

## Visualizing Imagery of Poetry *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*

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### Abstract

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This study article analyzed visual imagery of poetry “Because I Could Not Stop For Death” by Emily Dickinson. The aim of this article is analyzing the visual imagery in the poetry. This article presented the data by using descriptive qualitative method with the theory from Pradopo (2009) in analyzing the visual imagery. There are some steps in conducting this study. First step is by selecting the poetry, analyze the word or phrase that related with the visual imagery, and then analyze the data. The data are taken from the internet. The focus of this study is on the visual imagery and it would differentiate this article from the previous article. The findings of this article showed seven visual imagery of the phrase or line found in the poetry “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson. Most of those phrases show visual imagery of natural beauty and scenes from places that being observed as symbolism of life stages. The speaker conveyed the sense of sight by using figurative language.

#### Kata Kunci:

*Because I Could Not Stop For Death, Citra Visual, Emily Dickinson, Puisi*

#### Abstrak

Artikel studi ini menganalisis citra visual puisi “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” karya Emily Dickinson. Tujuan artikel ini adalah menganalisis citra visual dalam puisi. Artikel ini menyajikan data dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teori Pradopo (2009) dalam menganalisis citra visual. Ada beberapa langkah dalam melakukan penelitian ini. Langkah pertama adalah memilih puisi, menganalisis kata atau frasa yang berhubungan dengan citra visual, kemudian menganalisis data. Data diambil dari internet. Fokus penelitian ini adalah pada citra visual dan hal ini akan membedakan artikel ini dengan artikel sebelumnya. Temuan artikel ini menunjukkan tujuh gambaran visual dari frasa atau baris yang

terdapat dalam puisi “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death” karya Emily Dickinson. Sebagian besar frasa tersebut menunjukkan gambaran visual keindahan alam dan pemandangan dari tempat yang diamati sebagai simbol dari tahap kehidupan. Penutur menyampaikan indra penglihatan dengan menggunakan bahasa kiasan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

American literature is one of the famous literature in the world. Its history has been an amazing topic to be studied. American literature is the stories, novels, poems, and plays written by people living in the United States. The stories and ideas in American literature often reflect the history, culture, and experiences of the United States, and are sometimes written in English, but can also be written in other languages. There are many literary works in America that remarked as a famous literary work. The literary history of America begins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the arrival of European settlers in the New World there early settlers brought with them the literature of their native cultures, which they continued to write and read during their new lives in America. In addition, as the population of the continent grew and expanded westward, America’s first writers emerged, recording their observations of the country’s natural beauty, native culture, and the struggles to colonize new lands.

According to Giles J.R (2024) on Encyclopedia Britannica, In American literary History, there are some period of time which divide the literary works such as, early American and colonial period to 1776, democratic origins and revolutionary writers, romantic period, the rise of realism, modernization and experimentation, and the American contemporary literature. One of the period that gives big impact on American literature until this day is the romantic period. This era was roughly spanned from the late 18th century to the early 19th century There was a growing interest in nature, emotion, and the individual experience in American literature. During this time, many poets and writers were inspired by the vastness and beauty of the American landscape and the rich cultural heritage of the country. One of the challenges American writers faced during the Romantic

period was the limited market for their works. The United States was still a young and expanding nation, and there was not as much demand for literature as there was in Europe. This meant that many writers struggled to find publishers who would be interested in their work, and those who did manage to get published often had to rely on friends and family to buy their books in order to see them in print.

Despite these challenges, there were many American poets and writers who made important contributions to American literature during the Romantic period. These include authors like Emily Dickinson, who became known for her innovative poetic style and use of imagery. One of her famous works is a poetry entitled "Because I Could Not Stop For Death". This poetry was written around the year 1863. In the poetry, a female speaker describes being visited by "Death," who is depicted as a "kindly" gentleman and taken on a trip in his carriage. According to Wordsworth, poetry is the spontaneous outpouring of intense feelings, with its origins in emotion recollected in tranquillity. In poetry, intrinsic elements are the fundamental building blocks that shape and define a poem's essence. These elements such as form, structure, rhythm, imagery, and language contribute to the emotional, thematic, and aesthetic dimensions of poetic expression. They form the bedrock upon which poets craft their unique and evocative verses, allowing them to delve deep into the human experience and provoke profound emotions and thoughts within their readers.

