CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Romanticism period is a global phenomenon in the eighteenth century (Habich, Robert D, and Nowatzki, 2010, pp. 4-5). According to Wellek (1962, pp. 1-4), this era is characterized by a movement when the theme in literary world experiences a change from classical and neoclassical conventions to the romantic theme. In the Romanticism period, there are five basic characteristics that make it different from classical and neoclassical period. The characteristics are imagination, nature, symbolism and myth, intuition and subjectivity, and individualism (Stobaugh, 2012, p. 315). In the literary world, the works of Romanticism period are divided into two sides: the light and dark romanticism (Dinçer, 2010). The light romanticism contains every good thing that people want to achieve in life. The light side is very different from the dark romanticism that contains all of the bad things in human’s life. The works categorized in dark romanticism side, mostly ends with unhappy ending, have to contain dark, creepy, gloomy, and dreary tones. One of the author who uses dark romanticism side is Edgar Allan Poe.

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the major authors in literature world during the period of American Romanticism. Poe is well known for his work that presents a romantic theme in a dark way. It is because in his works, Poe is inspired by his own life filled with the fellings of sorrow, despair, anger, and suffer from loss. His experience of losing people that he loved successfully opened the gate for Poe to
be the father of works with the theme of death. Most of his literary works end with the death of his fictional characters. The death that always appear in Poe’s work is usually the death of the female character. It can be seen from Poe’s works, such as Eleonora, Ligeia, Berenice, Morella, and Lenore. Poe loves to write the death of a woman character as his favorite star. It seems that he wants to share his own feelings when he sees two beloved women in his life, his mother and his wife, die in front of his eyes. Poe has admitted that he believes that the most poetical topic in the world is about the death of a young woman (Poe, 1846). His poems that can give a clear example of the death of young woman are The Raven and Lenore.

The first poem is The Raven written in 1845. This poem tells about an unnamed narrator whose life is filled with sorrow due to the death of his lover, Lenore. The narrator is a man who is sitting and pondering in his room. He is thinking in unusual time because he wants to forget his lover. During his sadness, he hears someone knocking on the door but when he opens the door he finds nothing. So, the narrator talks to the raven, a creature from his imagination, after finding nothing at his door. He tells the raven that he is sad because he lost all of his hopes knowing that his beloved, Lenore, is already in heaven. The death of a young woman also happens in the second poem, Lenore.

Lenore is another popular poem written by Poe in 1843. The title takes exactly the same name as one of his lovers, a young woman named Lenore. In this poem, Guy de Vere is the man whose lover passes away because of illness. Unlike the man in The Raven who could not accept the reality of his lover’s death, the man in this poem accepts the fact that his Lenore does not exist anymore. Guy de
Vere talks to the narrator that he believes that his Lenore is happier in heaven and is waiting for him.

*The Raven* and *Lenore* have an interesting point that attracts me to analyze these poems deeper. The interesting point is the fact that although the male characters in *The Raven* and *Lenore* have opposite reactions due to the death of female character, these two poems use the name Lenore as the name of a woman character. This name, that appears in the two famous poems of Poe, invites the readers of these poems to find out about the real identity of Lenore and the reason why Poe chooses her as the woman character in *Lenore* and *The Raven*. Many people try to identify the figure of Lenore in Poe’s poems. One thinks that Lenore is the name of a woman who gives a big impact to Poe’s life besides Poe’s wife, Virginia. In reality, Hammond (1981) in *An Edgar Allan Poe Companion: A Guide to the Short Stories, Romances and Essays* gives the fact that Lenore refers to Poe’s wife, Virginia Clemm.

A continually recurring theme in the poetry, as in the short stories, is the quest for eternal perfection as personified by a feminine character of rare beauty. Just as Ligeia, Eleonora, and Berenice symbolized for Poe the elusive beauty he had found and lost in the person of Virginia Clemm, so Annabel Lee, Helen, Eulalie, and Lenore personified for him his idée fixe of departed love, of happinesses transitorily experienced but never to be tasted again… (1981, p. 155).

