



Representation of Racial Issue in Poetry “Passing Time” by Maya Angelou

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Abstract

This study discusses the analysis of a poem by American poet Maya Angelou entitled *Passing Time*. This study aims to determine the effect of racism that occurs in this poem. And this article also aims to remind people about how big the effect of racism is. In this study the authors used a qualitative descriptive methods with the theories of racism by Ali Rattansi. The theories of racism were used with the aim of knowing the effects of racism that occur in real life. These results show types of racism that can be found in the poem such as discriminations, injustice, skin color, segregation, in this poem also found racist acts against black people. This poem tells about someone who has black and white skin color which Angelou describes in this poem as twilight and dusk. Angelou tries to suggest that there is no difference between two skin tones/skin tones.

Keywords: *Discrimination, Poetry, Racism, Skin tone, Skin color.*

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INTRODUCTION

Literary work is an actual expression of artistic imagination as a manifestation in the lives of people who were densely packed, using short language resulted a good positive impact on the wider community (Esten, 1978: 9). Writing or creating a work does not need to use long sentences, even just a few Words are able to convey a long meaning. Hudson (1958: 94) stated that literature describes a very broad scope of life despite its own desires to make an object in literary work. In other words, literature is a reflection of an expression of one's own intuitive life. Hence, literary works are created through self-reflection in the form of sentences. Many types of literary works consist of poetry, rhymes, romances, novels, short stories, fairy tales, legends, drama, and poems. It looks very simple but still promising a deep meaning making the reader think and imagine reaching the pleasure (Anindita, 2017: 19).

Poetry is one of the ways to convey the aspirations of beauty, peace, cruelty and even criminal acts happened in a certain area. Every time the taste and concept of aesthetic change (Pradopo, 2000: 3). Many writers wrote their own experiences through the contents of the poem to sound the social issues like racism. Lustig (2003: 24) said that for those who have a big power used to oppress and exploit other people. The term called racism evokes enthusiasm and emotional reaction.

Racism can be occurred from how people or group of people creating a stigma to other people or a group of people. Racism often happen to someone who is different from other people around him. The aspects can be triggered racism to occurs are immigration, religion, ethnics, skin tone, or something different from the surroundings.

Racism is often found in daily life, but it happens beyond our awareness. for example, the case of teacher racism towards students who come from Papua in Jember, Indonesia. The teacher calls the student "si hitam" (the black boy) just because the student did not do the homework. Yet, the teacher concerned apologized to the student. This case has something in common with Angelou's poetry, "*Passing time*", which contains skin color/tone issue or racial. According to Audrey Smedley, "Racism, also called racialism, is the belief that humans can be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called "races"; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others."

Racism is still very urgent to analyze because in the colonial era of racism, even today racism still exists among the people. Racism does not only occur in middle class people, even those who have high positions still experience racism. Another reason is wanting to find out why someone can commit racism

even when a country is independent, and another reason is because racism is a trended issue in the world. Literature is able to mediate the delivery of messages. Everyone is expected to read the message of poems and avoid to race other people.

In this poetry, the problem of this study addresses racism. As can be seen in the poetry, this poetry describing how Angelou fight against the racism that often happens in America. Basically, this poetry talking about that there are no differences between black skin color and any skin color.

As can be seen, Angelou write this poetry over the acts of racism she has received as a black people. This type of issue can cause a bigger problem if it is not handled properly such as bad stereotypes, discrimination, or even disparities in access to education, employment, and other opportunities. However, the issue in this poetry should be analyzed more deeper in order to find out more about what kind of racism that implied in Angelou's poetry. It could be the act of racism that the poet experienced. But that does not rule out the possibility that Angelou wrote this poem on the basis of representing black people.

METHOD

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research, which refers to the research based on qualitative data taken from Maya Angelou's poems. The object of the research consists of two object, namely formal object and material object. The formal object of this research is optimistic view of life, and the material object of this research is Maya Angelou's poem. The data source of this research is divided into two, namely primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source of the study the poem itself, from the one of Poem by Maya Angelou entitled "*The Passing Time*". The secondary data sources are Biography of the author namely Maya Angelou, websites in the internet about Maya Angelou, and other resources which support to analyze. The method of data collection is document analysis by collecting, note taking, and selecting both of the primary data and the secondary data. Technique of the data analysis used by the writer is Descriptive technique, in which the writer interprets the text and the content relating to the psychological condition of the major character.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Racism in this research divided into two they are the expression of racism in Maya Angelou's poem which explained in kind of diction and the criticism against types of racism in Maya Angelou's poems. Angelou with her poem reflected the action of racism specifically the action of white people (Caucasian) toward black people (African-American) not only as an idea but an action which recorded in history of America turn into so many unequal judgment as it turn into slavery, discrimination, segregation, hegemony, prejudice and stereotype and class struggle specifically to the class conflict.

