

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF BYRONIC HERO IN THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE NOVEL *LOKI: WHERE MISCHIEF LIES* BY MACKENZI LEE: A MICHAEL RIFFATERRE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Byronic hero is a type of Romantic Hero that was popular in the Romantic period in the 19th century. The purpose of this research is to identify Loki as a Byronic Hero in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by Mackenzi Lee. This research uses qualitative analysis methods with a structuralism approach, which focused on intrinsic elements of the novel such as character and characterization, conflicts, and symbols. By applying Michael Riffaterre's theory of semiotics, this research describes the character traits of Byronic Hero through heuristic and hermeneutic readings on Loki's character describes the meaning of the symbols "godseye mirror" and "norn stones" on Loki's character, and also matrices and hypograms in the novel. The results of the research prov that Loki is a Byronic Hero in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*.

Keywords: Byronic Hero; heuristic and hermeneutic readings; matrices; hypograms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Heroes are admired because of their courage, strength, and determination that often are reflected on ourselves. In reality, a person is considered as heroic when providing selfless services to society. In literary works, usually the hero is a 'good person', as the type of virtuous protagonist who is supported or desired by the readers to 'win' in the end of the story. The central themes of heroism are moral competence, struggle, sacrifice, and being able to face obstacles (Geothelas & Allison, 2012).

Romantic Hero appeared in literary works in the era of Romanticism in early 19th century. Thorslev Jr. (1964) stated that this figure symbolizes important aspects of Romanticism, such as individualism, the belief that imagination is superior to reason, and the worship of love and idealism.

Then another variant of the character was created, which is Byronic Hero. The character was popularized by George Gordon Byron, the most notorious of the major English Romantic poets. Romantic Heroes are emotionally and physically

isolated, controlled by obsessive love, hatred, rebellion, and fear (Stanton, 2007: 116). Lord Byron took the character to its extreme level with more complexity.

Byron believed that a true hero must be human, with realistic emotions and actions. Essentially, the Byronic Hero is a manifestation of Byron's own personality: "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" (Gordon, 2015). The Byronic Hero was developed by Lord Byron's epic poems. For example, the main character, Manfred, in his poem *Manfred*.

Byronic Hero character traits according to Peter Thorslev Jr. (1967) and Atara Stein (2004) are intelligent, having great passion, loner, rebellious, arrogant, self-destructive, against norms, a lack of respect for rank and privilege, being thwarted in love by social constraint or death, and haunted by terrible past. Stein (2004:9) also argues that it was these characteristics that made the character so popular in fiction, and captivated readers in the 19th century as well as readers today.

Loki: Where Mischief Lies by Mackenzi Lee tells the story of Loki, years before he caused chaos on Earth. Loki was a young prince of Asgard and the unfavored son of Odin. He was mistrusted by the people of Asgard for his magical abilities, and feared by his father as a prophesied destroyer. Loki wants to prove himself heroic and worthy to the throne of Asgard. His adventure in 19th century London to investigate mysterious murders that have been caused by Asgardian magic unfold the opinions of himself and people around him, and who he is meant to be. This novel not only tells the past of a villain, but also a tragic hero that has a complex character.

Structuralism focuses on studying the structure of a literary work. As stated by Nurgiyantoro (2005: 60), structural studies of literary works are carried out by identifying, reviewing, and describing the functions and relationships of the intrinsic elements of literary works to form a unified totality of meaning.

Kutha Ratna (2004:97) states that new structuralism in the early 20th century accompanied the emergence of semiotics, so that formalism, structuralism, and semiotics are related to one and another. Especially the way of semiotics work which continues the results of structuralism analysis, that makes the two works cannot be separated. He also quotes Culler (1977:6) who stated that structuralism and semiotics are two identical theories. Structuralism focuses on literature, while semiotics focuses on literary signs.

In literary studies, semiotics is used to understand the meaning of signs in literary works. As Wellek & Warren stated (1989:159) "literary works can be seen as a complete sign system, with a sign structure that has a certain aesthetic function and purpose". These literary signs are part of the structure of literary works, which are the intrinsic elements in written texts, and extrinsic elements such as the relationship

between the author, literary works, and readers.

According to Michael Riffaterre's (1978) semiotics, there are four main things to produce meaning. Firstly, indirect expressions, which is the style of language used in literary texts. Secondly, heuristic reading and hermeneutic readings, the two reading models that are stepwise: heuristic reading produces meaning literally according to the language of the text, and then hermeneutic reading interprets or interprets to understand the implied meaning. Thirdly, the matrices, which are hypothetical ideas that are actualized in simple words and sentences in the structure of the text, the first or primary form of actualization, is model, then transformed into variants until they become literary texts. Lastly, hypogram, which is the background that underlies the writing of the text, in this case the literary text. It is divided into two types, they are potential hypograms in the form of colloquialisms, and actual hypograms in the form of texts, pre-existing discourses.

