

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “ON THE PULSE OF MORNING” BY MAYA ANGELOU

Nabilah Haruna, Aulia Apriana

nabilahinsan@gmail.com, aulia.apriana.fs@um.ac.id

Abstract: *The poem On the Pulse of Morning, by Maya Angelou, as the research object in this study aims to find out three main aspects of the poem: 1) types of lexical choice, 2) types of grammatical manipulation, and 3) poetic devices which occur on the poem. This research used descriptive qualitative approaches with a stylistic analysis method. The data was taken from the text of the poem On the Pulse of Morning by Maya Angelou. From the research questions, the researcher found out the following answers: first, the types of lexical choices are pulse of morning, a rock, a river, a tree, armed for slaughter, and many more. It helps the poet in creating the broaden image in some parts to affirm what the poet would like to tell about. Second, the types of grammatical manipulation are the same weight of NP, NP, NP; the absence of ‘and’, linking verb ‘are’ and relative clause marks ‘who’ and ‘which’. The poet used them to simplify the text or the ideas that the poet would like to deliver. Third, the poetic devices are personification and six other devices, used to make the poem ear-catching and touch the readers’ hearts.*

Keywords: *Stylistic Analysis, On the Pulse of Morning*

INTRODUCTION

Poem is a manifestation works which create by someone called a poet. Poem is also the same with poetry that people familiar with. Poem can make introvert people become more confident to show their feelings and describe many things with various expression of language, build emotions, and also play with the words. In our earth, there are many people who are popular because of their works and their writing on poem. They created bunch of poetry which are insightful and often being the representative of many people’s thought and based on deep of heart.

There are many poets who are popular with their poems, and according to (sebinmathew, 2017), there are 10 famous poet in the world, robert frost, rabindranathtagore, lord byron, john keats, percys Shelley, alfred lord tennyson, williamshakespeare, samueltaylorcoleridge, williamwordsworth and mayaangelou. From the ten names of poets, mayaangelou is on the first number. So, it means that mayaangelou’s works are definitely awesome and incredible.

Talking about poetry, many people have different perspective to define what is poem itself. However, in the cambridge dictionary, a poem is a piece of writing in which the words are arranged in separate lines, often ending in rhyme, and are chosen for their sound and for the images and ideas they suggest. Therefore, the researcher decided to analyze a poem because of several reason.

First, poem is one of creation of works in writing that may found new words which express the feeling through each verse. Second, the authors can deliver their thoughts about many things that happened in their life and in their surrounding through poem. Third, it is such a piece of works that can be a hobby for anyone. Fourth, there is something inside the poem that can go beyond when people recite the poem with the intonation, the right rhythm, and the play of rhyme. It is really interesting to analyze what behind the power of making a poem and what aspects it may appealing to readers’ heart from a poem.

Related to this research, there were two researchers from the same department of English language and literature who already analyzed a poem in stylistic analysis way. First, Natalia (2009) did a thesis with the title “*structural and contextual features of waltwhitman’s poem a child said, what is the grass?: a stylistic analysis.*” It presented about the interpretation of the message in the poem by digging up the structural and contextual features of the poem. In this research, she found some aspects related to the structural features in the poem which include three linguistic features; phonology, syntax and semantics. Meanwhile, in the contextual features, she found that the poem has embrace society, culture

and poet's background. Moreover, the researcher combined between the two of structural and contextual features of the poem to get the messages inside the poem itself.

Second, the research about "*John Hollander's poems: a stylistic analysis*" by Dinar Anggarini (2011). The researcher took three poems created by Hollander, Adam's task, swan and shadow, and for "fiddle-de-dee". This research seems to have adopted Natalia's research method and found out that both linguistic structure and poetic features work together to reveal the message of the poem. Both researcher did studies within the area of stylistics, taking different poems as their research objects. Moreover, their research findings seemed to be complementary with each other. That are, revealing poetic message relies on linguistic structures, poetic features, and social context.

