

**TEXT-BASED ANALYSIS IN WORDSWORTH'S POEM  
COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE**

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***Abstrak***

*Dalam studi ini, puisi karya penyair terkenal Inggris William Wordsworth yang berjudul Composed upon Westminster Bridge dipilih untuk dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori sastra yang ditulis oleh Knickerbocker, K.L. 1963. Interpreting Literature, dan didukung buku Theory of Literature yang ditulis oleh Rene Welek and Austin Waren (1962).*

*Composed upon Westminster Bridge yang ditulis oleh William Wordsworth mencerminkan cinta penyair alam, dan menggambarkan matahari terbit indah di atas London. Bahkan ia telah menemukan pemandangan yang paling indah di bumi ketika melewati Jembatan Westminster pagi itu tanpa berhenti untuk mengagumi pemandangannya. London seperti mengenakan kemeja halus.*

*Hari terlalu pagi sehingga semua masih sunyi. Berbagai bangunan terlihat dari jembatan Westminster, termasuk Katedral St Paul dan Tower of London yang berdiri dalam segala kemegahan mereka dalam cahaya pagi. Untungnya, kebetulan ada tidak ada "kabut London" yang mengaburkan pandangan*

*Dalam studi ini ditemukan bahwa Composed upon Westminster Bridge memiliki elemen-elemen yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman hidup penyairnya. Kemampuan Wordsworth dalam mengeksplorasi dan menggambarkan keindahan matahari terbit di jembatan Westminster bagi pembaca menunjukkan bahwa Wordsworth tertarik akan nature of beauty keindahan alam. Wordsworth juga menulis tentang keindahan kota yang ia lihat dari berbagai sudut dan itu merupakan sesuatu yang lebih besar daripada yang pernah dibayangkan. Kemudian Text-based Analysis atau analisis berbasis teks akan membuat kita merenungkan lebih lanjut tentang makna yang terdapat dalam puisi ini.*

*Kata kunci: London, jembatan, matahari.*

## **1. Background of the Study**

Knickerbocker & Renninger, (1963; 307) says that "poetry is the hymn of praise. Good talk about poetry is nevertheless rare and even the best of it will rest on fallow ground until we ourselves have learned how to penetrate the inner life of a few poem". Poem is a medium not only to express the feeling of the poets but also to make us enter into these feelings about the things, persons, situations or ideas in the poem. Poetry can to give entertainment, satisfaction, pleasure and enjoyment to the reader. This is because there is great difference between

language in a poem and our daily language, in that poetic language is stylized with aesthetic or artistic effect.

Poets work with words, while artists work with a variety of media including paint, ink, paper, canvas, clay, and metal. But both poets and artists offer pictures that reflect their responses to images, experiences, people, places, emotions that are observed, remembered, or imagined (Stamford, 2006 : 1235)

According to Wellek and Warren in their book, *Theory of Literature* (1955: 309), the meaning of poem is seldom stated directly, but is carried or revealed by the element and structure of the work that is usually in the form of figurative.

In this study, a poem entitled *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* by a well-known English poet William Wordsworth is analysed. *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* reflects the poet's love of nature, and describes the magnificent sun rise over London. Wordsworth declares that he has found the most beautiful scene on earth. You'd have to be someone with no spiritual sense, no taste for beauty, to pass over the Westminster Bridge that morning without stopping to marvel at the sights, he says. London is wearing the morning's beauty like a fine shirt or cape.

## **2. Problem of the Study**

Through the problems to be discussed; there are two questions to be discussed as follows,

1. How is the poem analysed based on the text.
1. How does Wordsworth's life experience help to understand the poem?

## **3. Aims of the Study**

This study has three aims; they are the general, specific, and academic aims.

The general aim of this writing is to apply theories related to Wordsworth's poem *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* and the specific aim is to find out what message the poet wants to deliver to the readers.

The last is an academic aim that is to apply the theory of literature learned in the English Department and write a scientific article to contribute to this department. Besides, this writing can be used as reference for the student who likes to write about literature.

