
THE REPRESENTATION OF BEAUTY DISCOURSE IN LORD BYRON'S SELECTED POEMS REPRESENTASI WACANA KECANTIKAN DALAM PUISI LORD BYRON

Anisa Hikmah Suryandari, Ikwan Setiawan, Hat Pujiati

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University Jln. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121

E-mail: anishsjungle@gmail.com

Abstract. This study discusses beauty discourse in the era of Romanticism. Beauty discourse was produced through Byron poems from 1813-1815. Byron was one of the leading figures in the Romanticist movement who was influential at the time. We use three Byron poems as the main data for this study. These poems are *She Walks in Beauty* (1814), *Sonnet to Genevra* (1813), and *Stanzas for Music* (1815). The concept of beauty produced by the three poems above connects physical beauty and intellectual beauty with natural elements as one of the great themes of the Romanticism era. The concept of beauty at that time was closely related to the romantic society of England. Referring to this reason, Stuart Hall's representation theory and discursive approach by Michel Foucault are used as a tool to analyze the above problems. The results of this study indicate that the concept of beauty in the romantic era (1) emphasizes intellectual beauty or beyond the physical itself as a concept of beauty in that era. In addition, three concepts of beauty, physical beauty, intellectual beauty, and natural beauty will always lead to divine beauty, where all life comes from Him, and (2) The three poems make beauty an instrument to criticize the presence of the industrial revolution at that time which is considered to cause chaos in romantic life.

Keywords: *Beauty, Romanticism, Nature, Transcendentalism.*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini membahas tentang wacana kecantikan pada era Romantisme. Wacana kecantikan diproduksi melalui puisi-puisi Byron tahun 1813-1815. Byron adalah salah satu leading figure pergerakan Romantisme yang berpengaruh pada saat itu. Kami menggunakan tiga puisi Byron sebagai data utama penelitian ini. Puisi-puisi tersebut adalah *She Walks in Beauty* (1814), *Sonnet to Genevra* (1813), dan *Stanzas for Music* (1815). Konsep kecantikan yang diproduksi oleh ketiga puisi diatas menghubungkan kecantikan fisik dan kecantikan intellectual dengan unsur alam sebagaimana menjadi salah satu tema besar era Romantisme. Konsep kecantikan pada saat itu berkaitan erat dengan masyarakat romantis Inggris. Merujuk ke alasan tersebut, teori representasi dari Stuart Hall dan discursive approach oleh Michel Foucault digunakan sebagai alat untuk menganalisa masalah diatas. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konsep kecantikan pada era romantic (1) menekankan pada intellectual beauty atau beyond the physical itself sebagai konsep kecantikan pada era tersebut. Selain itu juga, tiga konsep kecantikan yaitu kecantikan fisik, kecantikan intellectual, dan keindahan alam akan selalu menuju pada kecantikan ilahiah, dimana semua kehidupan berasal dari-Nya, dan (2) Ketiga puisi menjadikan beauty sebagai instrument untuk mengkritik kehadiran revolusi industri pada masa itu yang dianggap menimbulkan kekacauan kehidupan masyarakat romantis.

Kata Kunci: *Kecantikan, Romantisme, Alam, Transcendentalisme.*

Introduction

Beauty has been in literary works as a topic. The concept of beauty has discussed since an imperialism classic Greece. The concept of beauty has risen for the first time by a classic Greece philosopher, Plato. Beauty was a means to the Good (Jennifer:

2007). Commonly, beauty is described as something that gives pleasure and admiration for whoever sees it. It is usually relates the quality within physical object. Good means something that correlated to high quality and acceptable standard (Oxford Dictionary). It means beauty has correlation to quality of appearance, moral, aesthetic, and art. In beauty, there are lots of things that become quality of beauty such as skin color or shape of body. Every period produces different quality of beauty. It depends on culture, social conventions, and also media propaganda.