This article analyzed the visual imagery of the poetry "Because I Could Not Stop For Death". According to Pradopo (2009), visual imagery appeals to the sensation of sight by describing something seen by the speaker of the poetry. Visual imagery in poetry is like painting with words. It uses vivid descriptions, metaphors, and sensory language to create mental pictures in the reader's mind. By painting scenes, emotions, or experiences, it allows the reader to connect more deeply with the poet's message. For instance, describing a sunset with vibrant colors and textures can evoke feelings of beauty and tranquility, enhancing the reader's understanding and emotional connection with the poem's themes. Laurence Perrine (1992) also stated that visual imagery is the experience feeling

and sense of sight that represent the language. In "Because I could not stop for Death," Emily Dickinson crafts a narrative through vivid visual imagery. She uses descriptive language to paint scenes, such as the carriage ride with Death as a gentlemanly suitor. The journey through different landscapes. The school, the fields of grain, the setting sun that creates a vivid, almost serene picture that represents life's passage towards death. Dickinson's careful selection of imagery allows readers to visualize this journey, making the abstract concept of death tangible and relatable.

In conducting this study, several related study was found. It was a study from Suci Rahayu and Arida Widyastuti (2015). In this study, they analyze the intrinsic element of poetry " Because I Could Not Stop For Death" including visual imagery. The study shows there are some intrinsic elements were found in the poetry. Other study related to this study is a study from Nur Alam, Iskandar, and Abdullah that is Imageries in William Wordsworth's Poems. The study found there are four imageries found such as visual, auditory, olfactory, and nature imagery. A thesis from Syukri Ghozali also was used as the previous study. The study analyzed figure of speech and imagery of four Emily Dickinson's poetry. The result found three figure of speech used in the poetry and visual, auditory, tactile imagery found. A study from Masagus Sulaiman also was used as the reference of the current article. This study analyzed five poetries of Emily Dickinson and figure out imagery on the poetry. However, this study only focused on one poetry of Emily Dickinson and the visual imagery that differentiate this article from the previous article.

## **METHOD**

This study used descriptive qualitative method in presenting the data. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an understanding inquiry process built on diverse methodological traditions of inquiry that investigate a social or human issue problem. This article construct a sophisticated, holistic image, analyzes words, reports extensive information views, and conducts the research in natural setting. In this study, the data were taken from the poetry by

Emily Dickinson that taken from the internet. The method to analyze the poetry are by reading the poetry, and then collecting the word or phrase that the writer consider as visual imagery using the theory from Pradopo (2009). After that, the phrase are analyzed to show how visual imagery convey the meaning of the poetry. Lastly, the writer would present the result of visual imagery in the poetry “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”. The poetry was chosen to be the data source because it has adequate data. Moreover, the poetry personified death and afterlife using imageries. Visual imagery in this poetry represent the afterlife with sense of sight of the speaker that interesting to analyzed.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

According to Pradopo (2009), the use of visual imagery has it aims to appeal the sense of sight. In describing the image, poetry will use figurative language techniques. In the poetry “I Could Not Stop For Death” there are some visual imagery found such as:

### **Data 1**

#### **We passed the School, where Children strove**

This line shows that the speaker passes a school with many student like they were strove. The speaker wants to convey the atmosphere of a school. It paints an image of students working diligently, putting in their best efforts to achieve their goals or excel in their studies. This imagery suggests a scene of determination, hard work, and dedication among the students. The image of the school suggests a scene of youthful activity, where children are engaged in learning and growth. This setting evokes a sense of innocence, curiosity, and vitality, representing the early stages of life's journey. The word "strove" implies effort and determination, emphasizing the children's eagerness to learn and achieve.

Pradopo (2009) stated visual imagery is the experience of sight that the speaker feels to describe something. In this phrase, the speaker describe her experience. The way the speaker describe the setting in the poetry such as place, people there, and what they are doing is from the speaker visual imagination or

experienced. Therefore, the readers can feel the setting, atmosphere, and situation of the poetry by using visual imagery.

#### **Data 2**

##### **We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain**

This line shows that the speaker sees a field of grain. In this poetry, the speaker wants to depict a scene where she contemplated a field of grain, and it possibly representing a moment of reflection amidst nature's beauty. According to CambridgeDictionary.com, gazing derived from gaze means looking at something or someone for a long time with feelings of surprise, admiration, or the other feelings.

In this phrase, the speaker conveyed visual imagination of seeing fields with many grain that hypnotizes anyone who see it. The setting of this phrase is on a huge fields with grain. The speaker admire the beauty of the nature in this situation. *Gazing grain* in this phrase refers to the view that makes her surprised and amazed. The grain that hypnotized her to look on it was for a long time. The way the speaker conveyed the visual of this poetry by using figurative language. Overall, the visual imagery of the "Fields of Gazing Grain" enriches the poem's exploration of life, death, and the passage of time, inviting readers to reflect on the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world.