There is proof that Lenore is a symbol of Poe’s “darling little wife” in *Life of Edgar A. Poe* (1879). Didier says that “Poe and his Lenore’s” picture is on his
Didier also states that Poe has written his and his wife’s love story in one of Poe’s works, *Eleonora* (1879, p. 58). The meaning of the title on “What Shall We Name The Baby?” for Eleonora according to Wilson (2015, p.104-105), has the same meaning as Lenore. This is supported by Griffin (2014, p. 117) who points out that these names come from different language yet have the same meaning, that is, light. The names Eleanora and Lenore are commonly given to a baby girl. These names refer to a wealthy and elegant woman. It can be interpreted that Virginia gives a big impact to Poe’s life until it affects Poe’s works.

Didier (1879) writes that Poe is hitting the lowest point of his life after Virginia’s death. After her death, Poe has changed himself into somebody else. He does not seem to care about his life anymore. There is no doubt to say that Poe thinks that his wife is his light and life. Didier says that Poe writes *The Raven* and *Lenore* during the sickness of Virginia and Poe starts anticipating the possibility of Virginia’s death in his poems (1879, p. 100). This is the reason why Poe chooses Lenore as the name of his woman’s character in *The Raven* and *Lenore*.

These two poems do not only show people about Poe’s love towards Virginia and his condition after Virginia’s death but these poems also represent the characteristics of romanticism era that consist of dark romanticism side in its words and phrases. *Lenore* and *The Raven* are the works related to this period that do not only represent the characteristics of Romanticism period but these poems also tell the condition of environment in Romanticism Era through the words and phrases. This research is different from other previous research, such as the research that is conducted by Dukut (1999) Chick (2012), Rahman (2015), and
Wakhid, Ulfah, and Sari (2016). The difference between this study and other studies comes from the objective of study. Other researchers aim to find and analyse about the reason why Poe becomes an author who affects literary worlds, the formula of detective story in Poe’s works, the behaviour of male’s characters, and the myth or symbolism in Poe’s poems but this study is different because it aims to find out what words and phrases in the two poems portray the characteristics of Romanticism era.

1.2. Field of the Study

This study is related to the field of literature, especially American Studies because the research deals with poems written by Edgar Allan Poe, an American writer who lived in the Romanticism era.

1.3. Scope of the study

The limitations of the study are the words and phrases in *Lenore* and *The Raven* related to the Romanticism Era’s characteristics.

1.4. Research Question

Based on the issue above, the research question of this research is:

What words and phrases does Poe use to show both the characteristics of Romanticism Era and dark romanticism in *Lenore* and *The Raven*?

1.5. Objective of the Study

This research aims to:

Find and analyze the words and phrases showing the characteristics of Romanticism Era and dark romanticism in *The Raven* and *Lenore* poems.
1.6. Significance of the Study

This research is significant as it will help other students to understand how to apply the American Studies approach for poetry analysis. Students will have a better understanding of how to analyze the literary work that can show up the socio-cultural background of Romanticism era by using Poe’s biography as the supporting information.

1.7. Definition of Terms

1.7.1. Poem

Guillain (2015, p. 6) says that poem, or poetic text, is a text written in a specific way. It shows the use of languages for the languages’ aesthetic and meaningful qualities. The words, which are written in the poem, contain “sound and meaning” that make the readers have to think and feel the meaning of a poem in a particular way.

1.7.2. Romanticism

McGraw-Hill Education (2015) states that the word “Romanticism” is referring to the movement in art, especially in literature world. The authors who are influenced by Romanticism choose to write works that tell about imagination and feeling. In this movement, the works divide into two sides: the works that contain optimistic feeling and the works that have pessimistic feeling. The works that express optimistic feeling are the works that tell about the bright side of the world. This works are usually called as the works that present light romanticism. On the other hand, the works that show the pessimistic side are the works that reflect the dark side of the world. People usually name this kind of work as work that carries dark romanticism.