Around the year 1790-1830, there is a literary movement called Romanticism. Romanticism was the reaction of the classic period and the raising up of the industrial revolution. It tried to criticize the regime of the church and the presence of the machine. The classic period was the period where the rules of literary works were strict, especially in poetry as one of literary works. The spirit of the age of the classic period was the opposite of Romantic. In the classic period, the form was more important than the content. The reason was more important than emotion and imagination, and social convictions were more important than the individual ones. It is influenced by the intervention of political factors. (Albert, 1975: 305-307)

Because it was the opposite of classic period, Romantic Movement gave the new spirit of the age. Romantic subject gave birth to new interests. Those interests are naturalism and romanticism. Naturalism is devoted to nature in literature and art. It means that nature engages in creating a true way to nature. According to Edward Albert (1975:224), the return of

nature means a return to the real nature, such as earth, air, and not the bookish nature of the artificial pastoral. The poets wrote the poems that talk about man's position in the world of nature. This led to great activity in religious and political speculation. Romantic opposed the conventional literary technique.

One of the great poet in romantic period was Lord Byron. His full name is George Gordon Lord Byron. He was born on January, 22th 1788 in London. Byron's work showed admiration for nature. His poems were full of emotion and talked about human purity. It has correlation with the spirit of Romantic period. Besides, Byron works also talked about beauty. His poems which talked about beauty are *She Walks in Beauty* (1814), *Sonnet-to Genevra* (1813), and *Stanzas for Music* (1815). In Byron's works we can find many words, phrases, and sentences that construct the meaning of beauty.

Representation theory is appropriate to analyze this research. Hall says (1997:15) representation is an essential process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. Language and sign are media for the process of production and the exchange of meaning. Society as members of culture has a role to produce and exchange the meaning. Through representation, society produced and exchanged the meaning that involves language and sign.

There are two systems of representation. They are mental process and language. Mental representation is all things which we carry around in our heads. Meaning depends on the system of concepts and images are formed in our mind which can stand for or represent the world. Language is the second system of representation involved in the overall process of constructing meaning (1997: 17-18). Hall says that we can represent or exchange the

meaning or concept if we have an access to share language. The concept in our mind can be shared to others by language.

Hall stressed that just people who belong to same culture can share or communicate to others because they share a broadly similar conceptual map. They also share the same way of interpreting language or sign. Thus, people who belong to same culture are able to communicate or share the meaning or concept, so they have the same way of interpretation or make a sense of the world (1997:19).

There are three approaches in Stuart Hall's theory to correlate the production of meaning and representation; reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist approaches. According to Hall in the reflective approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world and language functions like mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists (1997:24). The second is the intentional approach. Hall says that (1997:24) language is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. The third approach is constructionist approach. Hall says (1997:25) that constructionist approach uses language to represent the author's concepts.

Stuart Hall explains that there are two ways of constructionist approach. First, is using the semiotics by Ferdinand Saussure, and the second is discourse with discursive method by Stuart Hall. According to Jonathan Culler (1976,p.19), Saussure says the production of meaning depends on language: "language is a system of signs". Second, the discursive model is proposed by Michel Foucault. Foucault says discourse in literature is not study about language but

discourse is system of representation. Discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language (Hall, 1992, p.291).

Based on the above background study, there are three questions needed to be answered in this research, as follows:

1. How is beauty represented in Lord Byron's selected poems?
2. What is the contextual condition of beauty in Romantic period presented in the poems?
3. What is the ideological position of Lord Byron in his poems?

In accordance with the above research questions, there are three purposes of this research:

1. To know the construction of beauty discourse in Lord Byron's poems.
2. To elaborate the construction of beauty discourse in British Romantic society
3. To find the ideological position of Byron as the author

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research in order to explain and to explore the information and the facts. According to Blaxter (2006: 64) "Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with collecting and analyzing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible." The text is taken from Lord Byron selected poems in form of words, phrases, and sentences of beauty discourse. To help and support this analysis, I collect the data that related to beauty discourse in books, journals, websites, and articles. The result of the data can be analyzed by Stuart Hall's theory of representation.