As Riffaterre (1978:22) put it, "I shall distinguish between two different semiotic operations: the transformation of mimetic signs into words or phrases relevant to significance, and the transformation from matrix to text". Other than mimetic signs, semiotic work is also in the form of matrix transformation into literary texts. The application of Riffaterre's semiotic model to prose is to continue the production of structural meaning.

This model has been applied in several previous literary researches. There are 'Riffaterre's Semiotics in *Durga Umayi* by Y.B. Mangunwijaya'

(2014) by Hartono M. Hum., 'Symbolisme Hujan in Tere Liye's *Hujan*' (2018) by Qiwarunnisa, Mulyono, and U'um Qomariyah, 'A Semiotic Analysis on the Short Story *Sang Pengelana Dan Teka-Teki Semesta* by Elizabeth Gabriela' (2021)

by Tri Wahyu Retno Ningsih, Annida Hanifah Elshanti, and Rizki Dinda Amelia.

The main problem of this research is the existence of Byronic Hero in the novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*. This research is focused on describing the characterization and character traits of Byronic Hero on Loki's character, the meaning of the

This research is qualitative research, with structuralism approach. The technique used in this research is library research technique with primary data the novel *Loki: Where*

This study uses the application of Riffaterre's semiotic theory which is carried out by reading heuristics and reading hermeneutics of the author's speech and dialogue about the characterization of Byronic Hero on Loki and the conflict behind it in the novel, the meaning of the symbols. "Godseye

Loki: Where Mischief Lies starts with Loki as the young Prince of Asgard and his struggles in finding his place in the kingdom of Asgard. He wanted to be seen as equal to his brother Thor, both in power and capabilities. However, being a warrior isn't his forte and with Odin forbidding him to learn magic, his natural ability, only weighed him down further. He must work harder to prove himself worthy to the throne of Asgard. Until his adventure on Midgard changed the course of his life forever.

Byronic Hero characterization of Loki in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* is shown by the direct (telling) method of characterization through the author's utterances, as well as indirect (showing) through dialogues spoken by Loki as the protagonist and other characters the conflicts that underlie.

First, through heuristic and hermeneutic readings, Loki is described as possessing the character traits of Byronic Hero in Mackenzi Lee's novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*, they are intelligent, great passion, loner, rebellious, arrogant, self-

symbols "Godseye Mirror" and "Norn Stones" on Loki's character, and matrices and hypograms in the novel according to Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory. The purpose of this research is to identify Loki as a Byronic Hero in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by Mackenzi Lee.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Mischief Lies by Mackenzi Lee, secondary data are books, journals and scientific writings about Byronic Hero and Michael Riffaterre's semiotics.

Mirror" and "Norn Stones" on Loki's character according to the heuristic and hermeneutic readings in the novel, and describing the matrices and hypogram of the novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by Mackenzi Lee.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

destructive, against norms, a lack of respect for rank and privilege, being thwarted in love by social constraint or death, and haunted by terrible past.

Loki is described as intelligent as when he always thinks of ways out of every problem he faces, and insightful for he is keen on his studies. Great passion, as shown in the novel, Loki wanted to learn magic to reach his potential and become the next heir to the throne, this he proved by trying to appear and be a good prince, especially in front of Odin. A loner, as shown, without Amora, Loki did not socialize often and spent most of his time alone studying and learning magic, and when he was faced with a problem, he often withdrew himself from the crowds to go somewhere he could be alone and reflect on where he went wrong and to figure a way to fix it.

Rebellious, as shown, Loki often disobeys in a small way or openly, such as when he secretly studied witchcraft despite Odin's prohibition, and failed while carrying out his task of investigating serial murders on Earth ordered by Odin.

Arrogant, as shown, Loki often being haughty and belittle Alfheim, the humans, and the people around him. Self-destructive, as shown, Loki often performs actions that would endanger himself, such as destroying the Godseye Mirror, nearly got killed by the beast Lurking Unknown, and his brash plan with Amora to attack Asgard. Against norms, as shown, in order to achieve his goals Loki would ignore the norms and justifies all means, albeit cautiously and without hurting innocent people, such as activating the Godseye Mirror without permission, attempted theft of Alfheim's relics, and stealing the Norn Stone.

A lack respect for rank and privilege, as shown, Loki did not show any respect for Prince-General Asmund and Aflheim, and often argues with his father. Failed in love due to social constraints and death, as shown, Loki fell in love with Amora, but their love was constrained by the law and ended in failure with Amora's possible death, and the relationship between Loki and Theo Bell had no chance to grow for his short time on Earth. Haunted by terrible past, as shown, Loki continued to be by plagued the Godseye Mirror's prophecy and his destiny as an evil god. It can be concluded that Loki is a Byronic Hero in the novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by Mackenzi Lee.

