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Colonial Representation of Caribbean in Rosaline Bacchus' Haiku Poems

Epata Puji Astuti

 English Letters Department, Universitas
 Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

 Tatang Iskarna

 English Letters Department, Universitas
 Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

The Caribbean has a long history which is reflected in their literature. The existence of Haiku poems in Caribbean literature is an interesting thing to be analyzed. The object of this research is Haiku poems written by a Caribbean poet, Rosaline Bacchus. A Haiku poem is a short poem originally from Japan, usually consisting of 5-7-5 or 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. Although it is a short poem, Haiku can depict the reality and experience of Caribbean people. This research aims to describe the diction and imagery that appear in Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems and to reveal the colonial representation in the poems. The researcher uses the explication theory to analyze the diction and imagery and postcolonial theory to reveal the colonial representation inside the poems. This research is descriptive qualitative research. The textual analysis method is used to find out the meaning of each line of the poem. From the analysis, it can be seen that the diction of the Haiku poems is dominated by denotative and concrete words. Denotative and concrete words help the poet to describe the situation during the Caribbean's colonization explicitly. Besides, the poems are also dominated by visual, auditory, and kinesthetic imagery. The imagery and the diction bring the reader to feel the reality that happened during the colonization era. The researchers hope that this research will give positive





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Keywords:

Caribbean, colonial, Haiku,
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Colonial Representation of Caribbean in Rosaline Bacchus' Haiku Poems

Epata Puji Astuti¹ ✉ and Tatang Iskarna²

¹²English Letters Department, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Epata Puji Astuti, **E-mail:** epatapuji@usd.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Caribbean has a long history which is reflected in their literature. The existence of Haiku poems in Caribbean literature is an interesting thing to be analyzed. The object of this research is Haiku poems written by a Caribbean poet, Rosaline Bacchus. A Haiku poem is a short poem originally from Japan, usually consisting of 5-7-5 or 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. Although it is a short poem, Haiku can depict the reality and experience of Caribbean people. This research aims to describe the diction and imagery that appear in Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems and to reveal the colonial representation in the poems. The researcher uses the explication theory to analyze the diction and imagery and postcolonial theory to reveal the colonial representation inside the poems. This research is descriptive qualitative research. The textual analysis method is used to find out the meaning of each line of the poem. From the analysis, it can be seen that the diction of the Haiku poems is dominated by denotative and concrete words. Denotative and concrete words help the poet to describe the situation during the Caribbean's colonization explicitly. Besides, the poems are also dominated by visual, auditory, and kinesthetic imagery. The imagery and the diction bring the reader to feel the reality that happened during the colonization era. The researchers hope that this research will give positive contributions to the development of literature, especially Island studies.

KEYWORDS

Caribbean, colonial, Haiku, representation

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1. Introduction

The Caribbean archipelago consists of small islands with countries we know today, such as Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba, Trinidad, and Tobago. Puerto Rico has a long history. The arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 brought great changes to the Caribbean. Since then, European nations such as Spain, Portugal, France, England also came to these islands and demonstrated their dominance by establishing trading posts in the Caribbean island regions. The Europeans also began to form colonies and began to bring slaves from their other colonies in Asia and Africa to the Caribbean islands for work. Africans, South Asians, and Indians who were brought by the colonial government to migrate to the Caribbean Islands are what shape the ethnic diversity in the Caribbean.

Rosaline Bacchus is part of the Caribbean diaspora. He is an import-export entrepreneur author of novels, poems, and short stories from the Caribbean. He was born in Georgetown, Republic of Guyana, a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Rosaline's grandfather was a Chinese immigrant who formed the British colony of Guiana. In 1853-1879, 14,000 Chinese workers were brought in by the British colonial government as contract workers on sugar cane plantations in the Caribbean. The majority of these Chinese workers live in Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana. Most of them came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau and then worked with African slaves on eight-year contracts. After their contracts expired, many of them chose to settle down in the Caribbean. Rosaline Bacchus' talent in the import-export trade was passed down from her grandfather, who was a Chinese-Guyanese. Not only that Rosaline Bacchus's poetry writing style was also influenced by the Asian culture that came from her grandfather. The Haiku poems she wrote were born from her experiences as a descendant of immigrants living in the Caribbean.

Haiku poetry is a short poem originating from Japan that has three lines, consisting of 17 syllables, where the first line consists of 5 syllables, the second line 7 syllables, and the third line 5 syllables. *Haiku* poetry also has no rhyme. The emergence of this poem was motivated by the Japanese people, who began to feel tired of writing long poems and full of rules. Some of the famous Haiku poets include Shiki Masaoka, Basho Matsuo, Buson Yosa, and Issa Kobayashi. Higginson (1996:28) states that haiku is a disclosure (recording) of an event that involves the author's ability to understand the forces of nature. Haiku poetry describes a real situation or reality clearly without abstract things, metaphors, comparisons, and personifications so that the aims and objectives are easier to understand. In Haiku poetry, what the poet focuses on is the moment that is perceived as an experience.