Documentary technique is used to collect the data since the documentary data in this research are in the form of written. The data in

this research are divided into two kinds: primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from Lord Byron's poems: *She Walks in Beauty* (1814), *Sonnet-to Genevra* (1813), and *Stanzas For Music* (1815) as the object of the study. The data are taken from words, phrases, and sentences that related to beauty discourse. The secondary data to support this research are taken from the dictionaries, articles, journals, websites and the previous researches of the similar topic but different objects.

The data processing and data analysis begin with the analysis of the poems to find how beauty is constructed in Byron's poems by collecting all the data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. Stuart Hall's theory which focuses on constructionist approach is used as a tool to explain how the beauty is constructed in Byron's poems. We will only use discourse model by Foucault to explain how the discourses of beauty in Byron's poems are produced through language (words, phrases, and sentences). Furthermore, we elaborate the construction of beauty discourses in London society in Romantic period to find how the beauty discourse is produced in Romantic period through articles, journals, and books that related to beauty discourse at the time. Later, we analyze the ideological position of Byron's as the author that creates the construction of beauty discourse in his poems and explore his alignment and point of view in Romanticism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Result on the Analysis

Beauty discourse emerged in Greece in 348 BC. It was founded by Plato, the Greek Philosopher. Beauty discourse constantly changing from time to time. In

romantic period, around 1790-1830, beauty was also discussed by Romantic society. Beauty in Romantic period had its own characteristics. As major characteristic of Romanticism, beauty always has relation to nature. In this research, I took the data from Byron's poems; *She Walks in Beauty*, *Sonnet to Genevra*, and *Stanzas For Music*. These works created beauty discourse in Romantic period. Through his experiences as Romantic society who lived in London in that period, Byron constructed beauty on his imaginative works in the form of poetic discourse. Moreover, the discourse of these three poems is analyzed through Hall representation theory.

First, Lord Byron's poem entitled *She Walks in Beauty*. This poem was written by Byron in 1814 and published in 1815 in *Hebrew Melodies*. It tells about the admiration of Byron to a beauty of woman. According to history sources, the woman who inspires Byron is his cousin, Mrs. Anne Wilmot. The source mentioned that Mrs. Wilmot wore dark gown with sparkles. In his poem, Byron illustrated about the appearance of Mrs. Wilmot as like this;

She walks in beauty, like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies And all that's best of dark and bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes (*Hebrew Melodies*, 21)

The poem consists of three stanzas and eighteen lines. It is the first stanza from line one to four. This stanza depicts about how she walks and wear dark gown with spangles. Byron explains the beauty of that gown which combines the dark and bright. Then, that beauty is confirmed with how the eyes and the aspect of the woman. All of the physical beauties are explained by Byron use the nature elements as night, cloudless climes, starry skies, dark, and bright. The word "night" shows the dark gown of Mrs. Wilmot, while "starry skies" describes the spangles that embellish that gown. The word of "dark and bright" shows the

color of gown.

On the other hand, there are word of aspect and eyes that are part of body. In this case, aspect and eyes are interpreted as the meeting place of the beauty of dark and bright. They are also describe the physical beauty of the woman. Aspect and eyes are often called as part of body that shows beauty especially to a woman.

*One shade the more, one ray the less, Had half impaired
the nameless grace Which waves in every raven tress
Or softly lightens o'er her face
(Hebrew Melodies, 21)*

Face and tress are part of the body. Tress is explained with raven which shows the hair color of women. In this stanza, the woman's hair are wave and raven. Hair represents the beauty of women. This stanza explains about nameless grace. The grace present at the illustrating black wave hair. Next, there is term face. Face is elaborated with the softly light that covered the woman's face. It can be concluded that the grace is presented in part of woman's body in term of raven tress and softly lightens o'er face. Automatically, the physical beauty is created by part of bodies that illustrate in this poem to show the grace of women.