By contrast, the present research is more interested in the lexical and grammatical manipulation aspects of poetic writing and also in poetic devices employed in poetic writing. As for the research object, the researcher is interested to analyze "*on the pulse of morning*" by Mayaangelou (1993). This is a very special poem, for it was written for the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of president bill clinton in 1993. Moreover, about the poet, Mayaangelou, according to her biography, she got grammy award as best spoken word album for the audio version of the poem when she recited on the pulse of morning in front of president bill clinton.

METHOD

As regards to the aim of conducting this research to analyze a poem *on the pulse of morning*, the researcher decided to use qualitative method. To achieve the objectives of the research, the present study requires qualitative data in the form of words rather in number figures. It also related to the statement of Bogdan and Taylor (1975) that a research procedure which is used to describe in details human behaviors or human works, facts, documents, and natural phenomena is called qualitative method. In addition, Eunsook and Willis (2000) explain that descriptive research is a study of status and is widely used in education, nutrition, epidemiology, and the behavioral sciences. Its value is based on the premise that problems can be solved and practices improved through observation, analysis, and description. So, the research design in this study is used qualitative and descriptive method.

The object of this study is the text of the poem entitled *on the pulse of morning* by Mayaangelou. It has six pages with 105 lines with free verse, in which the researcher had analyzed in three main points. Those are the lexical choice, grammatical manipulation and the poetic devices.

The primary instrument or the key of the instrument in conducting this study was the researcher who also plays the roles as data collector and analyst. It strengthen by Nasution (1998) and Moleong (2006) that the researcher himself was the key informant of the study in conducting qualitative research (Natalia, 2009). Related to this view, Danim (2002) mentioned about four important points to be succeed in collecting data. It depends on how good the skills of the researcher in collecting the data by interview lines, observation sheets, questionnaires, and data forms for line of work (Natalia, 2009). Meanwhile, to enrich the knowledge and the ability of the researcher and to construct the ideas, the researcher got from her advisors, books, journal, websites, dictionaries, and the text of the poem.

The data of this research were taken from a poem by Mayaangelou entitled *on the pulse of morning* which created in January 1993 for the inaugural ceremony for the president of bill clinton in united states of America. This poem has 105 lines with free verse and normal pattern, and use many personification.

In this study, the researcher applied several steps to analyze this poem, it is stated as follows; first of all the researcher collected the data by reading the text of the whole poem. Secondly, the reduction process, it was conducted to know whether the words is used to the categorization or not. Third, finding out the lexical choice of the words in the poem. Fourth, analyzed how the poet works in the grammatical manipulation by doing paraphrase. Fifth, to fit the category of poetic devices which has been explained in the theoretical framework with the words used in this poem. Last but not least, the researcher explored the finding by answering the research questions and discussed it more in the next chapter.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 LEXICAL CHOICE

Lexical choice is the same as diction that someone uses in her or his writing. In this poem *on the pulse of morning* the researcher found several lexical choices that are used by Mayaangelou to make her poem more entertaining to the readers. This poem was written by Mayaangelou, popular as the best female poet from African-American blood. Her poem, *on the pulse of morning* is powerful and brings an issue of peacefulness and togetherness in the world. It is related to the major theme that this poem has the major theme of hope, unity, courage, and change (literary devices, no year).

a) The title

“*On the pulse of morning*”, chosen by the poet, shows the high intention of morning, the word “pulse” is higher than “power” of morning. It describes the identity of living with nature. It is also mentioned in an essay by an anonymous author that since this was the start of a new term and a new presidency for America, angelou presents it as a new dawn. The themes she develops through ‘on the pulse of morning’ are also the same themes clinton spoke about in his speech. This poem made angelou the first African-American, and the first woman, spoke at a presidential inauguration, and thus cemented her literary status as one of the great poems ever written in America in the twentieth century (no name, 2014).

b) (line 1 to 8)

