

BRAVERY IN EKA KURNIAWAN'S *BEAUTY IS A WOUND*

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Abstract

In *Beauty Is A Wound*, Kurniawan portrays three kinds of bravery: physical bravery, social bravery, and moral bravery. These three kinds of bravery are constructed through the roles of the protagonist during the Japanese invasion in Indonesia. The protagonist uses her physical bravery to fight back against anybody who wants to hurt her or the people she loves. The second is social bravery; the protagonist has courage to have dispute with the person who wants to take advantages and threaten her; her action disfigures her image in front of many people. In her moral bravery, the protagonist does not expect any respect from anyone; even for a debt payment and she finally must do a disgusting work to find out her grandmother's treasure she buries in a septic tank pipe. The method used to do the analysis is descriptive research method due to its suitability for describing the data properly. The result indicates that the protagonist acts bravely to defend her and her friends' rights despite living as a prisoner; she is willing to prostitute herself for her and her friends' safety; she then morally struggles to pay all her debt. Three kinds of bravery are found in the novel.

Keywords: bravery, physical bravery, social bravery, moral bravery.

1. Introduction

One of the media that reflects social problems in our life is literature, whether they are individual problems or the problems within a society group by pouring it into a form of writing. Literature, then, is connected to a social problem like bravery, either it is physical bravery, social bravery, or moral bravery and the three kinds of bravery are brought into discussion. Bravery is a characteristic that is formed inside of human mind. Bravery characteristic is used by humans as an instrument to make risky decisions.

According to McCain and Salter (2004). bravery is described by overcoming fears for no purpose other than the act itself; in this case, women, known to be the weakest creature in society for their soft and kind characteristics. However, they also have bravery within themselves. This characteristic is formed either from the teaching of their parents, religion, society, or their own culture. Their act of bravery can be seen from a group of women who embraces the beliefs of feminism; they convey their feelings about fighting against the patriarchy system that presumes them as subordinates or inferior race.

In *Beauty Is A wound*, Dewi Ayu, the protagonist, is described as a very beautiful woman born from a mixed blood between Dutch and Indonesian. Ayu is also described as a smart woman when she is left behind by her parents and without knowing where they go while she is still a baby. Kurniawan writes the story by mixing some inner elements such as love, courage, and struggle. Besides her beautiful face and nice body, Ayu is also a very brave woman, though, unfortunately, she is forced to become a prostitute for the Japanese imperial army who colonizes Indonesia at that time. Ayu lives when the second world war occurs where chaos is everywhere all across Indonesia. The war between the Dutch and the Japanese army is so tense that forces many Indonesian people to be evacuated to another country, and some men are forced to enter the conscription including Ayu's grandfather, Ted Stammer, who has to become a militia to defend the country from the enemy. When her grandmother asks her to follow her to be evacuated, Ayu refuses it; she insists on staying at home. Thus, she is left alone by herself facing all kinds of hardship and fate that is unknown to her. Nevertheless, she has bravery to face the worse things that happen to her.

2. Literature Review

A protagonist plays an important role to run the plot of a literary works such as novels, movie, and also drama. Baldick (2001: 112) states the protagonist is the principal actor in a drama. Abrams (1999: 233-234) also has a similar definition about it. A protagonist is a main character either in a plot or a play. A protagonist is always become the opponent of the antagonist. As Beckson and Ganz (1990: 217) say a protagonist is the first actor who plays the leading and double part in some minor roles. A protagonist refers to the first actor in a play thence the principal character or actor. Consequently, a protagonist can be said to be the first actor in literary work, and the protagonist should not always be a man; a woman is often made as a protagonist in a story.

Besides the views on the protagonist, bravery has priority to discuss in this section. As McCain & Salter (2004: 13) say, bravery has been attributed to all manner of actions that may indeed be admirable but hardly compare to the conscious self-sacrifice on behalf of something greater than self-interest. Putman (1997: 1-11) defines bravery as facing fears associated with the loss of psychological stability. Worline and Rafaeli (2002) defines bravery with respect to fear, the ability to act for a meaningful (noble, good, or practical) cause, despite experiencing the fear associated with perceived threat exceeding the available resource.