This verse tells about aspect and eyes which are described as a dark and bright meeting places. The eye as part of the body considered the door of beauty and kindness shows a mixture of dark and bright. Two different things are considered harmony and balance not as a bad thing. This shows the resemblance to nature which acts as a harmonizer and aligner of human life. Nature comes with many differences. For example about dark and bright part of the nature. Dark associated to night and bright for the day. However, in this poem there is the word starry skies which shows harmony. Starry Skies comes as a mixture of dark and bright. This explains about bright which can be seen in dark. Dark comes as a bright counterweight. You can imagine if

dark is absent between bright, then starry skies cannot be seen, then there is no beauty that appears. As explained by Sarah E. Seal in "Finding Inspiration in Darkness: The Exploration of Obscurity in Romanticism through the Works of Lord Byron and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer",

“Byron understood that there was a need for a balance of light and darkness within the poem. The important idea here is that the poem does place more value on the unknown and the darkness rather than the light and the rational. The incarnation of beauty in this poem is mysterious and beautiful for the darkness and unexplainable aspects of her presence.” (2016: 19)

Then in the second verse in this poem talk about a fair face. It also explains the word light associated to a woman's face that is soft and clean as if removing light from her face. Shade and ray work together to bring beautiful meaning to the face. Then, this verse mentions raven tress as the body part showed physical beauty. Raven Tress comes as a perfect appearance. Beautiful is described as a soft face and raven tress. This is a harmony too. Raven tress is also a symbol of resistance to the classical period. This was explained by Sarah in "Finding Inspiration in Darkness: The Exploration of Obscurity in Romanticism through the Works of Lord Byron and Gustavo Adolfo Bequer:

“Another key detail to note is the color of the woman's hair in the poem. Byron made the artistic decision to use “raven” hair rather than the traditional blond hair that characterized beauty in during the Renaissance. In addition to using darkness in this poem, Lord Byron also used the theme of the inexplicable and unknown.” (2016: 20)

Black wavy hair picture and a bright face represent physical beauty in this poem. Corrugated

black hair is likened to the night, while the bright face is likened to light. Spirit romanticism always links beauty to nature. This physical beauty uses the natural term beauty paraphernalia described in this poem. Natural term gives imagination pleasure. Hair and face are mixture attractive body parts from the figure of the woman in this poem. Both of these blends melt into a beautiful harmony. However, the raven tress becomes a symbol of resistance to the Renaissance where blond hair becomes beauty characteristic in the Renaissance era.

Another poem entitled *Sonnet to Genevra*, on line 6-7, Byron also mentions a woman's mind clearly illustrated by a woman who has the thought like stainless.

*That-but I know thy blessed bosom fraught With mines
of unalloy'd and
stainless thought--*

(Love Byron's Poem, 20)

This verse more emphasize on the phrase stainless thought which means pure thought, not stained, and clear. Women, who admired by poets are portrayed by having a clean mind. Clean here means holy, not mixed by anything. Following Kant's beauty concept, beauty is not limited to the physical beauty only. It takes the role in inner beauty. In this verse, mind is present as a symbol of individual freedom. That is, mind takes a role in beauty as individual freedom to play in beauty. Human being has the right to get two basic rights of life, namely freedom and equality. As written in Romanticism and Transcendentalism:

“Rousseau believed that there were basic principles, such as liberty and equality, which were innate to human beings.” (Romantic and Transcendentalism 1800-1860, 9)

Byron uses nature imagery to explain the beauty of the subject of love. It is like the character of a romantic era that is closely related to nature. Romanticism initiated “returning back to nature” as spirit of life. Romantic believes that nature as representation of God's presence. Nature is used to express and improve the imagination of man. It leads how man imagine and feel the presence of God as a creator of earth. Man and nature are creature of God. They both can not be separated because they are related each other. The role of nature is as media for human being to appreciate, remind, and meditate about life and God.