This stanza describes the moment which happened in the past. It is about our planet, earth which had ever been inhabited by mastodon and dinosaurs. It is also about the history of nature that cannot be replaced because it has marked and we can still feel it by the heritages. This also gets support from the analysis of theme by an anonymous article that mentions that the theme of this stanza is that “the unforgettable quality of historical events is seen in stanza 1 (where dinosaurs are shown to have left a mark on the earth’s surface that cannot be removed)” (no name, 2014). Moreover, in this stanza, the researcher found out three words as the lexical choice that are put on the first line *a rock, a river, a tree*. This first line of the poem “*on the pulse of morning*” presents the portrait of pure nature which is closed to human beings on this earth.

c) (line 9 to 13)

In this stanza, the poet describes how the rock as the place wants to make people face their destiny no matter what it is. They have to face it with courage, there is no place to hide. People have to be brave if they act for the right things. This is related to an essay written by an anonymous author that mentioned that “the rock signifies strength. The strength for us as people everywhere in the world to stand together as one. Not to hide behind shame, humility or cowardness, but be able to stand strong in our right for what we believe in and what we know is right” (no name, 2019).

d) (line 19 to 22)

in this stanza, human beings only know about killed people, but the rock as the place wants them to show it off to the world, not hiding their face. It is related to the essay that explain about if humans do not stop hiding from the truth, they cannot delete the wrong in the past. In addition, anonymous author said that it was like the thoughtless, senseless violence of “slaughter,” words “spilling” out of a mouth suggest a lack of thought or intention (no name, no year). It means people are described in a very rude way.

e) (line 23 to 28)

In this stanza, the poet describe the situations of war in the past. It made country or nation protected themselves by their own strategy. The river wants to serve people and make them rest in a peacefulway.

f) (line 29 to 33)

In this stanza, the poet explain how the impact of the war in competing the profit. Related with the statement of anonym who said that this line is an indictment of capitalism and militarism as a scourge

upon the earth, environmental and survival. Another anonymous author also said that at one point the river explains how the result of manmade industry has littered hazardous waste all along the shoreline (no name, no year). The river also call people to come to the riverside if they will not study war anymore. This is about humanity that the river wants to deliver to the people.

g) (line 34 to 38)

In this stanza, the river wants to sing a song to the people with peace and unity. One anonymous author said that this is kind of the “negro” tradition, to sing a song with nature (no name, no year). To make all people in one together with peace and harmony. In addition, one author wrote that here the river speaks about a time of innocence in which, as plato said, “man’s greatest wisdom lay in knowing that he knows nothing and which has now changed into a time which man has gained knowledge, and with it pride, to develop skepticism towards the simple truths of peace and harmony.”

h) (line 79 to 89)

In this stanza, the poet builds the spirit to all people, every gender, and every age to leave the fear and face the life with courage. They all can get the opportunities which offer to them. The anonym added that equalities is an important concern in the world today. We all have the same opportunities in our country, no matter when in history we appeared.

i) (line 90 to 97)

In this stanza, Mayaangelou expresses in the day she delivered the poet in front of the people that that day is the beautiful day to have the new opportunity with courage, also supported by the nature in the country.

j) (line 98 to 105)

In this stanza, angelou gives the greeting towards all people and says that they have to be confidence to walk on this planet, face the days and get the chance with new hope and new happiness.

In short, by seeing those lexical choices, the researcher can conclude that the poet, Mayaangelou has given many different words and phrases to make her poem more delightful and meaningful for the readers by selecting the words from its meaning. This is also related to the statement of Manfredstede that lexical choice is difficult due to the choice of word very often carries implications that can change the overall message significantly.

3.2 GRAMMATICAL MANIPULATION

In this part, the researcher found out that there are several parts in the stanza of the poem *on the pulse of morning* which manipulate grammatical rules. In this explanation below, the researcher presented the evidence of grammatical manipulation that the poet uses.

a) Line 1 to 8 (stanza 1)

“*a rock, a river, a tree*”, in this first line of the poem *on the pulse of morning* - presents three subjects, but the absence of “and”, makes this first line become same weight as (np, np, np). The first stanza contains (np, vp) become one sentence with the notes that absence of “and” and the absence of the relative clause mark “which”.