Some researchers also argue that bravery can be divided into some kinds, like what Lopez et.al. (2003: 185-197) say that physical bravery is a virtue that has been a topic of human thought since the ancient times. Primarily, it is understood as a characteristic of a good soldier and is attributed mostly to male population. Weber et al. (2002: 263-290) also say there is a bravery called social bravery, social bravery is a courageous behavior in which the risks involved could damage the actor's esteem in the eyes of others. Bierhoff (2002: 67-69) describes moral bravery as a prosocial behavior with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards for the actor.

Furthermore, there are three kinds of bravery that respectfully need to be described in this section i.e. physical, social, and moral bravery. Firstly, physical bravery is a virtue related to human thought. Primarily, it is understood as a characteristic of a good soldier and is attributed mostly to male population (Lopez et al. 2003: 185-197). Most recent definitions distinguish physical bravery from moral and

psychological bravery, and describe it as voluntarily confronting a risky situation despite the fear arising from possible negative outcomes of the situation, such as severe physical injuries or even death (Lopez, et al., 2003: 185-197; Putman, 2001: 463-470; Rate, 2010: 47-66). Some studies show that parachute jumpers, soldiers, and demolition man are more persistent in their actions and physiologically recover sooner from a demanding or dangerous situation, in which the perform courageous actions (Cox, Hallam, O'Connor, & Rachman, 1983: 107-117; McMillan & Rachman, 1988: 373-378; O'Connor, Hallam, & Rachman, 1985: 187-197; Rachman 1984: 109-120, 2004: 149-176). Physical bravery can also be seen and found in a high-risk sports. Breivik (1995) says the main characteristic of high-risk sports is the high possibility of suffering severe injuries or death during the activity.

Secondly, social bravery is a courageous behaviour in which the risks involved could damage the actor's esteem in the eyes of others (Weber et al. 2002) Social bravery can be displayed by two main types of behaviors. The first type includes those that could damage the actor's relationships (Schilpzand et al. 2015: 52-77; Worline et al. 2002: 295-330); for example, when confronting a co-worker's problematic behaviors, the co-worker may become hostile and angry. In turn, this could damage the relationship between the actor and co-worker. The second type includes actions that could damage the actor's social image, also called face-loss costs.

Thirdly, moral bravery is a prosocial behavior with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards for the actor Bierhoff. (2002: 67-69). Moral bravery is the expression of personal views and values in the face of dissension and rejection. Moral bravery as then a brave behavior accompanied by anger and indignation, which intends to enforce societal and ethical norms without considering one's own social costs.

However, even though none of the authors divide the term bravery into categories, some notes still can be taken to support its distinction. Therefore, to reconcile this shortcoming, it is necessary to state that the three kinds of bravery are described by different authors, and certainly, there is no author who writes these kinds in a bound volume or book that shows a pack of information about bravery. On the other hand, those kinds of bravery are found in the novel, and become the points to be made under discussion.

3. Research Method

This paper discusses protagonist's bravery in *Beauty Is A Wound* by Eka Kurniawan, and focuses on the acts of her bravery to come out from threatening, killing, and serving men with no mercy or sympathy; respectedly, by having bravery, Ayu is able to ward all the problems she faces. To do the analysis, descriptive research method is the most appropriate method to be used. Nazir (1988: 63) says that descriptive research is method that is used to analyze a group of humans, an object, condition, thought, or an event that is currently happening. Therefore, the descriptive method is set up to do the analysis, and accomplishes this paper descriptively. Then, in collecting the data for the analysis, there must be some procedures conducted, as collecting some theories, opinions, or arguments relating to the subject matter of the discussion, generating the data from the novel, classifying the data, and organizing the whole data. At last, the data obtained from the novel are specified for the discussion in the next section, covering the three types of bravery i.e. physical bravery, social bravery, and moral bravery.

