

CONTEXTUAL MEANING OF NATURE IN WORDSWORTH'S ELEGIAC STANZAS

By

INDAH PERMATA ADJIE

ABSTRAK

Dalam studi ini, puisi berjudul Elegiac Stanzas oleh William Wordsworth dibahas. Puisi ini adalah elegi kematian John Wordsworth, saudara William Wordsworth. Dia hilang tenggelam di laut, tapi bukannya peristiwa tragis yang menimpa saudaranya lalu Wordsworth menulis puisi diperuntukkan kepada saudaranya, tetapi ia menelusuri pengaruh kemanusiaan dari kecelakaan tragis yang menyedihkan yang ada dalam pikiran Wordsworth. Ini menjelaskan kekecewaan Wordsworth akan keyakinan sebelumnya yaitu tentang kehidupan dan alam yang selalu optimis yang ternyata bisa menjadi hal kebalikannya. Pengalaman tragis ini menggugah kesadaran Wordsworth akan realitas kehidupan.

Melalui puisi Elegiac Stanzas Wordsworth meniupkan kehidupan ke dalam puisi tersebut citra laut, seolah-olah mengubah air laut menjadi makhluk hidup. Laut mengekspresikan kedua-duanya yaitu kemarahan dan ketenangan untuk menciptakan citra romantis yang telah muncul dalam diri Wordsworth. Subyek matahari, angin, dan laut muncul dan ketiga unsur sifat masing-masing tergambar dalam Elegiac Stanzas. Subyek ini cenderung membangkitkan ide-ide yang sama di setiap puisi yang dibuatnya dan ini menunjukkan bahwa Wordsworth memiliki perasaan pribadi yang pasti tentang ketiga subyek tersebut dan apa artinya baginya. Matahari adalah sumber kebahagiaan, angin menjadi sumber ketakutan, dan laut adalah makhluk yang membingungkan yang senantiasa bisa berubah di mana tampaknya memiliki kehidupannya sendiri.

Dengan menggambarkan ketiga unsur matahari, angin dan laut dengan begitu kuat, Wordsworth dapat menggunakan ketiga unsur tersebut berkali-kali dalam puisinya tanpa merasa jemu, dan ini membuktikan begitu indah karya yang ditulisnya *Elegiac Stanzas*.

Kata kunci: matahari, angin, laut

1. Background of Study

Poetry is one of the literary works beside prose and drama where the poet wants to express his/her feelings, mind and emotion of the reality of life. It is a human imaginative experience of what has happened in his/her life and which is never gone away from his/her mind. Then, he/she writes and tells the readers what exists in his/her mind as a poem. So, when the readers read the poem, it is hoped that they will know what the meaning of the poem is, what the readers can catch and find after reading it. And also it is possible that they will know the poet's personality and his/her life in the past, by reading the poem.

Biography is an important part in the poets' life. It is a literary genre. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 1995: 107), biography is the story of a person's life written by somebody else.

Biography is important when the readers want to know the real meaning hiding in a poem. After reading the biography of the poet, it is possible to the readers to get the meaning of the poem easily.

Talking about a poem, it must be realized that the work of the artist cannot be separated from the concern on society because the content of literary work is a reflection of the real world and its background.

In this study, the poem entitled *Elegiac Stanzas* by William Wordsworth was discussed. The poem was an elegy of the death of Wordsworth's brother John Wordsworth, he was lost on the sea, but instead of being a story about the tragedy that overtook his brother or paying to tribute to him, it traced the humanizing influence of the sad accident on Wordsworth's mind. It explained his disillusionment of his earlier beliefs about life and nature that were optimistic to the extent of being deceptive and the cultivation of the awareness of the reality of life.

2. Problem of Study

Based on the study above, there are two problems which need to be discussed as follows,

1. What message does Wordsworth say about life and nature in the poem?
2. Why does Wordsworth's belief about life and nature change after the death of his brother?

3. Aims of the Study

The general aim of this writing is to apply theories related to Wordsworth's poem *Elegiac of Stanzas* 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 studied in the English Department to write a scientific work which gives contribution to this department, so this writing can be used as reference to help the student who writes literary study.

4. Research Method

There are three aspect of the research of the study; they are consists of data source, data collection and data analysis.

4.1. Data Source

The data is collected from Wordsworth's poem entitled *Elegiac Stanzas* and the poem consists of 15 stanzas which were quoted from:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12383/12383-h/Wordsworth3b.html>

4.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The technique that is used in this writing is documentation research. The poem, theories, and other related information are collected by using documentation research. The poem is read repeatedly and intensively in order to be able to find the deep meaning of the words or phrases employed in this poem.

4.3. Method and Technique of Analysing Data

The method for analyzing the data was descriptive. The data was collected from the data source, and it was analyzed by using the theory of Warren and Wellek. 1962. *Theory of Literature*, and theory of Knicbocker and Reninger. 1963. *Interpreting Literature*.