*There be none of Beauty's daughters with a
magic like thee;*

*and like music on the waters is thy
sweet voice to me:*

*When, as if its sound were causing
The charmed ocean's pausing, the waves
lie still and gleaming,*

and the lulled winds seem dreaming

(Love Byron's Poem: 3-4)

In first stanza, there are many words use nature imagery such as waters, oceans, and winds. These words are expressed as metaphor to reveal the beauty of his addressee. The first two lines show that Byron compares his addressee and Beauty's daughter to create his amazement. He says no body as beautiful as his addressee. Then, in the third and fourth lines, he writes about music and voice. He expressed “his voice” is sweet like music on the waters that make a gentle wave. It is strengthened by the next lines. “His voice” is drawn with the water in the ocean that makes

it heaving but in a gentle way. It is such an expression of admiration using nature imagery to show beauty.

*And the midnight Moon is weaving Her bright chain
o'er the deep; whose breast is gently heaving,
as an infant & asleep: (Love Byron & Poem:
3-4)*

Byron views beauty as something that must be celebrated as a wealth of the meaning of life. He considers that life must be balanced. Life is not only about material things such as money, factories, and work but also non-material things such as beauty, humanity, and spirituality. This was raised by Byron in his three poems. In addition, this is also supported by Romanticism that beauty emphasized things that surpass the physical itself.

Byron as a noble refused the existence of a regime that curbed the human mind and made changes in life. He was very clear against his own people because the Industrial Revolution was the result of his own people, namely Bourgeoisie and financiers who of course were the upper class. This is exposed in a journal titled *Byron's European Impact* by Peter Cochran. He writes,

“He was deemed an aristocrat who had rebelled against his own society, and been expelled by it. He was deemed a great lover. He was deemed (in the teeth of the evidence) a champion of the common man, and of democracy. He was deemed to have been a freedom-fighter in Italy in aspiration, and a freedom-fighter in Greece in reality.”

With the various explanations above, Byron agrees with the Romanticism movement that carries the spirit of nature through the theme of beauty in all three poems. An aristocrat who fights his own people because the chaos that occurs in the community also affects him. He felt that life would not be meaningful if things like

beauty, humanity, and spirituality disappeared from civilization.

CONCLUSION

The representation of beauty discourse in three Lord Byron's poems to deliver the beauty concept constructed by Lord Byron. In a poem entitled *She Walks in Beauty*, concept beauty emphasizes more on what is in physics such as aura, while physics is a manifestation of other beauty. In the poem *Sonnet to Geneva*, the beauty concept that leads to the divine. At stanzas for music, the beauty concept that is put forward is the beauty of sound that uses natural instruments. Overall it can be concluded that the concept of beauty formed by the era of Romanticism through Byron's poetry is emphasizing things that surpass the physical itself. Beauty is depicted using natural instruments that actually all these beauties lead to God.

Through Stuart Hall's representation theory, the beauty discourse is created in three of Byron's poems. Moreover, through the conception of the Discursive model proposed by Michel Foucault, the correlation between the production of beauty is owned by Lord Byron. Thus, Byron's construction intends to get a similar goal to gain domination over society.

The construction of beauty discourse which is delivered in the poems the real condition representative in which the author — Lord Byron — lives in; the London society. As mind-body-dualism becomes the issue that has concerned philosophers for the century and the whole beauty concept in the poems, a similar phenomenon happens in the Britain romantic society. The idealized beauty always leads to the divine.

Lord Byron as the author of the *She Walks in Beauty*, *Sonnet To Geneva*, and *Stanzas for Music* gives portrayals that are a tool that can be used to criticize the regime. By bringing other instruments, Byron can make beauty as a tool for

dealing with two regimes at once namely the classical period and industrial revolution. In addition, he also fights his own people, namely the upper class. Byron illustrates that restraint of mind, taste, and spirit is inhumane.

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