#### **4. Research Method**

There are three points in this section: data source, method and technique of collecting data, and method and technique of analysing data.

##### **4.1. Data Source**

The data of this study were taken from William Wordsworth's poem entitled *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* William Wordsworth Select Poems, S. K. Mukherjee and Rajinder Paul. 2000. New Delhi: Rama Brothers.

##### **4.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

Data are the object of the study. The method applied in this study is library research because this method is reliable and relevant to the process of collecting the data. The important one is to get some books in the library and some articles on internet as data sources and references in order to find out more data related to the topic of study.

##### **4.3 Method and Technique of Analysing Data**

The data are analysed in accordance with *Theory of Literature* by Warren and Wellek. 1962 and *Interpreting Literature* by Knickerbocker, K.L. 1963. And one more theory to support this study is Smith's theory in his book of theory *Inside Poetry*. 1985.

#### **5. Analysis**

##### **Composed upon Westminster Bridge**

Earth hath not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
 Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The poem describes the unpolluted city of London, as the poet sees it, in the early hours of the morning.

**Line 1:** Earth does not have anything to show more fair:

The poet opens the poem with hyperbole, declaring that the earth has no other sight as beautiful as the one he beholds. Though, he's exaggerating. He really means something like, "At this particular moment, I can't imagine anywhere being more beautiful than the place I'm standing." It's almost more a reflection of his mood than of the outside world.

**Line 2:** Dull would he be of soul who could pass by

The poet believes that anyone who could see the sight that he is witnessing and passing by without being stunned by its beauty would be very dull of soul. He justifies his decision to stop his coach along the way to look at the view from the bridge. The person who could just pass by has been jaded and worn down by experience to the point of dullness. He's also boring, which is another meaning of the word "dull."

**Line 3:** A sight so touching in its majesty:

Without disclosing the fact that he is observing the city of London, he continues in the third line of the octave to say that the sight makes him very emotional due to its royalty and majesty. "Touching" scenes are often small and intimate, like a kid giving flowers to his sick grandmother. "Majestic" scenes are often large and public, like a snow-covered mountain or a king entering a throne room. The view from Westminster Bridge combines both these elements. The speaker feels both awed by and close to the landscape.

**Line 4:** This City now doth, like a garment, wear

In the fourth line of the octave Wordsworth mentions the city and immediately personifies it to be able to wear a garment.

We learn what time it is: London "wears" the morning like a nice coat or some other piece of clothing ("garment"). These lines hint maybe the morning, not London itself, is responsible for the stunning quality of the view. As, the garment could be so beautiful that it doesn't matter what the person wearing it looks like.

**Line 5:** The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,

He discloses that the garment he is referring to is the personified morning which is steeped in beauty and rich in silence.

"Bare" is an interesting word that means "naked". It contrasts with the image of the city wearing clothing from line 4. Here, the ships and buildings are nude.

**Line 6:** Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie

As if out of purpose, to suddenly introduce the stereotypical image we have of the city, he moves on from describing the beauty and silence of the morning to a list of structures synonymous with activity and movement.

**Line 7:** Open unto the fields, and to the sky;

The poet shares his disbelief at the sight of the city surrendering to the open clear sky. He mentions the sight of fields, which is unusual considering that the city of London is known more for its movement and commercial structures. He uses this as a prelude to the thought shared in sestet.

Despite being all crowded together within one city, the poet gives an impression of spaciousness by noting that the ships and buildings are "open" to the fields of London and to the sky.

**Line 8:** All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

The poet marvels at the cityscape shining like new and well lit in the unpolluted, crisp morning air. He focuses on the early morning summer sunlight, which makes the buildings "bright and glittering." The word "glittering" in particular suggests that the scene is not static but rather constantly changing with the shifting light.

**Line 9:** Never did sun more beautifully steep

He opens the sestet with a sense of disbelief and exaggeration (hyperbole) where he says that he has never seen the sun rise more beautifully.