#### **Data3**

##### **We passed the Setting Sun**

In this line, the phrase setting sun means where the sun is going down. In this poetry, the speaker tells that she passed or moved past a horizon where the sun goes down. The way she describes the sun is by telling that the sun is setting. The readers might familiar with *sunset*. Therefore, the word setting describe the position of the sun.

Readers can imagine how the sun is going down and the speaker saw it. The image of setting sun also can evoke the feeling of end point just like death. The speaker wan to tells the reader that she sees a sunset. It might refers to a condition of evening time in her journey. The setting that she describe is visual

imagery by using visual imagination or experience. Setting sun usually related to death or the phase of afterlife.

#### **Data 4**

##### **The Dews drew quivering and Chill**

This line shows the condition of the poetry that the speaker feels. It shows a scene of delicate, trembling droplets of dew forming on the surfaces. The speaker wants to tell how it cold, and gives shivering sensation as the dew settles. *Quivering* makes the readers think the droplets are shaking a bit, and "chill" means it's really cold. This makes the readers picture a cold and fresh place where small drops form and tremble because it's so chilly.

According to CambridgeDictionary.com, the word *quivering* derived from a word quiver means shaking slightly and it because of a strong emotion. In this phrase, the speaker wants to conveyed that she saw the dew has started to form on the grass because of the sun that has set. The speaker describe the visual imagination using that phrase.

#### **Data 5**

##### **For only Gossamer, my Gown –**

##### **My Tippet – only Tulle –**

In this line, the speaker tells about the clothes that she wear in that situation. "Gossamer" evokes an image of something delicate, fine, and almost transparent, like a fine spider's silk or a delicate, filmy material. A "gown" typically brings to mind an elegant, flowing garment, often worn on formal occasions, which could be long, well-fitted, and made of luxurious fabric. A "tippet" paints a picture of a narrow strip of fabric or accessory, possibly draped around the shoulders or neck, adding a touch of elegance or formality to an outfit. "Only tulle" suggests a garment made exclusively or primarily of tulle, a fine, sheer net-like fabric often used in veils or as a decorative element in clothing, creating an image of something delicate and airy. This imagery contributes to the overall tone of the poem, emphasizing the transient nature of life and the speaker's acceptance of her mortality. The choice of these specific

materials enhances the ethereal and otherworldly atmosphere of the poem, creating a haunting yet beautiful visual picture.

#### **Data 6**

##### **House that seemed a Swelling of the Ground**

In this line, the speaker wants to describe the condition of the house that the speaker sees. It shows a picture of a big, solid house that seems to blend into the land, making it seem like a natural part of the surroundings. The image of a house emerging from the earth, appearing as if it is swelling from the ground itself, suggests a surreal and supernatural atmosphere. It implies a blending of the natural and the supernatural realms, where the boundaries between life and death are blurred.

This imagery also conjures up the image of a tomb or burial mound rising from the ground, representing the deceased's eternal resting place. The house could stand for the speaker's ultimate destination or the afterlife itself, leaving room for interpretation as a metaphor for the transition into eternity or the afterlife.

#### **Data 7**

##### **The Roof was scarcely visible**

The speaker wants to tell that the roof is barely able to be seen. This suggests a scene where the roof blends into its surroundings or is obscured by something, making it challenging to distinguish or perceive clearly. It evokes an image of a roof that's almost hidden or partially covered, possibly due to darkness, fog, or another element obstructing the view.

The image of a roof that is "scarcely visible" implies a sense of ethereality and ambiguity. It could suggest a house or structure that is fading from view, symbolizing the speaker's departure from the tangible world into the realm of death. Alternatively, it might signify a threshold between the earthly realm and an unseen, spiritual realm beyond.

## CONCLUSION

The stories and ideas in American literature often reflect the history, culture, and experiences of the United States, and are sometimes written in English, but can also be written in other languages. There are many literary works in America that remarked as a famous literary work. In American literary History, there are some period of time which divide the literary works such as, early American and colonial period to 1776, democratic origins and revolutionary writers, romantic period, the rise of realism, modernization and experimentation, and the American contemporary literature. One of the period that gives big impact on American literature until this day is the romantic period. There were many American poets and writers who made important contributions to American literature during the Romantic period. These include authors like Emily Dickinson, who became known for her innovative poetic style and use of imagery.

One of her famous works is a poetry entitled “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”. This poetry was written around the year 1863. In this study, the writer would elaborate the use of visual imagery in the poetry using descriptive qualitative method. The result shows that there are some visual imagery that the writer found in the poetry “I Could Not Stop For Death”. This visual imagery represents the feeling of sight in the poetry, using some phrases of figurative language. Therefore, the poetry gives the experience feeling to the readers. Most of the visual imagery of the poetry were describing and admiring nature.

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