



**THE REPRESENTATION OF PATRIARCHAL IDEAS IN
VICTORIAN ERA THROUGH ROBERT BROWNING'S
PORPHYRIA'S LOVER AND ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING'S SONNET XXIX: *I THINK OF THEE***

THESIS

Written by

Ervi Dwi Wulandari

140110101006

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITAS JEMBER

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Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Sarjana degree of
English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Jember

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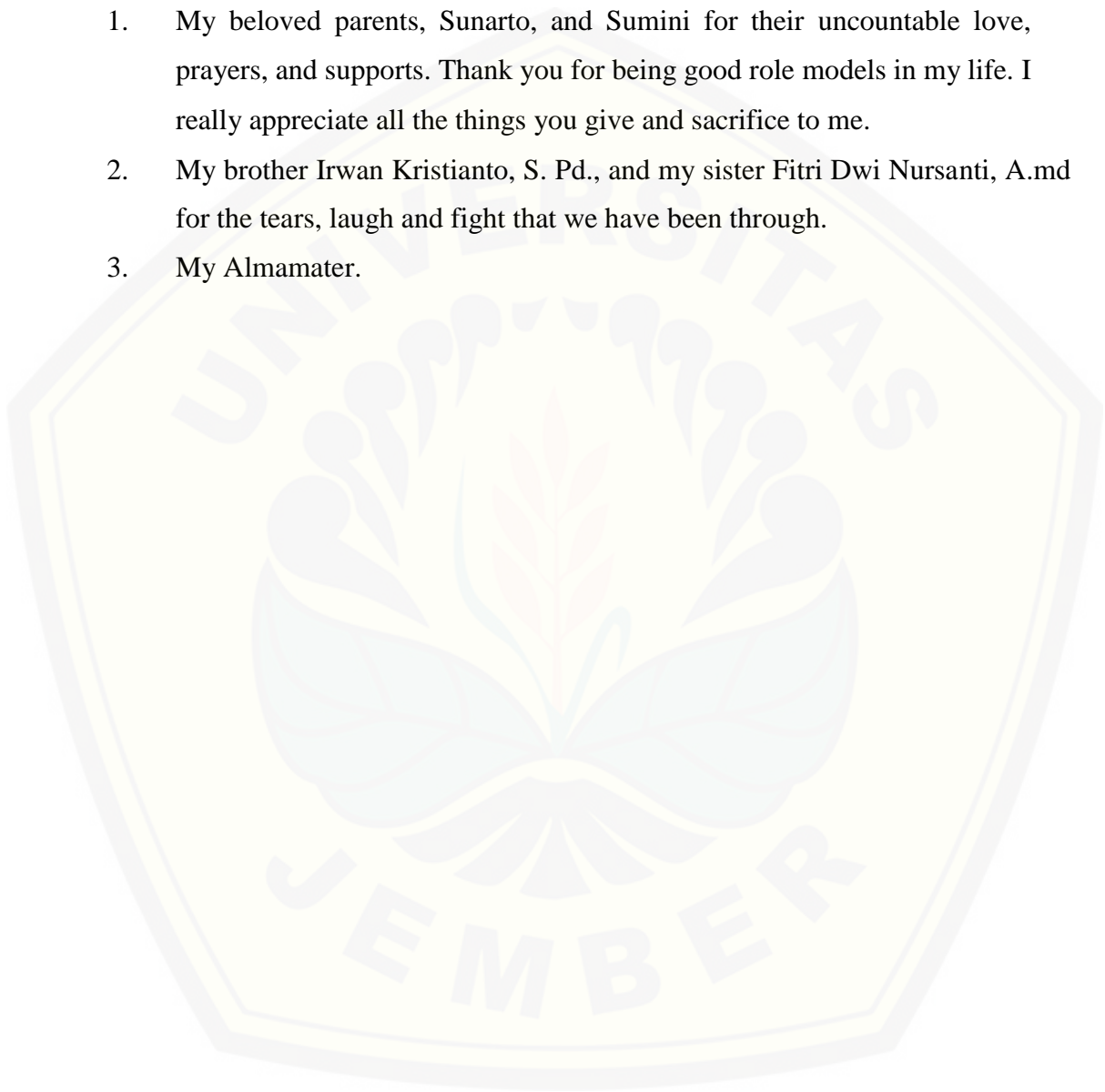
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2018

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

1. My beloved parents, Sunarto, and Sumini for their uncountable love, prayers, and supports. Thank you for being good role models in my life. I really appreciate all the things you give and sacrifice to me.
2. My brother Irwan Kristianto, S. Pd., and my sister Fitri Dwi Nursanti, A.md for the tears, laugh and fight that we have been through.
3. My Almamater.