5 Analysis

Wordsworth's *Elegiac Stanzas* may be divided into two parts. In the first half of the poem, line 1-32, the poet tells the readers that he once visited the castle in a calm weather. The sea was tranquil and castle seems asleep. The sea then appeared to him as the gentlest of all gentle things. The poet claims that if he had been a painter then, he would not have produced a picture like Beaumont's depicting storm scene. He would have produced the tranquility and the gentleness of the sea. Even he would have added to the painting

the gleam,	(line 14)
The light that never was, on sea or land,	(line 15)
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;	(line 16)

His painting would have been a treasure house of peaceful years, of lasting ease, Elysian quiet, without toil or strife that is, it would have represented his youthful ideas about life. He once thought them to be true, though he now realizes that they were deceptive.

The second half of the poem represents the poet's later emotion, the words "tis so no more" in line 33 marks his disillusionment. He is no more dreaming, he has become a human being with a keen awareness of life. This awareness has come through the death of his brother John. He has now become distressed for he speaks of his knowledge with a serene mind. Beaumont's painting shows the sea in anger, the dismal shore and

That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,	(line 46)
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!	(line 48)

And now he knows that Beaumont's conception of the castle in the storm is the true image of human life.

Nature

In the first part of the poem, Wordsworth seems to be reminiscing about his childhood memories of the Peele Castle. Even though he calls the building a “rugged Rile” (line 1), it is clear that Wordsworth’s memories of the place are generally positive. He creates a calm and peaceful atmosphere by placing it in an environment dominated by calm natural scenes, with a pure sky and quiet air. Even though he describes the setting as calm, it has very dark over tone, even “sublime”, which a very good way to describe the painting. It is also noticed that he capitalized the words Pile, Form, Image, and Deep. This indicates that both the castle and the ocean play an important part throughout the poem.

After the third stanza, the poem begins to change. In the first part, Wadsworth sets up the idea that the castle is unchanging, “so like, so very like, was day to day” (line 6), so this change in the poem signifies a change in Wordsworth himself, not the castle.

In the middle of the poem, Wordsworth begins to frame his childhood images by explaining how he would have painted the scene from his memory. Wadsworth ties his innocence and happiness to sunshine. He would have given the painting a brighter look instead of cast it in shadows of a storm.

The ending part of the poem, switches from pleasant memories to the present reality of Wordsworth’s life. With his brother’s death he loses all his innocence, something he knows he can never regain. He knows he can never return to the calm memories of his childhood because Beaumont to him is now filled with a “sea in anger” (line44), “rueful sky” (line 48) and “trampling waves”. (line 52)

It is also interesting to note how connected Wordsworth’s feels are connected to nature. As Wordsworth’s attitude change so does the natural scenery he describes.

Traumatic Experience

In 1805 William Wordsworth, a founder of English Romantic poetry and champion of Nature, lost his brother, Captain John Wordsworth, to a violent storm

at sea. The following year, he wrote his Elegiac Stanzas subtitled “Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont.” The painting depicts a ship foundering in a storm like the one in which Wordsworth lost his brother. Wordsworth knew the coastal scene of Beaumont’s painting well having spent an idyllic summer there in his youth. In particular, he cherished a memory of the sea there as having been perfectly and perpetually calm. As he states in lines 11-12: “I could have fancied that the mighty Deep/Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.” Wordsworth goes on to say that, had he been a painter, he would have produced:

A Picture...of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature’s breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made,
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed. (lines 24-32)

But Wordsworth could never look at Nature in the same way after losing his brother to a natural disaster at sea. The following stanzas describe the fundamental change which traumatic loss wrought in his basic concept of the natural world.

So once it would have been – ‘tis no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.
Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne’er be old... (lines 37-39)

In summing up his response to Beaumont’s representation, Wordsworth proclaims:

O ‘tis a passionate Work!- yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That Hulk which labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!
(lines 44-48)

In facing up to the contrast between his earlier view on Nature and his new one, Wordsworth attempts to come to grips with conflicting views.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
 Such happiness, wherever it be known,
 Is to be pitied: for 'tis surely blind.
 (lines 53-56)

6. Conclusion

Through *Elegiac Stanzas* Wordsworth breathes life into the sea imagery, turning the water into a living creature in this poem. The sea expresses anger and tranquillity to create a great romantic image that has appeared similarly in other pieces by Wordsworth as well. The subjects of sun, wind, and the sea appear and all three-nature related images are found in *Elegiac Stanzas*. The subjects tend to evoke similar ideas in each poem they appear in, demonstrating that Wordsworth has definite personal feelings about those images and what they mean to him. The sun is a source of happiness, the wind a source of fear, and the sea is a mystifying creature that seems to have a life of its own.

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