

THE ANALYSIS OF WILIAM BLAKE'S POEM THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

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Abstrak

Karya sastra dan sejarah merupakan hal yang tidak dapat dipisahkan, terutama saat kita membahas Era Romantis. Revolusi Perancis dan Revolusi Industri merupakan suatu peristiwa besar yang dampaknya terasa dalam setiap aspek kehidupan di Eropa, termasuk dalam karya sastra dari William Blake yang berjudul The Chimney Sweeper.

Dalam The Chimney Sweeper, William Blake melukiskan tentang mereka yang ingin mendapat uang dengan cara mudah dengan mengorbankan anak-anak sebagai penyapu cerobong. Dalam puisi ini Blake menegaskan bahwa para pemimpin bahkan orang tua dari anak itu sendiri, berpikir bahwa mereka tidak melakukan kesalahan dan tidak akan menyakiti anak mereka dengan pekerjaan tersebut, yang pada kenyataannya merupakan tindakan yang sangat berbahaya dan membawa penderitaan untuk anak-anak para penyapu cerobong tersebut.

Studi ini akan mengadopsi dua teori utama, yaitu teori dari Knickerbocker dan Reninger, serta teori dari Wellek dan Warren. Pembahasan akan difokuskan pada latar belakang sejarah puisi dan menganalisis puisi itu sendiri dengan melihat pesan dalam puisi serta pengalaman hidup sang penulis, William Blake.

Blake ingin menyampaikan pesan bahwa anak-anak dibawah umur yang dipekerjakan oleh orang tua mereka, sesungguhnya berada dalam sebuah ketakutan, penderitaan, bahkan bahaya besar yang mengancam jiwa mereka.

Kata kunci: pekerja anak, penderitaan, bahaya

1. Background of Study

Literature influence the culture and social reality because it contains ideas, feelings, desires, hopes, moralities and emotions. A work of literature must have meaning, and it cannot avoid from having one.

Poetry is narrative, it tells a story. It conveys the meaning in ways that are different from those found in prose fiction. Poetry makes a statement, and the reader should be able to paraphrase that statement, realizing however that the paraphrase is not the poem itself. Most poetry has a formal structure that differentiates it from prose. The language of poetry is characterized by a greater intensity than a prose. It is likely to be more *metaphorical* and *connotative*. Discovering and describing meaning in a poem seems to be the goal in analyzing poetry.

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. A work such as a poem is considered to be the reflection of the poet's thought, his ways of thinking and perspectives, which he obviously absorbs through social, cultural historical bounds with his life within a society. Thus, biographical approach is needed especially by readers to catch the message from the poet.

In this study, the poem entitled *The Chimney Sweeper* by William Blake was chosen to be analyzed.

2. Problems of Study

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

1. What is the message in *The Chimney Sweeper* that Blake intended to say to the readers?
2. Do the children in the poem seem aware that they might be facing death any day?

3. Aims of Study

This writing is intended to fulfill three aims: the general, specific, and academic aims.

The general aim of this writing is to apply theories related to poetry in order to get better understanding of Blake's poem entitled *The Chimney Sweeper*.

Meanwhile the specific aim of this writing is to find out the critical estimate of the poem and what message the poet wants to convey.

The last is academic aim, which is to give contribution to English Department, so this writing can be used as reference to help the student who takes the same topics.

4. Research Method

A method is a systematic procedure in analyzing an object of research in accordance with the approach which is used. The method which is used in this study includes the aspects as follows:

4.1. Data Source

The data was taken from a poem entitled *The Chimney Sweeper* by William Blake which consists of six stanzas and is cited in:

http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/william_blake/william_blake_songs_of_innocence_the_chimney_sweeper.htm

4.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The technique used in this writing is documentation research. The poem, theories, and other related information are collected using documentation research.

The steps of collecting data are:

1. Preparing the writing tools
2. Reading the poem in detail
3. Identification process
4. Categorization process

4.3. Method and Technique of Analysing Data

The analysis of the poem is related to the theoretical basis in order to be able to find the types of figurative language used in the poem and to determine their meanings through an interpretation. The analysis of the data is presented descriptively

5. Analysis

In the United Kingdom, sweepers were very important figures to the families, because they had to keep their houses warm throughout cleaning constantly the chimneys, and so they needed them

The Chimney Sweeper comprises six quatrains, each following the AABB rhyme scheme, with two rhyming couplets per quatrain.

The poem is narrated by a chimney sweeper. He tells us a little bit about himself first before giving us the lowdown on another chimney sweeper, Tom Dacre. After introducing Tom, he relates a very strange dream that Tom had one night (it involved chimney sweepers in coffins, angels, flying, and a few other bizarre things). The poem concludes with Tom and the speaker waking up and going to work, sweepin' chimneys.

It is clear that Blake is being ironic here, to show that these kids suffer double. Not only do they physically suffer, but they also suffer mentally and emotionally, too. It may indicate that Tom's belief is a coping mechanism; the only way to get through the day is to believe that they do not have to fear harm. But the sad part is, they totally do. The children get up in the dark and go to work. While "dark" refers to the time of day, it is also a metaphor for the "dark" and miserable lives the children lead. In a poem called *The Chimney Sweeper*, it is expected to meet a sweeper. In fact, the readers meet several (at least five) specific ones, thousands of other nameless ones, and also the readers get a pretty close look at their lives and the stuff of their work, brushes, bags, soot. All of these things represent burdens that children should not have to bear, and the poem makes no secret of this opinion.

Interpretation of *The Chimney Sweeper*: The poem contains the following contrast: the chimney sweeper is working and covered in soot while mother and father have gone to church to pray. The chimney sweeper symbolizes the plight of England's children (chimney sweeper was a horrible job done by children because they were small enough to fit in the chimney and clean it). Fathers and mothers symbolize those responsible for taking care of children, be it the church, the king, or adults in general. It denounces the hypocrisy of the upper classes for praising "God & Priest & King" while ruining the lives of children.

The Chimney Sweeper was published in 1789. The poem examines the duties that children have to society as a whole. While there is an overriding sense of an allegiance to duty in the poem, the poem's situational irony complicates the relationship between children and responsibility. The final line of *The Chimney Sweeper* best demonstrates this complicated relationship.

Although it is fair to say that poem is proponents of both duty and childhood because of their youthful structure and irony. However, the poem is more heavily weighted towards one allegiance or another fulfillment of duty to family and country than the fulfillment of childhood. On the contrary, Blake's choice to give his child character a first person voice empowers his protagonist and supports the idea that Blake was a bigger proponent of childhood than of duty. The poem reveals the complicated nature of this issue during the Romantic period, and it counters the other to give them both a more multidimensional perspective on the consequences and benefits of preserving childhood and duty.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter, Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper* can be concluded as follows.

Chimney sweeping was a nasty business, and the children who worked as chimney sweepers did not bathe very often, usually just once a week, which means they were probably often covered in soot and looked very dirty.

The job was also dangerous. Children could get stuck and suffocate which often happened or get burned and bruised on a regular basis. In addition, chimney sweeps often developed what became known as soot wart, a form of cancer related to prolonged exposure to the cancer-causing substances from the nasty black stuff.

The dicey dangers and widespread injustice of the chimney-sweeping profession really stuck in his craw, so much so that he wrote not one, but two poems called *The Chimney Sweeper*. Last but not least, *The Chimney Sweeper* is about the ways in which childhood innocence is destroyed, taken away, or ruined by mean old adults.

7. Bibliography

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