MOTTO

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

(Corrie ten Boom)



DECLARATION

I hereby convey that this thesis entitled — **The Representation of Patriarchal Ideas in Victorian Era through Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnet XXIX: I Think of Thee*** is an original writing. The research described in this thesis has never been submitted for any other degree or any publication. I certainly certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any help received during the composition of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, July 2018

The Writer,

Ervi Dwi Wulandari
NIM 140110101006

APPROVAL SHEET

Approved and received by the Examination Committee of English Department,
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

Day :

Date :

Place :

Jember, October 2018

Chairman,

Secretary,

Dra. Supiastutik, M.Pd
NIP. 196605141998032001

Hat Pujiati, S.S, M.A.
NIP. 196605141998032001

The Members:

1. Dr. Eko Suwargono, M.Hum (.....)
NIP. 196511061993031001
2. L Dyah Purwita Wardani SWW, S.S., M.A. (.....)
NIP. 197109282005012001

Approved by the Dean,

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Sofyan, M.Hum
NIP. 196805161992011001

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Finally, the researcher realizes that this thesis is far from being perfect even though the researcher has tried the best. However, the researcher hopes this thesis will give some of the contributions to the learning of literary and cultural study.

The researcher

SUMMARY

The Representation of Patriarchal Ideas in Victorian Era through Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*; Ervi Dwi Wulandari, 140110101006; 2018; 41 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities; Universitas Jember.

This thesis deliberates the patriarchal issue in the Victorian era. This study is aimed at finding out the presence of the patriarchal system in Victorian England through the poems from Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*. This thesis deals with the theory of representation by Stuart Hall (1997) which concerns on discursive analysis to understand the statement, language and ideas about the representation of patriarchal ideas within the two selected poems and to connect data about male domination within the two selected poems with the social-cultural context in Victorian England. The other supporting theories related to the male domination over female are also used to analyze the data.

This research is conducted by using descriptive qualitative method and documentary research strategy. The data of this research are in the form of words and stanzas. This data are divided into primary data and secondary data. The primary is taken from the words and stanzas within the poem that represented male domination over female in Victorian England. The secondary data of this research is gained from books, literature papers, and online media which relates to the patriarchal ideas. The data are analyzed by elaborating the all over analysis using theory representation by Stuart Hall (1997) with the concept of male domination over female.

The finding of this thesis proves that Victorian society holds the patriarchal system. In this case, the male dominated, marginalized and oppressed the female. The concept of an ideal woman led by Victorian values and the Christianity belief that female should submit to the male caused the female willingly accepted the act and the rule of the male. In effect, the woman unconsciously supports in legitimating patriarchy.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter spreads out of the basic idea of carrying out this study. It divided into several sub-chapters which are Background of the Study, Topic of Discussion, Research Questions, and the Goal of Study. It is presented as follows:

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender subordination is the characterization of women's lives in the Victorian period. Women are not only treated as subordinate to men moreover also subject of discrimination, oppression, unequal treatment, exploitation, control and violence (Ray, 2014: 1). It means men have a role to organize all the social elements so that men have a right to control women. Women have to follow all of the rules and order are given to them without having a right to reject the orders. Based on this phenomenon, it shows that there is a system in the society in which women are constructed to be subordinate with men so that men are regarded as more superior than women.

This phenomenon is seen in the Victorian era in British society. The Victorian era was a transitional period in which the industrial revolution influenced English society in culture, politics, economy and social norms. This condition made Britain the richest country in the world. "Although it might have been an era of growth, it was also a period of trouble and anxiety" (Fatima, 2013), especially in providing the self-determination for women to contribute in the society. In other words, Victorian women become the second class of civilization, meanwhile, men become the first class of civilization. This disorder occurred due to the holding of the patriarchal system in Victorian society.

Walby (1990: 20) through her book entitled *Theorizing Patriarchy* shares the view that "patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". It is in line with McDowell and Pringle (1992) who say that "women are considered not to have parallels with men, but women are considered a creature that relies on men and has a lower position than

men". This becomes a problem that leads to the imbalanced ways for women to have the same right in the society.

In addition to the men domination over women in the patriarchal society, there is misunderstanding concept on differentiating sex and gender. Society regards that gender is given by God so that it cannot be changed. Conversely, this misunderstanding contributed a hierarchy position in the society in legitimating patriarchal system. Moreover, according to the Oxford Dictionary (1995: 1078), "sex is the state of being male or female, while the gender is the condition of being male or female". It is considered a fact that sex is a kind of biological classification as male or female that has been created by God and gender is understood as the cultural definition which is constructed by the society as the member of a culture, of what it means to be woman or man. In the same way, the subordination in terms of social rights is not only caused of their biological differences but also cause of their gender differences which are constructed by the society.

