucy's footprints through the snow. They led them across an open field and to a bridge. Not deep within the churning bowels of nature do Lucy's tracks disappear but on this man-made creation: "They followed from the snowy bank / Those footmarks, one by one, / Into the middle of the plank; / And further there were none! (Line 53-56). The child meets her end far from the desolate wilds of unadulterated nature but in following the

appropriate path. After wandering from hill to hill, through the heart of wilderness, Lucy falls from the bridge.

Wordsworth depicts Lucy's footprints disappearing from the planks of the bridge instead of merely vanishing into the river from the bank. By doing so, Wordsworth shows the disarming foolishness of claiming victory over nature. Had Lucy walked to edge of the river, she would have acknowledged the adamant natural barrier and turned away but, instead, she was lulled by the structure and order of the bridge and attempts to cross in the midst of a terrible storm. Lucy mocks the barrier of nature, this river, and puts her faith, and safety, solely in the ordered hands of civilization.

Finally, in the last two stanzas of the poem, Wordsworth soothes his reader with the slim possibility of Lucy's survival. The girl, however, does not live on in the civil confines of a familial unit or the rigorous confines of community. She lives on through nature:

She is a living child;

That you may see sweet Lucy Gray

Upon the lonesome wild.

(Line 58-60)

She treks on through nature, content with her plight—in the final lines of the poem, Wordsworth shows that the girl is free, she "never looks behind; / And sings a solitary song / That whistles in the wind. (Line 62-64). In death the child has become what she, unlike her parents, never showed any fear of.

In the first half of the poem, the child is overjoyed to go freely into nature, she is glad to go out alone. Now, the child "sings a solitary song" and lives on through the same natural world others professed as her enemy (Line 59). Instead of showing the grief and sorrow of her family, the models of ordered life and society, Wordsworth leaves the child in nature. The child is let go from the shackles of order and structure—she is free to be nature.

3. SIGHT

The poet sees a lonely girl at the time of dawn. It is the sense of sight.

I chanced to see at break of day, The solitary child. - line 16

In line 9, the poet says that you may see the young one of a deer playing and jumping. Here he uses the word “spy” which is the optimum of the word “see”.

Then he says that you may see the hare upon the green.

You yet may spy the fawn at play, The hare upon the green. - line 17

In lines 36 and 40, the poet uses the word “sight” and “saw”. He says that there was no sight of Lucy Gray and then they saw a wooden bridge.

But there was neither sound nor sight

And thence they saw the bridge of wood. - line 18

In line 44, the poet says that the mother of Lucy Gray saw the foot prints of Lucy Gray and again uses the word “spy”

When in the snow the mother spied

The print of Lucy’s feet. - line 19

In line 60, the poet uses the word “see”.

That you may see sweet Lucy Gray Upon the lonesome wild. – line 20

Similarly, there are a number of visual images in the poem which appeal to the sense of sight, though the word “see” or “sight” has not been used. These are the optical and spectacular sights which attract the sense of sight and then go deep into the heart of a human being. These beautiful objects of Nature lead to investment in the heart and the soul. For instance, when the poet uses the word snow in line 16, he says: your mother through the snow.

The word moon has an appeal to the sense of sight as moon is something attractive and beautiful which is often used as a symbol of beauty. In lines 26-29, he uses the word mountain roe and says that Lucy Gray is happier than the mountain deer and when she walks, she disperses the powdery snow which rises like smoke. It is a beautiful image which has got aesthetic pleasure to provide to the spectators.

Not blither is the mountain roe:

With many a wanton stroke

Her feet disperse the powdery snow,

That rises up like smoke

- line 20

From line 46 onward, there are a number of visual images enumerated by the poet when he says that the parents of Lucy Gray came down from the steep hill's edge, followed the footprints of the child, through the broken hawthorn hedge, by the long stone-wall and then crossed an open field.

In the presentation of Nature, Wordsworth is fascinated by the sound in the objects of nature, just as Shelley was fascinated by the color in the spectacles of nature. The following lines from *The Solitary Reaper* exhibit the poet's enthusiasm for sound in nature:

A voice so thrilling never was heard

In spring time from the cuckoo bird

Breaking the silence of the seas

Among the farthest Hebrides.

- line 21

4. SOUND

In the very first line of the poem, the poet uses the word "heard" in which he says that he had often heard about a little child called Lucy Gray. It is the sense of sound.

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray

- line 22

In line 19 the poet says that the church clock has struck two. Here the poet uses the word struck which appeals to the sense of sound.

The minster clock has struck two

- line 23

In line 35, the poet uses the word shouting which appeals to the sense of sound. He describes the miserable condition and the sense of fear of Lucy's parents because she did not return home. They went out shouting everywhere all that night in search of Lucy Gray.

The wretched parents all that night

Went shouting far and wide - line 24

In line 42, the word cried has been used which again appeals to the sense of sound.