4. Discussion

4.1 Physical Bravery

The author describes the protagonist as a beautiful and brave woman. The protagonist, Ayu, is always the first person who takes a step forward to face any kind of problem that she and her friend face. She always does some brave actions to save either herself or her friends from getting troubles, as indicated in the quotation below:

“For a whole half century, she was pregnant once again. Just as with her other children, she did not know who the father was, but unlike the others she had absolutely no desire for this baby to survive. So, she had taken extra-strength paracetamol pills that she got from a village doctor and washed them down with half a liter of soda, which was almost enough to cause her own death but not quite.”

(Kurniawan, 2002: 6)

As depicted, the protagonist is brave enough to kill herself and her child by taking a deadly drug, but it is not enough to kill the child and she ends up injuring herself. Aside from being a brave woman, the protagonist is also a skillful person. There is one time when she rides a horse to pursue Ma Gedik who runs away because of a trauma after she is informed by one of the house guard.

“He ran away screaming like he had seen the devil, miss”

“You didn’t catch him?”

“He was running so fast, just like Ma Iyang ran sixteen years ago” replied the guard. “But Mr. Willie chased him with the car.”

She ran into the stable and joined the chase on horseback.”

(Kurniawan, 2002: 54)

Beside being brave, Ayu seems to be so skillful. She chases Ma Gedik and finally finds him standing on top of a hill wanting to end his life so that he can meet with Ma Iyang in heaven. In addition, the protagonist is also marked as an extreme woman by her neighborhood as she always tries something absurd that could endanger her life. She orders her maid to buy her a shroud and wrap herself in it and acts as if she has already died.

“Buy me a burial shroud,” said Ayu. “I have already given four girls to this accursed world. The time has come for my funeral procession to pass by.” (Kurniawan, 2002: 7)

Though Ayu looks so brave, yet she looks foolish, as she really wants to die because she is tired of giving birth to a child. She never expects the child, but she must have it due to the Japanese immoral deeds. Apart from this, she shows her physical bravery by eating a boiled leech that she cooks as her dinner and share it with all of her friends in the prison. It is very disgusting indeed.

“We’re not eating leeches, but cow’s blood” Ayu explained. She split open the leeches with a small knife, pulled out the clots of cow blood inside them, stabbed them with the point of the knife, and swallowed them.” (Kurniawan, 2002: 65)

To survive inside the prison needs a sacrifice, including eating all of those disgusting living things that should not be eaten. Ayu is brave enough to make a

decision to sacrifice her stomach when feeling hungry as she does not want to eat the food that the Japanese army gives. However, she chooses to eat her own handmade food. Even if the food is disgusting, and can make her stomach hurt.

4.2 Social Bravery

Social bravery is an act where the actor makes a decision which sacrifices his or her image towards another person, either it is a respect or an exclusion in a group of society. In social bravery, the actor only needs to make a decision or an act which involve a group of society to reach the group or the actor's goal. In the novel, social bravery occurs when the protagonist makes a joke out of an order from a Japanese officer who tells her to follow a set of rules when she is imprisoned by the Japanese.

“Inside again, a few women, afraid of careless errors, quickly taught their children the orders. Their shouts of *Keirei!* And *Naore!* Made Ayu double up the laughter. “you are the way more vicious than the Japanese!” she exclaimed.” (Kurniawan, 2002: 67)

The quotation above points out that Ayu is not bothered by the Japanese strict order; what she does instead is to make a light joke that relieves both herself and her cellmates. Even then, Ayu shows some other social bravery when the people inside the prison are starving, because there is no food to eat for dinner. Ayu boils some leeches that are filled by cow's blood and says something to motivates her cellmates.

