

# ELEMENTS OF POETRY THROUGH ROMANTIC PERSPECTIVE IN A NOVEL “LELAKI HARIMAU” BY EKA KURNIAWAN

Natia Nur Aropah

English Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati,  
Bandung, Indonesia  
E-mail: [natianur1006@gmail.com](mailto:natianur1006@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Literary works cannot be separated from the activity of thinking, imagining or observing sensitivity the author and his environment. This means that literary works are the result of an author's expressive feeling with full strength of heart, intuition and imagination. It's the same as the romantic criticism which prioritizes aspects of the heart, intuition and soul in expressing the natural context in literary work. This research aims to examine that how element of poetry through romantic perspective play a role in expressing the natural context in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan. This novel is beautifully conveyed by Eka about the beauty of nature until the reader feels it for real. For the element of poetry in this research thorough romantic perspective is nature was often presented as a work of art itself, constructed by a divine imagination, in emblematic language, and a nature full of wildness, irrational reason. Common life situation or rural life unite with the nature is a mature life landscape and a natural life according to Romantic perspective. However the next element of poetry is colouring imagination, something that is considered ordinary must be brought into our minds to be an unusual aspect. Making objects that we generally know are displayed uncommon. And the last element is prophetic intelligence how great the author is in processing text with the power of his words in a text that feels real, carried the reader into the soul and carried away by the atmosphere.

*Keywords: Romanticism; element of poetry ; nature*



## INTRODUCTION

Literary work is the result of a process of thinking, fantasizing or one's sensitivity to the environment, therefore literature is considered an intimate vessel between an author and his idea. This is then conveyed by Sumardjo & Saini (in Pratiwi, 2018: 2) that "*Sastra adalah ungkapan pribadi manusia yang berupa pengalaman, pemikiran, perasaan, ide, semangat, keyakinan dalam suatu bentuk gambaran konkret yang membangkitkan pesona dengan alat bahasa.*" (Pratiwi, 2018: 2). In another hand literary work closely related to the 'imagination' of an author, "*Sastra memang tidak dapat dari terlepas dari apa yang dinamakan imajinasi.*" (Pratiwi, 2018: 2) What is imagination according to Day, "*The imagination is viewed with some suspicion because it does not show things as they are, but the importance of emotion is recognized*". (Day, 2008: 238 )

The expressions are in the form of imagination, thoughts are conveyed with spontaneous feelings to bring out an expressive "*Spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility*" (Wordsworth in Nurrachman, 2017: 163) does not mean doing the work at the time but when our imagination, thought, emotion is strong which want to be released then that's where the power of spontaneity means of feelings that slide spontaneously too. Thus, imagination, heart, mind, feeling, play a role in expressing the natural context according to the romantic thoughts of the novel "Lelaki Harimau" by Eka Kurniawan.

As written in (Parab, 2015) Romantic coincides with what is often called the "Age of Revolutions" including of course, the American (1778) and the French (1789) revolutions. The age which witnessed the initial transformations of the industrial revolution. In that time, focused on handwork and scientific reasoning, which means that the growing development of science, industry and technology makes the role of nature increasingly eroded, hurting the feelings of rural people, where the farms, gardens, rice fields that were previously leased by Aristocracy to rural people, bought by the upper class to become industrial land such as factories. So this makes many urban communities with large social problems, significant gaps, creating classes, so that the human soul seems



to disappear from the circulation of nature. So that the pensioners like William Wordsworth with his romantic flow want to express a statement that mind will be damaged if it is not balanced with the heart, intuition and the soul's sensitivity to natural forms. According to René Wellek (in Haekel, 2017) who, in an equally influential essay entitled *The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History* (1949), states:

*"If we examine the characteristics of the actual literature which called itself or was called "romantic "all over the continent, we find throughout Europe the same conceptions of poetry and of the workings and nature of poetic imagination, the same conception of nature and its relation to man, and basically the same poetic style, with a use of imagery, symbolism, and myth which is clearly distinct from that of eighteenth-century neoclassicism. This conclusion might be strengthened or modified by attention to other frequently discussed elements: subjectivism, mediaevalism, folklore, etc. But the following three criteria should be particularly convincing, since each is central for one aspect of the practice of literature: imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style. (Wellek 1949: 147)*