The speaker returns to his bold claim from the beginning of the poem: that earth has never presented a scene quite so beautiful as this one. Specifically, he compares the morning sunlight falling on the city to the sunlight that might cover more remote parts of the countryside, such as a valley, a boulder or mountainous cliff or a hillside.

**Line 10:** In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;

He describes the sun lighting up hills, rocks and valleys, once again elements of the natural landscape that usually do not come to mind when we think of London.

These sights would have been more familiar to Wordsworth than the scenery of London, who spent most of his life in rural parts of England, such as the picturesque Lake District in the northwest part of the country.

"First splendour" just means morning. Basically, he's ragging on his hometown, saying even it can't compare with this view of London. The word "steep" means to submerge or cover – think of how you let a tea bag "steep" in water.

**Line 11:** Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

Using anaphora (by repeating the word 'never') he emphasizes on his belief that this sight brings him a sense of calm and peace that he has never experienced before.

He describes how the vision of London makes him feel calm, which is perhaps surprising because London is a huge, bustling city. The speaker seems to again compare London to places that you would normally think of as calming, like the hills and valleys from line 10.

**Line 12:** The river glideth at his own sweet will:

Wordsworth also draws our attention to the fact that irrespective of whether man has the eyes or the vision to praise and glorify nature, nature carries on exhibiting its beauty and running its course. He personifies the river Thames to have a will of its own.

This section of the poem engages in the personification of various elements of the picture. Here the river is described as a patient person who takes his time and doesn't allow himself to be rushed. He moves according to "his own sweet will."

**Line 13:** Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;

Wordsworth uses exclamation and apostrophe by addressing God directly and once again personifies the beautiful city of London by mentioning that the

houses seem to be asleep in the early morning hours. He cries out to God as if he has just recognized something astonishing he had not noticed before.

He personifies the houses as asleep, when it is actually the people inside the houses who are sleeping at this early hour.

**Line 14:** And all that mighty heart is lying still!

He ends the sonnet by making a direct reference to the significance of the city, by referring to it as 'mighty heart'. Continuing to give the city human-like qualities, the city of London appears to be in a state of slumber to the poet's eyes.

The city looks like one big, peaceful, sleeping body. The "heart" of this body is "lying still" for the moment before the city awakens for a new day. The heart probably doesn't refer to anything specific, but rather the city's energy or vitality.

## 6. Conclusion

Wordsworth's *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* expresses the reflections of William Wordsworth as he looked out upon the glorious sights of the city of London visible from the bridge. Contrary to the impression given by the title, he probably did not compose the entire poem at one time; he may have begun it as he was leaving London in late July of 1802, finishing it upon his return on September 3.

At any rate, the poem recognized the magnificence and beauty of the still, quiet morning he beheld from his vantage point on the bridge. He observed "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples" as he looked out and understood that it was possible to see them "All bright and glittering in the smokeless air" because it was early in the morning. He compares their grandeur to "valley, rock, or hill" and contends that "Earth has not anything to show more fair" than the sights of London.

Wordsworth usually praises nature, as opposed to cities and man-made structures, in his poetry. However, in this poem, he praises the city of London in the early hours of the morning. In the first line, he notes that nothing, presumably in nature, is as "fair" as the city in this still, quiet state:

arth has not any thing to show more fair:

Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
 A sight so touching in its majesty:

The man-made structures were literally within sight of the more natural landscapes of the area.

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky;

Since it is early in the morning, none of the factories and/or chimneys are bellowing much smoke. The city is quiet and "glittering in the smokeless air." Wordsworth then notes how calm the scene is, remarking that this scene seems more calm than the sun shining on any valley, rock, or hill. Even the houses seem alive, part of nature: "the very houses seem asleep." The quiet city in the morning seems like a natural landscape because the daily activities of the city have not yet begun. The scene seems even more calm in juxtaposition to its usually busy interactions and smoke-filled skies. Therefore in comparison to the city's usual busy, noisy state, the quiet city of the morning seems much more serene: as serene as a natural landscape.

## 7. Bibliography

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