A furlong from their door
They wept-and, turning homeward cried
“In heaven we all shall meet”; - line 25

In the concluding two lines, the poet uses the words “sings” and whistles” which are the most appealing words for the sense of sound.

And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind - line 26

In all of the above lines the entire impact is that of sound.

5. TASTE

In line 7 and 11 the poet says that she was the most beautiful child ever born on the earth. He uses the word “sweetest” which is a comprehensive term appealing to all senses especially to the sense of taste.

She dwelt on a wide moor,
-The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door
.....
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen. - line 27

Similarly in line 59, the poet says that some people still believe that she is still alive and that you may see the sweet face of Lucy Gray on the wild moor.

That you may see the sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild. - line 28

Losing a loved one is one of the hardest experiences every person must go through. The experience does not end with the loss though, but begins with

it. The loss of a dear person leads those left behind into a downward spiral of emotions and memories. In *Lucy Gray*, Wordsworth focuses on that loss and the emotions that follow it. By reading the poem one can objectively experience both the grief that Lucy Gray's death brings on but also her parents' acceptance of her death.

The poem in brief summary allows us to experience an outsider's view of the death of Lucy Gray and her parents' grief. The character narrating the poem tells the story of Lucy, a girl who was sent by her father with a lantern to light the way home, for her mother in town. On her way to town a snow storm hits and Lucy is never found neither dead nor alive. The fact that a stranger is narrating the story as opposed to one of the parents telling the story, allows the reader to witness the tragedy of Lucy Gray without feeling too tangled up in the parents' grief. By having an outsider who is in no way involved in the tragedy tell the story, the writer of the poem William Wordsworth, gives the reader an objective point of view on the tragedy as well as room to relate the reader's own experience to the poem without feeling uncomfortable. Had the poem lacked objectivity the reader would have surely felt uncomfortable and stifled by emotions of the parents' or a parent telling the story of their daughter's death. As well as that, the objectiveness of the stranger narrating gives the reader almost a communal experience. It is as if the reader was in a small town one day, and a local just happened to tell the story. The communal aspect as well as the reader being so far removed from the actual event, provides an understanding by the reader of the parents' grief yet it does not in any way force the reader to feel something.

The stranger in the narration of the story, at one point focuses on the parent's helplessness when their daughter does not come home. The feeling of helplessness is the first emotion they experience as realization of their daughter's disappearance and possible death sets in. This helplessness is best expressed in the following lines of the poem:

*The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;*

But there was neither sight nor sound

To serve them for a guide.

Line - 33 – 36

Additionally the parents feel helpless is because no one else besides them is looking for their daughter. It is up to them to find her and if they do not find her alive, it is a failure on their part to keep their child safe and alive. The lines also show the desperation that Lucy's parents start to feel as they see that they cannot find her and that the snowy weather lowers any chance in their hearts that she will actually be found alive. It is these feelings of helplessness and the desperation that introduce the grief that will follow. The helplessness is best shown the next day in the poem when Lucy's parents find her footsteps and follow them. The following lines show this helplessness:

They followed from the snowy bank

Those footmarks, one by one,

Into the middle of the plank;

And further there were none!

- line 53 – 56

The preceding lines of the poem allow the reader to see the build up of emotional expectation on the parents' part that their daughter might still be alive. This is of course, until the parents discover that the footsteps end and there is no Lucy. A fall from some kind of hope, allows the grieving to begin. Had the parents not found the footsteps and followed them the grieving process would have started later and been more painful with lingering hope.

As for every parent that loses a child it is hard for Lucy's parents to let go. The hardest part seems that fact that they never even find Lucy. Though hope of her still being alive is gone, the parents still have no closure because they never find her body. Yet they must do without and find a way to accept her death. The following lines show the parents' willingness to come to terms with Lucy's death and let her go, "In heaven we all shall meet" (Line 42). Lucy's parents do not let her go in a way that they forget her, but they make peace with the fact that someday they shall all meet again and be together. They allow themselves to grieve but also to accept that nothing can change the fact that Lucy is dead. What really makes it apparent that Lucy's parents refuse to let her fade away, is the fact

that the stranger is telling the story. The stranger is narrating it as if it was told to him by one of the parents, word by word, to be repeated and spread throughout the town, so in a way Lucy is always kept alive. In words of Wordsworth

- Yet some maintain that to this day

She is still a living child;

That you may see sweet Lucy Gray

Upon the lonesome wild.

- line 57 – 60

Though Lucy died at such a young age and under such unfortunate circumstances she is still remembered by the town's people as well as the reader now.

6. CONCLUSION

The poem *Lucy Gray* focuses on a little child –a manifestation of aesthetic elements and features. These aesthetic features appeal to the five senses. It is a great piece of Wordsworth's creative talent which observes the dimensions of romantic aesthetics. He highlights these dimensions in such a way the scene comes almost in front of the readers.

Beauty – the ability of an object to appeal to the senses and provide emotional satisfaction – is manifest in the poem appealing to the senses of the readers of the poem.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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