Furthermore, Setiawan (2016) shares the view that patriarchy is defined as social structure that has been going on in the long historical period and its transformation continuously happens in which men have dominant position, in that position, they exploit women which manifests in social practice, economic, political and cultural, both in private or public sphere. Through Robert Browning's poem and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem entitled *Porphyria's Lover* and *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee* the representation of the unfair treatment between men and women is legitimated. Furthermore, *Porphyria's Lover* is a poem of Browning that depicts the woman condition in the Victorian period. *Porphyria's Lover* is unique to be analyzed related to woman's condition for it was written by a man who tried to open woman mindset about the subordination that they suffered. Porphyria has a higher social position than the man, but the man speaker gives the impression to resent her power over him by claiming that Porphyria is weak and completely worship him. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee* depicts a woman who is being stereotyped by the construction of the patriarchal ideas. The woman is delineated as a woman who was tortured by her longing for the man she loved. The thoughts of the woman speaker are wrapped around the man as vines on

a tree. There is a sense that the woman speaker cannot live without the man she loved.

Based on Robert Browning's poem entitled *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee* show that there is strong gender inequality in the Victorian era. It creates a problem leading to an unfair treatment or opportunity for women in society. The love story of Porphyria who is socially superior to the man, but still defeated by the patriarchy system draws me to do further research on how the domination of the Victorian men influenced the woman's life's perspective. In addition to that, Robert Browning as the author of this dramatic poem was regarded as one of the romantic-philosopher poets who through his writing had made involvement in the Victorian era (<http://www.notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Browning-Robert.html>). Moreover, Elizabeth Barrett Browning who is also known as Robert Browning's wife was incredibly a successful and celebrated Victorian poet. *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which is a collection of forty four love written to Robert Browning, the one who wrote *Porphyria's Lover* became the most famous collection of her. *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee* is one of forty four poems in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Further understanding "*The Portuguese*" is Elizabeth nickname which was given by Robert Browning (<http://charlotteunsworth.com>).

To expose the patriarchal system portrayed within *Porphyria's Lover* and *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*, it is valuable to apply Stuart Hall's theory of representation as the main theory for the purpose of analyzing the language and ideas about the domination of Victorian man over woman in Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*. The researcher adds the concept of patriarchy to get a deeper analysis of man domination over women. The researcher pursues the poem's contextual background to know the accurate data about the representation of patriarchal ideas within the poems. On the other hand, analyzing the patriarchal system portrayed within the poems also guide to the critical ideas of the authors of the poems.

1.2 Topic of Discussion

Starting a topic is an essential part to guide us in developing the next specific steps for analyzing a literary work. It controls the discussion in order not to be out of context. Therefore, this research focuses on the discussion of the domination of the Victorian man in the poem of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, entitled *Porphyria's Lover* and *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*. Robert Browning through his poem brings a universal message about the spirit to struggle from oppression, regardless their gender so that every person, especially woman has the civil rights to freedom and the rights to equality in the economy, politics or social, education and all aspects of life. In addition to that, the poem of Elizabeth Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee* is added to understand the patriarchal system from the woman's perspective.

1.3 Research Questions

The main point of the research is intended to expose how patriarchal ideology constructed in the poem through the characters. Based on the problem, the research questions in this study are formulated within two questions as follows:

- 1) How is the idea of patriarchy represented in Robert Browning's poem entitled *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX*?
- 2) How are the critical perspective of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning as the authors of the poems?

1.4 The Goal of Study

It is expected that this research gives additional knowledge as follows:

- 1) To give a profound description of the idea of patriarchy in the Victorian era through Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonett XXIX: I Think of Thee*
- 2) To uncover the critical perspective of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's as the authors of the poems towards the concept of the patriarchal system.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of two sub-chapters discussing previous research and the explanation of some theories of the scholars. The first sub-chapter elaborates two main previous researchers which are used to support the research. The second sub-chapter is to describe the theory that I apply. It is the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the concept of patriarchy as an Ideology.

2.1 Previous Research

Previous research is needed in order to provide supporting references and to avoid any form of plagiarism within the research. According to Blaxter *et al.*, (2010, 123), it helps to place your work in the right context of what has already been done, allowing comparisons to be made and providing a framework for further research. Additionally, previous researchers become the limitation for the researcher to prevent the discussion to be out of context and it also prevents the recent researcher to discuss issues which have been discussed by applying the same perspective. To support my research, I mainly choose two previous types of research in this thesis.