The poet compares light and dark skin tones to sunrise and sunset. One is "like the dawn", the other, his, is "like the dusk". At first, they look different, but as the next four lines describe, they are not. If you pay attention, you will notice that there is no difference between sunrise and sunset. In the end, it's all the same. *"Passing Time"* by Maya Angelou is a six-line poem divided into couplets or two lines. These lines do not follow a specific rhyming pattern or metrical pattern. They vary in length, but all are about three to four words long and three to seven syllables. Although there is no consistent rhyme scheme in this poem, there are some examples of half-rhymes. Half rhyme, also known as oblique or part rhyme, is observed through the repetition of assonance or consonance. This means that either a vowel or a consonant is used again in one or more verses. For example, "skin" and "start" lines one and three, and "like" and "my" lines one and two. Angelou uses a number of poetic devices in *The Past*. These include alliteration, enjambment, metaphor, and personification. The latter happens when the poet imbues a non-person or an object with human qualities. In the third to sixth lines, the poet talks about human skin. He gives it the ability to "paint ... the beginning" and the end.

A simile is a comparison of two different things that use the words "as" or "like". The poet uses such figurative language to say that one thing is similar to another, not as a metaphor that it "is" another. There are two clear examples in the first pair. The poet compares his skin to "dusk" and the listener to "dawn". Alliteration occurs when words are used in sequence, or at least appear close to each other and begin with the same sound. For example, "dawn" and "dusk" are one and the other in a row. Another important technique often used in poetry is enjambment. This occurs when a line is cut before its natural stopping point. Enjambment forces the reader to the next line, and quickly to the next. To comfortably solve a sentence or phrase, it is necessary to move forward. For example, moving between the second and third and five to six rows. In the first lines of *"Past Tense"*, the speaker begins by comparing someone else's skin with the metaphor of "dawn". Here he means someone with fair skin.

They are white and their skin tells him the light of the beginning of the day. Equally beautiful is her skin, which looks "matte". It is dark, the sun is setting. The reader should note the use of alliteration in the first two lines with "dawn" and "dusk". It is also a good example of consonance with the use of hard "k" in the words "skin", "like", "like" and "Twilight". These two lines are interconnected. There is no punctuation at the end of the first line, encouraging the reader to jump to the second to see what happens next. The same can be said about the transition between these second and third rows.

Lines 3-4

The next two lines of "Passing Time" call one of those two colors a "beginning/definitive end" painting. It's not an entirely happy message, and it's not clear what skin tone he associates these images with. Both belong to the ranks. The text suggests that something will change. There is a transition between how things are now and how they will be in the future. There will be a "certain end" to this way of life.

Lines 5-6

Second, the end of a definitely start. In the third couplet of "Passing Time", he ends his cue. Because things change and now two skin tones that were originally different are the same. The difference between sunset and sunrise merged and became one. The second skin tone, whatever it may be, shows us "the end of a certain beginning. For these purposes, he tries to combine two colors that are ultimately the same. He tries to show that there is no real difference between the two.

CONCLUSION

In Maya Angelou's poem "*Passing Time*," she explores racism through the expression of racism and the criticism of types of racism. The poem reflects the actions of white people (Caucasian) towards African-Americans, which have led to unequal judgment, slavery, discrimination, segregation, hegemony, prejudice, and class struggle. Angelou compares light and dark skin tones, comparing them to sunrise and sunset. The poem uses half-rhymes, oblique or part rhyme, and poetic devices such as alliteration, enjambment, metaphor, and personification. In the third to sixth lines, the poet talks about human skin, giving it the ability to paint the beginning and end. Alliteration and enjambment are important techniques in poetry, allowing the reader to move forward and solve sentences or phrases. In "Past Tense," the speaker compares someone else's skin with the metaphor of "dawn," comparing fair skin

with dark, matte skin. The use of alliteration and consonance in the poem encourages the reader to move forward and solve sentences.

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