

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN “LONDON” BY WILLIAM BLAKE

Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with the situations and conditions happened in England at the end of the seventeenth century. Based on the fact that there is a relation between history and literature, the writer analyzes the history of industrial revolution in England. The aim of this research is to understand the poem of William Blake entitled “London”. The writer also tries to figure out social problems happened in England reflected in the poem. The writer uses library research as the method of data collection and sociological approach in analyzing the data. By using the library research method, the writer gets many references to write this final project. By using the sociological approach the writer could understand the social context of the poem. The result of this final project shows that Blake tends to show the impact of industrial revolution and the social condition happened in England through the figurative languages in his poetry.

Keywords: Industrial Revolution, Imagery, Metaphor

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature cannot be separated from the society in the world. In other words, the existence of the literature is influenced by the condition and the phenomena in society, both in individual life and social life of human. As expressed by Wellek and Austin Warren (1973:

12) literary work is not only influenced by the society conditions but also as the reflection of society.

Poetry is a form of literary work. The language in the poetry can deploy the author's idea about the social or individual life in a certain time. As Perrine said in *The Element of Poetry*, "poetry might be defined as a kind of language that says more successfully at appreciating poetry than at defining it" (1988: 3).

"London" is a poem which William Blake wrote in the eighteenth century during industrial revolution era. Blake has been regarded as a great English poet. The poem is rich with imagery to depict how the condition of England society during industrial revolution. So, the writer is interested in analyzing the intrinsic and the extrinsic elements in the poem to reveal the condition of society during industrial revolution.

1.2 Research Problems

In this paper, the writer would like to discuss the research problems as follows:

1. How does the intrinsic elements composed in the poem?
2. How does the intrinsic elements relate to the extrinsic elements in the poem?
3. How is the condition of industrial revolution reflected in the poem?

1.3 Method of Research

In this final project, the writer uses library research in collecting data.

As Wellek and Austin Warren said that "since the majority of student can find their source materials in libraries, a knowledge of the most important libraries, familiarity with catalogue as well as other references books, is undoubtedly, in many ways, an important equipment of almost every student of literature" (1962: 58).

The writer sought information about industrial revolution from books, articles or audiovisual tools such as internet, television and other electronic sources to analyze the data.

In analyzing the poem, the writer uses intrinsic and extrinsic approach. The writer analyzes

the imagery and metaphor as the intrinsic aspect in the poem. Besides analyzing the intrinsic approach, the writer also figures out the industrial revolution issue as the extrinsic aspect in the poem.

2. LITERARY REVIEW

2.1 Imagery

Imagery may be defined as the representation through language of sense experience. “The word image, perhaps most often suggest a mental picture, something seen in the mind’s eye and *visual imagery* is the most frequently occurring kind of imagery in poetry. But an image may also represent a sound” (Perrine, 1969: 54).

Based on the definition above, it can be said that imagery is one of the important aspects in poetry. By understanding imagery, the readers may build an image in their mind about the real situation that appears in poetry. There are kinds of imagery. Those are visual imagery (an image that appears from eyesight), kinesthetic imagery (an image that appears from the movement), auditory imagery (an image that appears from the senses of hearing), and organic imagery (an image that appears from thought or consideration. It relates with sense inside of the body, such as angry, thirsty, tired, sad, hungry, etc.), olfactory imagery (an image that appears from the sense of the smell), tactile imagery (an image that can be felt by skin to feel the hardness, softness, cold, warm, etc.), and the last one is Gustatory Imagery (an image that relates with what our tongue taste). However, in this paper the writer focuses on the visual and auditory imagery.

2.2 Metaphor

Based on *Glossary of Literary Term*, Metaphor is “a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison” (Abrams, 1999: 97). The statement above clearly explains

that the comparison in metaphor is implied rather than stated outright. There are no words such as “like” or “as” to indicate that a comparison is being made. The example can be seen from Lord Alfred Tenyson’s “The Eagle”

He claps the crag with crooked hands,

From the example above, Tenyson uses metaphor “crooked hand” to replace the claws.

2.3 The History of Industrial Revolution

In *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary*, industrial Revolution is “a rapid development in industry which took place in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, chiefly owing to the introduction of new or improved machinery and large-scale production methods” (2010: 766). Between 1760 and 1850 was the transition time from agriculture-based economy to a manufacturing-based economy. This transition leads to a massive migration from the rural areas to the urban areas. It was ultimately leads to the swelling population in several cities in England.

Industrialization had led to the development of the cities and the new community centers, since the industrialization promising a better life. It caused many farmers from rural area interested in a better job in the town. This effort resulted in the waiver of agriculture. Due to increasing urbanization in the cities, the number of labor was increasingly abundant. Meanwhile, many factories that used engine power result into the low wage labor.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Imagery

3.1.1 Visual Imagery

Stanza 1 line 1

I wander through each chartered street,

In this line, Blake uses visual imagery to make the reader imagine the chartered street that he passed. Blake gives the readers idea that the street may be restricted or under control by something or someone.

Stanza 1 line 3

And mark in every face I meet

In this line, Blake uses visual imagery when he saw the object, “face”. This could be a visual imagery because there is an object that can be seen by someone.