The first previous research is a research conducted by Zaenab (2015) entitled *The Construction of Patriarchal Ideas through the Heroine Bella in Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn*. Zaenab utilized Josephine Donovan's feminist critical theory as a tool to analyze. It is formulated as a qualitative research. The research focuses on the analysis of patriarchal ideas through the character of Bella in the *Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn*. Zaenab does not only focus on analyzing the patriarchal system but also regard to what ideology the author wants to profound through the novel. As a result, Zaenab found that there is a construction of patriarchal ideas through the heroine Bella. In the novel, Bella is portrayed as a subordinate woman who is proved by her inferiority, dependence and limited self-esteem.

There are several roles which are played in order to construct patriarchal ideas within the novel. Firstly, **the chastity doctrine** that plays a role in the construction of Bella's character as a good girl. It was symbolized by her virginity and Edward's commitment to have a sexual relationship after marriage. Secondly, **the marriage**

for eternity doctrine, its role is played when Bella was married to the Vampire, she loved. Even though Vampire is an immortal creature, Edward offers the eternity of love. Thirdly, **the conversion doctrine**, it plays role in Bella's transformation into a vampire so that makes her be a better creature than before. Lastly, **Family doctrine** plays role in Bella's limited-esteem in which Bella is portrayed as a woman with the altruistic character so that she does not have encouragement to refuse or postpone not to have children for shellfish or materialistic reason, in the end she finally falls pregnant of a half-vampire half-human baby. Zaenab also found that Meyer through *Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn* wants to drop feminism values by creating Bella character because her perspective of womanhood is purely influenced by Mormons belief instead of American feminism values of womanhood. Mormons belief is a Church's doctrine of chastity, marriage for eternity, conversion and family.

Understanding the concept of this research, I actually undergo several similarities, especially in the case of the theoretical framework. It provides the general picture of how the man domination over a woman is built within a literary work. However, Zaenab's research only covers the basic process of the construction of the patriarchal ideas within the character of Bella, I intend to widen the process of patriarchal construction in a real society, in this case in Victorian society. Additionally, the object of study chosen in the previous research is different from my object of analysis.

The second is another research carried out by Marysa Demoor (2007) entitled *Gender Relations in Robert Browning's Dramatic Monologues*. Analyzing six different Dramatic Monologues poem of Robert Browning which are "*Porphyria's lover*" (1836), "*My Last Duchess*" (1842), "*Andrea Del Sarto*" (1855), "*Count Gismond*" (1842), "*The Laboratory*" (1844) and "*Evelyn Hope*" (1855), Demoor compared gender representation of these poems with respect to themes, characters, and motifs. This research used Toril Moi's theory about sexual and textual politics. Based on the research, Demoor shows that the poems are constructed by the use of contrast and conflicts. As a matter of fact, to project all men's desires onto the female project, the male speakers use his narrative voice to suppress the woman's

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter deliberates the conclusion of the whole analysis regarding the representation of patriarchy within the Victorian society presented in the *Porphyria's Lover* and *Sonnet XXIX: I Think of Thee*. The analysis has been conducted and discussed in the previous chapter by using the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the concept of Patriarchy. This chapter will contain the answer to the research questions available in chapter one.

Relating to the representation of patriarchal ideas through the characters in the poem, the analysis of the research finds the practice of the patriarchal system by observing the aspects which reveal the domination of male. In the meantime, there are numerous forms of male domination faced by Victorian female; the female is being marginalized and discriminated, Female's admiration towards male, male as a decision maker, Female's attitude and beauty governed by the system, female is being the object of male gaze, the death is being the price for woman liberty and female is controlled by man.

In order to the critical perspective of the authors, the researcher found that through the representation of Porphyria in the *Porphyria's Lover*, Robert Browning symbolizes his faith. Robert Browning used literary work as a media to present his idea in order to uncover the way of his readers' thinking. He explores the changes in moral and social values in Victorian life which is caused by the industrial revolution. As a dramatic writer, he feels the difficulties faced by the woman as the effect of the complexity of gender's role in Victorian England. Browning shows that woman's role cannot be considered as degrading but the rules of the woman must be considered as a positive role.

Moreover, in facing the oppression that caused unequal gender roles between male and female in the Victorian period, the finding of this study reports that the woman unconsciously supports in legitimating patriarchy. The women adored the men so that they are willingly putative all of the worse action given to them. There are some factors which influence Porphyria and Elizabeth Barrett

Browning to contribute in supporting Victorian patriarchal values. They are adherence to the concept of ideal women lead by Victorian values and the societies belief towards the Christianity in which the women have to submit to the men.



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APPENDICES**PORPHYRIA'S LOVER**BY ROBERT BROWNING

The rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me — she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirred,

And yet God has not said a word!

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46313/porphyrias-lover>)



SONNET XXIX 'I THINK OF THEE'

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there 's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

(<https://genius.com/Elizabeth-barrett-browning-sonnet-29-i-think-of-thee-annotated>)