A rock (which) hosts to species long since departed

A river (which) hosts to species long since departed

A tree (which) hosts to species long since departed

Those three subjects contain hosts as the present participle verb of the clause.

b) Line 14 to 18

In this stanza the poet omitted the relative clause mark “who”. In this following sentence, the researcher would put the relative clause mark in the poem.

NP { you (who were) created only a little lower than the angels;
have crouched too long in the bruising darkness;
have lain too long
face down
In ignorance } **Adv of manner**
c) *Line 26 to 28 (stanza 8)*

In this stanza the researcher found out the absence of a linking verb “is” and the subject “each of you”.

Each of you (is) a bordered country,
(each of you is) delicate and strangely made proud,
yet (each of you is) thrusting perpetually under siege.

d) *Line 29 to 31*

in this stanza the researcher found out the absence of “and”.

NP { your armed struggles for profit
VP { have left collars of waste upon
NP { my shore,
NP { (and) currents of debris upon my breast.
S = npvpnpnp

e) *Line 61 to 64*

In this part, there is the absence of relative clause mark (who) and absence of a linking verb (are) and also the absence of (and).

You, the turk, the swede, the german, the scot...
You the ashanti, the yoruba, the kru,
(who) bought, sold, stolen, (are) arriving on a nightmare
(and) praying for a dream.

f) *Line 98 to 105*

In this part, there are many absences of “and” as the usage to parallel inside the sentence and to parallel between the phrase and the clause.

Here on the pulse of this new day
you may have the grace to look up and out
and into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, (and) your country
and say simply, very simply (and) with hope
good morning.

In conclusion, the researcher believe that mayaangelou wrote this poem and constructed it based on the rules of grammar, meanwhile she was doing some manipulation to make her poem more effectively to read, minimized the usage of repetition words, phrases, relative clause mark, and the conjunction. She tried to use the poetic license that allowed her to break the standard rules and might create new style in her poem.

3.3 POETIC DEVICES

In this part, the researcher presents the result of finding the poetic devices in the poem *on the pulse of morning*. There are seven poetic devices employed in the poem namely personification, metaphor, symbolism, alliteration, line, free verse, and chorus.

- Personification

Personification is one of the poetic devices that non-human objects are given human action or emotions. The followings are the evidence of personification used in the poem *on the pulse of morning*.

(line 9): "but today, the rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully"

In this line, the poet describes the rock, an inanimate object can do something that only living object can do, for example "cry". This word is kind of emotion that familiar with human being, but here, the poet put the rock may cry out, to express the emotion of being the rock.

(line 24): "a river sings a beautiful song"

In this line, the poet describes the river. An inanimate object can behave like living object usually do, for example "sing". This word is an expression that is familiar with human being, but here, the poet puts the river being able to sing a song, to deliver such a symbolism that the river can make musical sounds with the voice, and make a high-pitched whistling or buzzing sound, (oxford dictionary).

(line 41): "the singing river and the wise rock"

In this line the poet describes that the river is singing and there is a wise rock with the river. Meanwhile, singing is the activity that human being usually do. According to oxford dictionary, singing is the activity of performing songs or tunes by making musical sounds with voice. Moreover, the word "wise" which refers to the rock seems to show that the rock has experience, knowledge and good judgment.

(line 50): "today, the first and last of every tree speaks to humankind."

In this line, the poet given an illustration that the tree can say something in order to convey information towards the human being. People have known that a tree does not have mouth to speak, but here the poet made the tree can speak like human can do.

- Metaphor

Metaphor is one of poetic devices that is used for constructing comparison without the words like or as. It is also used for creating more imaginative and description for something.

Any broad of alarm of their hastening doom is lost in the gloom of dust and ages (line 7-8). One sentence in the two lines above has the meaning that in that situation the worried things was lost by the darkness of dust and ages.

- Symbolism

Symbolism is an artistic style using symbolic images to express mystical several kinds of emotions.

A rock symbolizes the place where people stay and live for their whole life.

A river symbolizes the peace of human being and the nature.

A tree symbolizes the unity and togetherness of all nations, religions, beliefs, occupations, and races.

Moreover, those three symbolisms are taken from the nature which are closed to human being.