Stanza 3 line 2

Every blackening Church appalls,

In this line, Blake use visual imagery to describe blackening church. Blake use visual imagery to emphasize the atmosphere inside the poem. The word “blackening” that is only reference to a color giving an idea to the reader that the church that supposed to be a place of purity and a place for security is being blackened.

Visual imagery in this line can be seen in the new-born Infants tear. Blake gives idea to the reader about new baby born who tears, it can create atmosphere of fear and scary in London at that time.

3.1.2 Auditory Imagery

Stanza 1 line 2

Near where the chartered Thames does flow.

From the line above it can be seen auditory imagery through the word “flow”. The word “flow” means that people can hear the sound of water flow. For example, the water flows in Thames River. People can hear how the water in the river flows.

Stanza 2

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,

The mind-forged manacles I hear

In stanza 2, it can be seen through the word “cry” repeated in every line. It is auditory imagery because “cry” can be heard by anyone. Cry means people who express their sad feeling with screaming, yelling or weeping as loud as they can.

Stanza 3 line 1

How the Chimney-sweepers cry

In stanza three line one there is sentence “the Chimney-sweepers cry”. This sentence has a meaning that the chimney-sweeper is expressing his sad and sorrow toward his duty as a chimney-sweeper. It was an auditory imagery because people can hear how the chimney-sweeper cries.

3.2 Metaphor

After reading the poem, it is clear that William Blake uses metaphor in several parts of the poetry to express emotional meaning in “London”.

Stanza 1, line 1 and 2

I wandered through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,

In these lines, the word “chartered” explains something that does not belong to the speaker. The speaker does not have anything. The word “Thames” refers to the river which becomes a symbol of London. “Street” and “Thames” describe places to which everyone has right and privileges, but the “chartered street” and “Thames” are the kind of metaphor that everything is owned by the powerful people in London. It causes the society could not have freedom about those places. Also, all of the places in London are under control of some capitalist people.

Stanza 4, line 1 and 2

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot’s curse

“Midnight streets” is the metaphor used by William Blake to replace the existence of prostitutes who usually went out in the midnight. “Harlot’s curse” is the metaphor of prostitutes who got a disease because of the sexual intercourse she did. The “curse” in this case, means the disease transmitted by the prostitutes or free sex.

Stanza 4, line 3 and 4

Blast the new born infant’s tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse

The prostitutes transmit the disease to their child which can be understood through the metaphor the “infant tear”. At that time, this curse has no cure, so that becomes a fear for the people. The “marriage hearse” is the metaphor of the ending. The marriage means the beginning of the new life as a family. However in this poem, it is an ending of the life because it is carried by the hearse. It is linked to the “harlot’s curse” or the disease that brought by the harlot to the marriage.

3.3 The Condition during Industrial Revolution Reflected in William Blake’s “London”

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In the first stanza of the poetry, Blake suggests that there were nothing free in London. The word “chartered” shows that everything in London was under the control of the powerful people. This first stanza shows the reader about the real condition of industrial revolution period in which several powerful people was controlling the society in London. The capitalist mostly controlled the economic system at that time. However, their control only brought advantages for themselves. On the other hand, another group of people who was known as labor had to take the sorrow and pain from this condition. The suffering of the most

society in London can be seen through the word weakness and woe. Their suffering is caused by the poverty and the suppression which still existed at that time.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear

The word “cry” which appears in every line in the second stanza shows to the reader about the sadness. This sadness can be found in every part of London. Poverty rate was very high in industrial revolution period. It is because the salary of the labor was very low. The labors were forced by capitalist to work hard but they just got a small salary. The condition was getting worse because the labors could not counter the capitalist. Though they were suffering from this condition, they could not do anything, because their life always depended on the capitalist people. The dependency of the labor is caused by the massive immigration from rural area to London. Because of this condition the number of labor was very abundant, so the capitalist just gave a low salary for them in order to keep production cost low.

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear
And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse

In the last stanza of the poetry, the reader sees the reflection of night life in London. There were so many prostitutions that exist as the symbol of moral decadency that happened in London. The fourth stanza above shows the woman oppression that happened in that period. Prostitution appears as the result of the meaningless war. Many women became widow who had to safe on their family without any support from their husband anymore. Unfortunately, at that time it was very rare for women to get a respectable job. So, prostitution was the only choice for them. Sexually transmitted diseases appeared as the result of that prostitution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the writer concludes that William Blake expresses his idea in his poem "London" by using a great combination of metaphor and imagery as the figurative language aspects. By using the metaphor and imagery, Blake describes the misery and sorrow of the people who lived in London at that time. Through the language in this poem, the writer figures out that Blake's criticism is against slavery and social class. It can be seen through metaphors in the poem such as "through the chartered street", "Thames", and the "chimney sweepers" which shows the sorrow, sadness and suffer at that time. In addition, Blake shows the clear image of children who forced to work as a slave, the soldiers who complained about authorities of the state, the authorities of church by the state and the young women who had to work as prostitutes since there were no other works they could do.

Furthermore, when the writer relates the poem with the historical event of industrial revolution, the writer figures out Blake's view point on social issues that occurred at that time. The poem clearly presents the lower class life that had to suffer as the impact of the industrial revolution. They suffered from the cruelty and the sadness. The writer believes that through the poem, Blake would like to reassure the public about the importance of equal rights and dignity. It was increasingly aware that it was very difficult to change the situation in the absence of self-awareness of each person.

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