Second, the meaning of the symbol "Godseye Mirror" in the novel. As described in the novel, the mirror has the power to foresee the future, specifically the future of Asgard and its people. At Gullveig's celebration, the Godseye Mirror shows Odin one of his sons leading an army of the undead against Asgard in Ragnarok, the doomsday of the gods. According to heuristic reading is 'vision of the future'. Next, mirrors display the image of a person in the form of reflection, in a deeper sense, one's identity. Godseye Mirror shows Odin's son will betray Asgard. Loki broke the law to find the answer. He saw a reflection of himself in

the future, and wanted to find out who he really was by looking in the mirror. However, after Loki tried to use the mirror with Amora's help, the mirror shattered into pieces. A broken mirror is often associated with bad luck. The worst fate for Loki is to become the son of Odin who betrayed Asgard in the future. According to hermeneutic reading is 'identity' and 'bad luck'.

The meaning of the symbol "Norn Stones" in the novel. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in Norse mythology "Norn" was one of a group of supernatural beings related to the Greek Moirai, and was usually depicted as three girls spinning or weaving the fate of men. A stone is a solid object that is hard and not easy to crush. Described in the novel, the Norn Stones are a series of magical gemstones that can amplify the magic of the person who uses them. According to the heuristic reading is 'strength'. The Norn Stones are one of Asgard's precious relics. One day a set had been stolen from Karnilla. Whoever stole it would be considered a traitor, and whoever found the culprit and the stone would be a hero. Loki participated in the search for the stones. The task ended in failure as Loki and Thor being caught trying to steal Alfheim's precious relic under Loki's devious plan. Then, in his mission on Earth, Loki failed when it was revealed that he had stolen the Norn Stones. However, when carrying out the action with Amora to use the Norn Stones and raise an army of the undead to attack Asgard, Loki returned the side of Asgard. Loki used the Norn Stones to stop Amora and the undead. In the end, Loki failed in being a hero and a villain. According to the hermeneutic reading is 'failure'.

Third, the matrices and hypogram in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by Mackenzi Lee. The matrix in this novel is 'an attempt to gain recognition and acceptance which ends in failure'. The matrix is actualized in a model, 'Loki wants to prove himself

heroic, but fails because of his flaws'. The matrix and the model are actualized from two variants, they are (1) Together with Thor, Loki was given a diplomatic assignment to Alfheim but ended up failing because both were caught while trying to steal Alfheim's precious relic based on Loki's devious plan, (2) Loki failed in his task of investigating a murder case on Earth, and it was revealed that he had stolen the Norn Stones.

Lastly, the potential hypogram of this novel is actualized from of the matrix,

IV. CONCLUSION

From the results of the study of Byronic Hero's characterization of the main character in Mackenzi Lee's *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* by applying Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First, Loki, the main character, is proven to possess the ten character traits of Byronic Hero in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*, they are intelligent, great passion, loner, rebellious, arrogant, self-destructive, against norms, a lack of respect for rank and privilege, being thwarted in love by social constraint or death, and haunted by terrible past.

Second, the meaning of "Godseye Mirror" in the novel according to heuristic reading is 'reflection of the future', while according to hermeneutic reading is 'identity' and 'bad luck'. Secondly, the meaning of "Norn Stones" in the novel according to the heuristic reading is 'strength', while according to the hermeneutic reading is 'failure'.

Last, the matrix in this novel is 'an attempt to gain recognition and acceptance which ends in failure', the potential hypogram is 'a son who seeks recognition from his father and fails', and the actual hypogram of this novel is the film *Thor* (2011) directed by Kenneth Branagh.

which is 'a son who wants to get recognition from his father and fails'. While the actual hypogram of this novel is the film *Thor*, which was released in 2011 and directed by Kenneth Branagh. The novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* (2019) ends with Odin's ultimatum to crown Thor as the next heir to the throne, and the film *Thor* (2011) begins with Thor's coronation ceremony before being interrupted by a Frost Giant attack which is part of Loki's devious plan. The novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies* is set before Loki played the villain role in Marvel's superhero stories.

The aspect of Byronic Hero in the symbolism explained above is this failure. Loki failed to become a hero because of his flaws, and he also failed to become a villain because in the end he still protected Asgard from the calamity he made himself. In accordance with Lord Byron's belief, a hero must be human, with realistic emotions and actions. In the novel *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*, Loki failed throughout the story. In reality, human life is always followed by failure. Loki became a symbol of human nature.

Byronic Hero has a greater level of psychological and emotional complexity than conventional heroes. As a villain, Loki has an arrogant, cold, and cruel personality. He interfered in the lives of others and did not hesitate to take their lives to feel superior and strong. He shows hatred towards his father Odin and his brother Thor. Loki lost to Thor who was favoured by Odin. He had to put in more effort to get his father's attention. Despite filling the role of villain in the story of the princes of Asgard, Loki is difficult to completely be liked or hated because he shows human nature as it is that attracts the sympathy of the audience, as well as the readers. Therefore, the results of the research proves that Loki is a Byronic Hero in *Loki: Where Mischief Lies*.

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