Ayu also has some leadership skills. She manages to raise her cellmate morally by encouraging them saying that they are not going to die. Ayu is also brave enough to face anybody inside the prison involving the officer who guards the cell or even the commandant. Even before she is captured by the Japanese soldiers she already mocks some of them. It can be seen in the quotation:

“I know you guys,” said Ayu, “You're the photographers who used to work at the bend of the road!” “Yeah, that was fun. We got photographs of every single dutch person in halimunda” answered one of the soldiers. The other spoke: “Prepare yourself, miss” “You mean madam,” said Ayu. “I'm a widow now” (Kurniawan, 2002: 58)

This indicates that not even a man in an armored jacket can scare her. Despite the soldiers threatening her, she chooses to stay calm and mock the two soldiers before they take her away with them. Ayu is quite famous around her neighborhood when she is still young. When she is on the truck, she recognizes some of her friends and starts telling a joke to them despite the situation that they are currently facing.

No matter how dire the situation is, the protagonist always remains calm and is not showing any sign of fear in front of the people around her. The protagonist is socially brave enough to keep calm and can still casually talk in such dire situation. Ayu always acts more mature than many other women of her age. Even the elders respect her maturity and leadership skill. She often becomes a role model for the younger girls so that they can be just like her. Her bravery in taking a decision is very remarkable. At one time when both Ayu and Ola are about to be transferred into another prison, she tells Ola to leave her younger sister at the current prison because she knows that if the three of them are separated, there might be a chance that one of them could make it out alive until the war ends.

"I have to bring Gerda," said Ola "No," said Ayu. "If we die, at least she will survive." "or the other way around?" "Or the other way around" (Kurniawan, 2002: 75)

The quotation verifies how Ayu decides to leave Gerda to stay at the current prison, and surely takes Ola with her to be transferred to the new prison, rather than to let the three of them dying as nobody knows what kind of place is that new prison is or where it is located. After they arrive at their new prison, it turns out to be a big house with a sweeping yard full of trees and bushes. A middle-aged native woman suddenly appears from inside the house, wearing her hair in a bun and a loose-fitting gown with the belt untied at her waist. Ayu then bravely approaches her and asks whether this is her house or not.

"Is this your house miss?" Asked Ayu politely. "Call me Mama Kalong," she said. "Because like a *kalong*, a fruit bat, I'm much more often up and about at night than during the day" (Kurniawan, 2002: 77)

While no other women are brave enough to approach Mama Kalong to ask about the place. Ayu steps up and approaches the owner and asks the question on behalf of all the women. The women then find out that they are going to be turned as prostitutes by Mama Kalong. None of those women could accept the truth except Ayu, the one who accepts it without any problem.

"Don't you feel like something strange is going on? Aren't you worried about anything?" "worry comes from ignorance," said Ayu. "So you think you know what is going to happen to us?" asked Ola "Yes," she replied, "We are going to be made into prostitutes." They all knew it, but only Ayu was brave enough to say it." (Kurniawan, 2002: 82)

It seems that Ayu is both mentally and socially brave enough to accept her fate as a prostitute for the Japanese soldiers other than any other women in her group. She does not care about how they are going to be treated by the Japanese soldiers nor does she care to find an escape route to run away from the house. Ayu seems to be like a heartless woman for all the other women, but she actually cares about her friends. What she does is for the sake of her friends. She tells them a few ways so that they would not be ravished by the Japanese soldiers every night.

"Lie down like a corpse, until they get bored," she said. But the girls found that to be even more dreadful. To lie quite while someone assaulted their body and fucked them, none of them could imagine it. "Or try to find a guy out of all of them who you like a little, and service him with your full attention, and make him addicted to you so that he will come back every evening and pay you for the entire night. Servicing the same person over and over is way better than sleeping with lots of different men" (Kurniawan, 2002: 90-91)

It points out that Ayu is quite respected by all the women in her group. She is considered as the leader of the group. All of the women follow her suggestion even though it will not work. Ayu even gains some trust from the owner of the house, Mama Kalong. Both of them become acquaintances in just a week because of Ayu's calm demeanor. While everybody wastes their time chatting and entertains themselves with

funny story, Ayu spends most of her time talking to Mama Kalong. She tells Ayu that she owns another brothel at the end of the wharf, and consider them all as lucky women for being transferred into this house, but Ayu gives her a very brief respond.