- Alliteration:

Alliteration can be defined as a series of words, which occurred together in the same phrases or lines that have same first consonant sound.

Mark the mastodon, the letter "m" found in line 2.

Distant destiny, the consonant "d" found in line 11.

Midas and the mendicant, the letter “m” found in line 96.

Than the mastodon then, the letters “th” found in line 97.

- Line

Line is the poetic device which the poems made by line that do not form in paragraph. In this following is the form of line which is used in the poem *on the pulse of morning*.

*“a rock, a river, a tree
hosts to species long since departed,
mark the mastodon,
the dinosaur, who left dry tokens
of their sojourn here
on our planet floor,
any broad alarm of their of their hastening doom
is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.” (line 1-8).*

- Free verse

Free verse is the poetic device that the poem has no consistent pattern.

*“any broad alarm of their of their hastening doom
is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.
But today, the rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
come, you may stand upon my
back and face your distant destiny,
but seek no haven in my shadow.” (line 9-14)*

- Chorus

Chorus is a short part of the poem is repeated sometimes in the other part of the poem.

*A rock, a river, a tree (line 1)
I, the rock, i the river, i the tree (line 68)
The rock, the river, the tree, your country. (line 95)*

To sum up, from the explanation above, it can be assumed that the seven poetic devices which are employed in the poem *on the pulse of morning* are really constructed to make each lines related to one another. They also help the poet to develop emotions and create imaginative characters in the poem. The last but not least, the poetic devices are used to make beautiful writing and can deliver the important messages to the readers.

CONCLUSIONS

This research uncovers three principal ideas which are the answers to the research questions. Therefore, based on the findings, there are several points that can be concluded. First, the selection of words to form a phrase or a sentence is definitely important in creating a poem or poetry. Any kind of beautiful words is to help the poet in delivering the message towards the society in the form of creative writing. In this present study, the researcher found out that mayaangelou as writer of *“on the pulse of morning”* is so much enthusiastic in using nature and environment as the objects of aesthetic exploration in her poem. It brings the issue of humanity, tolerance, and new hope for new opportunity in the world. The types of lexical choice in this poem are heavily related to things that we usually find in natural environment around us like rock, tree, and the river. In addition, it also uses the gender, race, nationality, belief, and occupation as part of the lexical choice in this poem.

Second, the technique to manipulate the grammar in poetry is also a part of creative writing process of a poet. The ideas of each stanza need a formulation to make them relate well to each other. While combining the ideas in each stanza and making them relate to the next stanza, it is also needs good

grammar to help the readers understand what the author wants to deliver in the poem. The researcher found out that in this poem there are many absences of the word “and”, the relative clause mark “who”, “which”, and also the different place of noun phrase and verb phrase. The grammatical manipulation in the poem results in presenting the theme in a simply but interesting way. The poet reduces some conjunctions and relatives clause markers to make the poem more effective by using short sentences.

Third, the researcher also found out several poetic devices that are used in the poem *on the pulse of morning*. One kind of poetic devices that is used frequently in this poem is personification. The poet is so much creative in exploring the theme by presenting nature as a poetic subject. Accordingly, objects in nature (particularly, the rock, the tree, and the river) behave like persons—they talk to humans the way humans talk to each other. This poem is created in free verse in the form of lines which contain several numbers of verses.

In short, the researcher finally found out three main aspects as answers to the three research questions. These main aspects are important to put on the poetry to create a piece of better and beautiful writing. Lexical choice, grammatical manipulation and poetic devices should be included in a poem to make sure that it has good quality to read, while it is meant for entertaining, educating, or persuading people through its poetic message.