"Nature" meant many things to the Romantics, it was not meant defining nature by enlightenment, nature was often presented as a work of art itself, constructed by a divine imagination, in emblematic language, the intended nature is not a regular or permanent nature, but a nature full of wildness, irrational reason. So, by living in the common life, rural life expresses the power of nature. That is the reason why Wordsworth in Nurrachman (2017: 148-151) stated: *"The principle object proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situation from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language, it really used by the men. "* and *"My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personification do not make any natural or regular part of language."*

Similar to the novel "Lelaki Harimau" which has been translated into English, French, Italian, German, and Korean, this novel is beautifully conveyed by Eka about the beauty of nature until the reader feels it for real. The charm of nature with village life displayed by writers looks



naturalist to be brutal, expressive and rude but feels the honesty which may be considered taboo by some people however it is very influential and completing the details of the story. With the example quotation as follow:

*"Sebagaimana diceritakan Ma Muah, pendongeng desa mereka, banyak orang di kampong itu memiliki harimau. Beberapa dari mereka mempunyai sebab kawin dengan harimau, yang lain memperolehnya dari warisan yang diturunkan dari generasi ke generasi." (Kurniawan, 2004: 43)*

*"Pikirnya, sebentar lagi Komar sungguh mati. Ia ingin tak percaya tahayul, tapi semua orang telah bilang, setiap seekor gagak hinggap dibungun, seorang mati dibawahnya." (Kurniawan, 2004: 65)*

From the quotation above, it can be seen that rural life still likes to believe in myths, mysticism, irrational which combines with the forces of nature, society, people or characters so that they can be united and felt through the writer's intuition and imagery, with this description the writer represents the extremely wild nature with the landscape of villages and the events. That is the characteristic of the romantic genre. This also led the novel "Lelaki Harimau" receiving an award and being accepted by foreign media.<sup>1</sup>

The most significant difference between romantic and others is that:

*"To throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situation interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." (Wordsworth in Nurrachman, 2017: 148)*

Something that is considered ordinary must be brought into our minds to be an unusual aspect. Making objects that we generally know are displayed uncommon. For example, 'rain', probably for scientist, is the

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<sup>1</sup> "Briliant, tight-knit and frightrning village tragedy" – Benedict R'O.G Anderson New Left Review. (Kurniawan, 2016)

condensation process of water vapor that occurs in the atmosphere until it falls down to the ground to become water droplets, but for romantic people rain does not fall down, looking at the rains slowly can bring a strong imagination and touching our feelings for someone to deliver longing and joy as a couple. So, the object is not important, but the most important thing is how the soul, feeling, heart unite with nature. The most crucial thing is the subject, namely experience, expression, creativity, imagination, originality. (Haekel, 2017). As in the following quote.

*“Segumpal daging itu tercerabut dari sana, dengan serat-serat koyak segar menjulur tipis, dan darah menyembur tak ada Kendal. Sepotong daging tanpa rasa, kini tertinggal dimulur Margio yang segera menyepahkannya ke lantai dan berguling-guling itu disana. Anwar Sadat mulai terbang, kerongkongannya bunyi sendiri, wajah Margio mandi darah memancar dari sana.”* (Kurniawan, 2004: 33)

*“Ia menyaksikan leher yang paruh koyak, bahkan leher yang dipotong pada Hari Kurban tak seganas itu, dengan gumpalan-gumpalan daging bergelimpangan di lantai, serasa kuah macaroni yang tumpah. Lantai itu penuh keramik, warna merahnya kontras serupa bendera nasional.”* (Kurniawan, 2004: 34)

The writers is very expressive and his imagination is very strong in describing human death such as slaughtering animals. The quotation above is as if the neck of an animal was cut on the Day of Qurban, but with the creativity imagination, the writers represent it in a real life to humans themselves. According to *Encyclopedia of creativity of the imagination relates to the unique function of the imagination in the production of a work of art, to the expression of the beautiful.*<sup>2</sup> Cows or goats that are slaughtered during that Day are very common, but what happens if a human being ripped by a human is like a goat which is beheaded? Isn't that a 'coloring imagination' and once again Eka's imagination is really wild by putting it in his language which is explicit and very unusual. This makes romantic poets different from scientists or businessmen. According to Day, (2008: 226) which stated "*The defining feature of a poet is his ideas and insights*

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<sup>2</sup> Religion-Encyclopedias almanacs transcripts and maps-Creativity Imagination (encyclopedia, n.d.)

