

ABSTRACT

The literary phenomenon known as the English Romantic period emerged during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in England. The major poets collectively referred to as the “Romantics” consist of William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. Byron’s originality and radical style, in particular, influenced not only the poets of his generation, but also those of the twentieth century. This study examines Byron’s conception of the Byronic Hero in his various literary works in order to explain the significance of this figure in Romantic literary culture, and to identify the various reasons for its enduring popularity as a cultural icon. It will focus on Byron’s portrayal of the hero in selected texts such as *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, *Manfred*, and the Turkish Tales (*The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *The Bride of Abydos* and *Lara* specifically), and will also draw upon Byron’s letters and journals. Much of the appeal of the Byronic hero lies in the unique social, political and historical conditions of the time.

First, Byron’s own popularity as an author, coupled with the scandalous details of his personal life, naturally influenced the public reception of the Byronic hero. Frequently portrayed as strikingly good-looking, the Byronic hero was more importantly a courageous rebel who fought for justice and liberty for the oppressed. Byron’s biographical background is thus crucial to an understanding of the popularity of his heroes. Second, although the Byronic hero was endowed with many positive attributes, he had flaws and weaknesses like anyone else and was not afraid to expose them. This trait endeared him to readers who often

sympathized with his suffering. Female readers in particular, who were becoming increasingly aware of their social and intellectual roles, found the hero's sensitivity towards women highly appealing, further fuelling the popularity of this character in English contemporary culture. In addition, the rise of the Byronic hero can be attributed to Byron's shrewd understanding of the demands of his literary audience. The growth of the literary market to include the media such as newspapers and reviews, for example, illustrates the emergence of an increasingly knowledgeable reading public. Those from the upper and middle classes especially, frequently demanded the latest and most fashionable texts in the market, a niche that was filled by Byron's best-selling *Turkish Tales*. These tales, featuring the heroic exploits of the Byronic hero in exotic Eastern settings, captured the imagination of the reading public who craved for such excitement in their own lives. Finally, the Byronic hero served as a symbol of hope for the English masses suffering from the turbulent effects of the French Revolution. Byron was a staunch advocate of liberty and justice propagated by the early years of the French Revolution and an ardent admirer of Napoleon, who he regarded with high esteem for his role as liberator of the oppressed, his revolutionary idealism and his military prowess during the French Revolution. The reign of Napoleon during that time also made a deep impression on Byron, as seen in the revolutionary idealism of his own heroes. Such was the popularity of the Byronic hero that it has inspired generations of readers and writers throughout the world. Thus, by examining Byron's various literary texts, letters and journals, this study aims to provide insights into the significance of the Byronic hero as a popular cultural icon in the Romantic period.

ABSTRAK

Fenomena kesusasteraan yang dikenali sebagai zaman Romantik Inggeris telah wujud pada lewat abad ke lapan belas dan awal abad ke sembilan belas di England. Penyair-penyair terkemuka yang secara kolektif digelar sebagai "Romantics" terdiri daripada William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron dan John Keats. Keaslian serta gaya penulisan Byron yang radikal bukan sahaja telah mempengaruhi penyair-penyair generasi beliau, malah juga penyair-penyair abad ke duapuluh. Kajian ini akan meneroka rekaan watak-watak yang digelar "Byronic Hero" di dalam beberapa hasil karya sastera beliau untuk menerangkan kepentingan watak ini dalam kebudayaan kesusasteraan Romantik, serta mengenalpasti beberapa punca utama populariti "Byronic Hero" sebagai "cultural icon." Kajian ini akan berfokus kepada penampilan hero tersebut dalam beberapa teks-teks terpilih seperti *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *Manfred* dan 'Turkish Tales' (khususnya *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *The Bride of Abydos*, dan *Lara*). Ia juga akan meneliti surat-surat serta jurnal-jurnal hasil penulisan Byron. Daya tarikan hero-hero Byron berhubung kait dengan situasi sosial, politik dan sejarah yang unik pada ketika itu.

Pertamanya, populariti Byron sendiri sebagai penulis ditambah pula dengan kisah hidup peribadi beliau, sememangnya telah mempengaruhi penerimaan orang ramai terhadap "Byronic hero." Sering digambarkan sebagai seorang jejaka yang tampan, watak "Byronic hero" juga merupakan seorang pemberontak yang berani berjuang demi menegakkan keadilan dan kebebasan terhadap golongan yang ditindas. Justeru itu, latar belakang kisah hidup Byron ternyata amat penting sekali untuk memahami punca populariti hero-hero

rekaannya. Kedua, walaupun Byronic hero dianugerahkan dengan banyak sifat-sifat positif, beliau juga mempunyai kekurangan atau kelemahan seperti manusia lain malah tidak takut untuk menonjolkan kelemahan-kelemahannya itu. Ciri ini telah menyebabkan beliau disenangi oleh pembaca-pembaca yang sering berasa simpati dengan kesengsaraannya. Pembaca wanita, khususnya, yang semakin menyedari peranan sosial dan intelektual mereka, mendapati keprihatinan hero terhadap wanita amat menarik sekali dan ini menaikkan lagi populariti watak tersebut dalam budaya kontemporari Inggeris. Disamping itu, peningkatan popularitinya juga disebabkan keprihatinan Byron tentang kehendak peminat sastera. Perkembangan pasaran kesusasteraan yang merangkumi media seperti akhbar dan rencana, umpamanya, mempamirkan kewujudan suatu golongan pembaca yang berpengetahuan. Mereka dari golongan atasan dan pertengahan khususnya sering meminta bahan-bahan teks yang terkini di pasaran dan kehendak ini sering dipenuhi oleh teks 'Turkish Tales' yang laris di pasaran. Kisah-kisah yang menampilkan pengembaraan "Byronic hero" berlatar belakangkan dunia ketimuran yang menarik, telah memukau imaginasi golongan pembaca yang dahagakan keseronokan seumpama itu dalam kehidupan harian mereka.

Akhir sekali, watak "Byronic hero" juga adalah suatu simbol harapan bagi masyarakat di England yang sering dilanda kesengsaraan akibat Revolusi Perancis. Byron merupakan seorang pejuang kebebasan dan keadilan yang sering dilaungkan ketika zaman awal Revolusi Perancis serta seorang peminat setia Napoleon Bonaparte yang disanjungnya atas peranan Napoleon sebagai pejuang kebebasan golongan tertindas, sikap idealisme revolusiner serta kehebatan tenteranya ketika zaman Revolusi Perancis. Pemerintahan Napoleon pada ketika itu juga telah memberikan suatu kesan yang mendalam pada Byron, seperti yang dapat dilihat dalam sikap idealisme revolusiner watak-watak utama Byron sendiri. Begitu hebatnya

populariti "Byronic hero" sehingga beliau telah menjadi sumber inspirasi kepada pelbagai generasi golongan pembaca mahupun penulis di serata dunia. Oleh demikian, melalui penelitian pelbagai teks, surat-surat dan jurnal-jurnal beliau, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memberi pendedahan mengenai signifikasi "Byronic hero" sebagai "cultural icon" di zaman Romantik.