REFERENCES

- Baldick, Chris. 1996. *Oxford Concise Dictionary Of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press.
- Bartleby Research. 2016. *Analysis Of ‘On The Pulse Of Morning’ Essay*. Retrieved February 26, 2020, From <https://www.Bartleby.Com/Essay/Analysis-Of-On-The-Pulse-Of-Morning-Pkexvg5yljxq>
- Bartleby Research. 2016. *Maya Angelou’s Inaugural Poem On The Pulse Of The Morning*. Retrieved February 26, 2020, From <https://www.Bartleby.Com/Essay/Analysis-Of-On-The-Pulse-Of-Morning-Pkexvg5yljxq>
- Beaming Notes. 2014. *On The Pulse Of Morning Analysis By Maya Angelou*. Retrieved February 26, 2020, From <https://Beamingnotes.Com/2014/09/25/Pulse-Morning-Analysis-Maya-Angelou/>
- Bogdan, R.C& Taylor S. 1975. *Introduction To Qualitative Research Methods. A Phenomological Approach To Social Sciences*. London: Wiley.
- Brinks, Melissa. 2019. *The 20 Poetic Devices You Must Know*. Prepscholar. Retrieved December 19, 2019 From <https://Blog.Prepscholar.Com/Poetic-Devices-Poetry-Terms>
- Cambridge Dictionary. 2020. *Poem*. Retrieved January 12, 2020, From <https://Dictionary.Cambridge.Org/Dictionary/English/Poem>
- Danim, Sudarwan. 2002. *MenjadiPenelitiKualitatif*. Bandung : Cv. PustakaSetia.
- Editors. 2014. *Maya Angelou. The Biography.Com*. Retrieved February 24, 2020, From <https://www.Biography.Com/Writer/Maya-Angelou>
- Galperin, I.R. 2010. *English Stylistics*. Urrs
- Grades Fixer. 2019. *“On The Pulse Of Morning” Analysis*. Retrieved February 26, 2020, From <https://Gradesfixer.Com/Free-Essay-Examples/On-The-Pulse-Of-Morning-Analysis/>
- Gardenia, Dinar Anggarini. 2011. Thesis. *John Hollander’s Poems: A Stylistic Analysis*.

- Kies, Daniel. 2017. Grammatical Manipulation Of The Audience. Papyr.Com. Retrieved December 15, 2019, From <https://Papyr.Com/Hypertextbooks/Comp2/Manipula.Htm>
- KohE.T., Owen W.L. 2000. *Descriptive Research And Qualitative Research. In: Introduction To Nutrition And Health Research*. Springer, Boston, Ma
- Laruan, Gladys.M. *Stylistics In Linguistics*. Academia.Edu.Retrieved December 15, 2019, From https://Www.Academia.Edu/30971679/Stylistics_In_Linguistics
- Literary Devices. No Year. *Summary Of On The Pulse Of Morning*. Retrieved January 29, 2020, From <https://Literarydevices.Net/On-The-Pulse-Of-Morning/>
- Mathew, Sebin. 2017. *Top 10 Very Famous Poets*.Listonap.Com. Retrieved December 8, 2019, From <https://Listontap.Com/Top-10-Famous-Poets/>
- Merjen. 2017. *Stylistics As A Branch Of Linguistic*.Prezi.Com. Retrieved December 13, 2019, From <https://Prezi.Com/D5wrzymjbm80/Stylistics-As-A-Branch-Of-Linguistic/>
- Natalia, Febrina. 2009. Thesis. *Structural And Contextual Features Of Walt Whitman's Poem A Child Said, What Is The Grass?: A Stylistic Analysis*.
- Ortega, Angel. 2014. *Stylistic Introduction, Definitions Of Stylistics*. Retrieved January 29, 2020, From <https://Www.Slideshare.Net/Angelortega/Stylistics-Introduction-Definitions-Of-Stylistics>
- Paperap.Com. No Year. *Maya Angelou On The Pulse Of Morning Analysis*. Retrieved December 21, 2019, From <https://Paperap.Com/Paper-On-An-Interpretation-Of-On-The-Pulse-Of-Morning/>
- Scrib.Id. 2014. *Lexical Choice*. Retrieved December 14, 2019, From <https://Id.Scribd.Com/Document/246578264/Lexical-Choice>
- Shodhganga. No Year. *Stylistic Analysis*. Retrieved December 18, 2019, From https://Shodhganga.Inflibnet.Ac.In/Bitstream/10603/121820/8/08_Chapter%2020.Pdf