*are linked together by emotion and this distinguishes him from the scientist or man of business who compartmentalize things."* He relied on his emotions linked to nature in every idea he conveyed.

Furthermore, a good literary work according to Wordsworth is "*whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect and further*" (Wordsworth in Nurrachman, 2017: 143) Romantic poets are of the view that the true truth is the truth which cannot be touched by our senses, but can only be touched with the heart and felt by the soul. Contrary to the rationalists who consider a real experience to be felt by the senses, can be seen and touched. That is what Wordsworth emphasizes about 'presented the mind to the mind in an unusual' which represented on this following quotes:

*"Peristiwa-peristiwa ini memberikan kesimpulan bagi Margio bahwa tak ada yang bisa bikin Nuraeni bahagia. Tidak pula bunga-bunga itu. Sepanjang mereka memaharaja di pekarangan dan menjadikannya semak belukar, Nuraeni tak terhentikan dari omong kosong bersama kompor dan panci, sebagai pertanda bahwa kemurungan itu tak juga pergi darinya. Bahkan jika pun belukar bunganya bikin ia bahagia, kebahagiaan itu sedikit saja."* (Kurniawan, 2004: 123)

From the quote above, it can be seen that Nuraeni can feel the happiness and sadness of her soul just by looking at inanimate objects, imagining it as if she has a spirit like an ordinary human, the stove and the pot are symbolized by writer as a living thing to invite a little happiness in Nuraeni which her sanity is shaken by Komar bin Syueb's harsh treatment.

The expressive side, romantic flow categorizes or equates poet/author themselves as "Prophetic Intelligence" which is seen from how great the author is in processing text through an expressive approach of the beauty of intrinsic elements such as the power of his words in a text that feels real, influencing the reader to be carried into the soul of the author, making the reader touched or carried away by the atmosphere, that's where the author is categorized as prophetic intelligence.

*"... What is meant by the word poet? What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? -*



*a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ... "* (Wordsworth in Nurrachman, 2017: 155)

Word 'man speaking to men' means that the author as a human being speaks to humans namely readers, this is stated that nature according to romantic is universal, broad knowledge from a poet as a wise person which can convey virtue and judgment to society so that the poet becomes the central of knowledge itself as the discoverer of what kind of way of life is good, by influencing the reader through the words in a text.

*"Kata Ma Muah pula, kakeknya termasuk salah satu yang memelihara harimau putih. Tapi kakeknya tak pernah mau cerita tentang harimau itu, sebab ia masih kecil, kataya, dan tak mungkin bisa menjinakkan binatang buas semacam itu. Ia lebih besar dari harimau pohon, lebih besar dari yang dilihat orang di kebun binatang atau sirkus, atau buku pelajaran sekolah. Jika seseorang tak bisa mengendalikan binatang ini, ia bisa begitu ganasnya hingga tak ada apa pun bisa menahannya jika ia mengamuk.*

*"Tapi aku sekedar ingin melihat," kata Margio.*

*"Kelak saja, barangkali kau akan memilikinya." (Kurniawan, 2004: 44)*

The quotation above contains the incident of Margio who hopes the presence of the white tiger entering himself. According to his grandfather, a tiger is very huge than a tiger in general, and no one can tame it when it is on a rampage. What this author means about tiger is the anger that has risen very much in Margio because of the inner conflict he feels and he is eager to release all the grudges that have been hidden so long. If it is represented by our feelings, namely how the top level of someone's anger is analogous to a tiger raging even more vicious by the author. The relevance to human life is how moral values are taught in simple life by teaching us not to be greedy for life and to be able to control emotions. So, with the neatness of the language of the author, he is able to touch the



hearts of human souls and they can get a lesson. This was also conveyed in a review about this novel.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion in the Romantic period emphasized the self-creativity, imagination and the value of art. This is in contrast to the enlightenment emphasis on rationalism and empiricism. Theory of romantic has been catchphrase to back to nature, because, in that case, our feeling, our soul unite to be able to understand every social problem. Nature is not mono-centric into a center but nature is macro and human is micro. Romantic criticism emphasizes through an expressive approach regarding that the power of the heart, intuition, imaginative soul are one of knowledge that can truly open our way to the mystery of life, not finding the whole truth by only tracing from a mystery of life. When we neither rely on our feelings nor involve the heart in living this life process, the mystery of this life will not be exposed either. Therefore, for romantic people, the power of love, heart, feelings, can mess up the world but it can also make the world more beautiful.

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