“You all are lucky not to be doing it day and night,” said Mama Kalong. “Plus the low-ranking officers are way bigger assholes.”

“there’s no differences between low-level officers and the emperor of japan,” said Ayu. “they all target female genitalia.”

(Kurniawan, 2002: 91)

The quotation sets out that Ayu does not care about what Mama Kalong says about them being lucky for being transferred into her house. For her, all the Japanese soldiers are the same, whether they are low or high ranked. All of them just want to ravish all the women to increase their morale, and let out their frustration. As week goes by, Ayu finds out that she is pregnant, but she does not even bother thinking about it. Instead of crying and stressed out because of her pregnancy, she sews some clothes for her baby and even still is able to make a joke out of it.

“As always, during the middle of the day they had a lot of free time.

The girls would gather to gossip and chat. Some played cards and others helped Ayu sew small clothes for her baby. They were thrilled that one of them was going to give birth, and their hearts pounded in anticipation as they waited for the baby’s entrance into this vicious world. Sometimes they talked about war. There was a gossip that the allied troops would attack certain pockets of the Japanese military and the girls hoped that Halimunda would be one of them.

(Kurniawan, 2002: 92-93)

It can be seen that the women are all very happy to hear about Ayu’s pregnancy. They even help her sew small clothes for her baby and laugh at Ayu’s joke about the baby’s father being Japanese. This shows that Ayu is not bothered with her pregnancy after getting ravished by the Japanese soldier. She happily accepts the fact that she is pregnant and still able to make all of her friends laugh with her joke.

4.3 Moral Bravery

Often, this act of bravery can be seen in our daily live when someone is trying to protect his or her friend from being physically or verbally abused or even bullied by other people. This act forces the actor to have a strong mental and physical bravery within themselves, for this act does not give the actor a direct reward for the thing that they do. In *Beauty Is A wound*, the author shows how the protagonist applies moral bravery in living her daily life, as verified in the quotation below:

“I have family treasure,” replied Ayu, “Before the war I buried all of my grandmother’s jewelry in a secret place and no one knows about it except me and the god.” “and what if god stole it?” “then I’ll come back and whore for you to pay off my debt.” (Kurniawan, 2002: 104)

Ayu will do anything to achieve her goal, even though she has to sell her dignity to Mama Kalong to pay her debt. The author also shows how Ayu dismantling the septic tank pipe inside the bathroom in her house. She works with several people, who

are willingly helping her, to dismantle the pipe in order to find the treasure that she buries within the pipe, but then the result disappoints her.

“Ayu was sure that they had already removed all the excrement and soil that she had stashed there. There were no necklaces or golden bracelets--there were only mounds of rotting earth, brown and humid she didn't believe that the jewellery could have rotted away with the shit so she abandoned her work and gave up, grumbling “God stole it.”” (Kurniawan, 2002: 106)

Being a brave woman, she is not afraid of doing such a dirty work, even though she knows that it will damage her social image towards other people who help her. All that she really cares is to find the treasure that she buries inside the septic tank pipe, which she will use to pay both the wages of her maid and gardener, also her debt to Mama Kalong. She never thinks of running out from responsibility for what she has done before; it is her duty to pay them all.

5. Conclusion

It is interesting to note that Ayu shows her physical bravery to all of her inmates to get survive throughout the war by eating everything she can find in the prison. She boils a leech that is filled with cow blood in it and then drink it. By her social bravery, the novel depicts that Ayu calmly answers the question of one of her friends who is asking where they are going when the Japanese army captures them as a prisoners of war. She also shows her moral bravery when she speaks to Mama Kalong begging her to lend Ayu some money to feed her children. In return, she will pay it back with the treasure she buries deep within her old house, and if she cannot afford to pay it she has to work for Mama Kalong for her life time. By this it is obviously proved that the three kinds of bravery: physical bravery, social bravery, and moral bravery are found in the novel and conducted by the protagonist.

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