Two elements of literary works that are most prominent in analyzing Haiku poetry are diction and imagery. Diction is the choice of words that reflect the author's style of expression, and imagery is the poet's sensory experience to strengthen the image of the reader's thoughts and feelings. The short form of Haiku poetry makes every word choice meaningful. The diction in Haiku tends to be simple and general in everyday life so that it can convey the poet's intentions. The imagery in Haiku brings the reader to feel nature. The emergence of Haiku poetry writing style by a Caribbean-born writer is certainly very interesting to study, how the diction and imagery in his work can represent his experience as part of a Caribbean society that has experienced European colonization. Furthermore, this research will examine what experiences Rosaline Bacchus wants to convey in her work. Researchers hope that this research can contribute positively and enrich the study of islands (*Island Studies*), especially the Caribbean islands.

2. Literature Review

Research on colonial representation in the Caribbean Islands has not been done much. Most of the research topics still refer to Third World postcoloniality in general, as was done by I Putu Hendra Mas Martayana in 2020 entitled "*Postcoloniality in Third World Countries*." This study looks at the ambiguous representation of Eastern identity, hating the West, which is considered a source of demoralization but also loving the West as a source of inspiration for progress. Research on postcolonialism in the Caribbean community was also carried out by Gabriel Fajar Sasmita Aji in 2017 in his article entitled *Myth and Postcolonialism in Walcott's Omeros*. In his research, Gabriel Fajar tries to see how Walcott manipulates traditional philosophies related to Caribbean myths. From existing studies, this study tries to present a different thing, namely by examining how Haiku poetry voices colonial issues in the Caribbean Islands.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Object

The primary data of this research are Haiku poems by Rosaline Bacchus. These Haiku poems were written during the period 2011 to 2017. Some poems that taken as the object such as *Our Legacy*, *Purpose Driven*, *Street Children*, *The Top One Percent*, *Vengeance of Heaven*, *Human Bondage*, *Cane Sugar*, *Outside the Fence*, *The Word Corrupted*, *No Compassion*, *Seeds Among Thorns*. Secondary data consist of books on literature and history of Caribbean society, the theory of how to analyze Haiku poems, studies of postcolonialism, as well as various journals and articles related to postcolonialism of the Caribbean.

3.2 Research Approach

This research is qualitative descriptive research using the literature study method. The data collection technique used documentation, and the data were analyzed by the explication theory, which focused on diction and imagery analysis. Furthermore, the meaning obtained from the diction and imagery analysis will be analyzed using a postcolonial approach, which is to reveal the unbalanced interaction between the indigenous people who are controlled and the colonizer as the ruler. The data are classified to be analyzed in terms of the relationship between the indigenous people of the Caribbean islands and the colonizer as rulers.

4. Results and Discussion

A. Diction

Diction is one of the important physical structures in Haiku. The short form of Haiku makes the author must choose every word carefully and thoroughly. In every word choice by the author, the intention and purpose are stored to create a certain impression (as expected) to the reader. The meaning of word choice or diction is much broader than what is reflected by the relationship of the words. This term is not only used to state which words are used to express an idea or ideas, but also includes phraseology, language style, and expressions (Keraf, 2008: 22-23).

Haiku poems by Rosaline Bacchus are dominated by denotative & concrete diction that depict the life of the Caribbean people when they were colonized by Europeans. Rosaline describes the suffering of the indigenous people of the Caribbean. Words like hungry, kill children, long food lines, bomb, refugee, terror, rubble, slaves, bleeding, brutalized, hate color most of Rosaline's Haiku poetry. It is not difficult for the reader to understand these words because the suffering of the Caribbean people is described so explicitly. The nuances of war, slavery camps, refugee camps, and the harshness of street life are depicted directly. Only very few use figurative language. Here are examples of a Haiku poem by Rosaline Bacchus, which contains denotative and concrete meanings.

Our Legacy

Naked, we are born.
What will be our legacy
when we are long gone? (Bacchus, 2011)

In the poem above, Rosaline describes humans born into the world naked, without carrying anything. The choice of words used by the author is a choice of words that contain true meaning so that it is not difficult to understand. The author points out the contrasting relationship between 'naked' and 'legacy.' This choice of words raises the question in the mind of the reader, how can someone who is born without bringing anything give a legacy or inheritance. The reader seems to be invited to reflect on what he will inherit while he was born with nothing.

Purpose Driven

VICTORIA - GUYANA
Eighty-three freed slaves
Bought land with barrows of coins.
Purpose driven lives. (Bacchus, 2011)

Street Children

CEARÁ - BRAZIL
From parched lands, they come
hungry faces full of hope.
City streets their home. (Bacchus, 2011)

From the two poems above, Rosaline uses real and concrete meaningful words so that the impression made is easily captured by our senses. Rosaline clearly describes the life of slaves in Victoria-Guyana who fought for their land by buying it from the wages they collected. Rosaline also explicitly describes how the lives of children in Ceara-Brazil are starving and poor due to their land being burned and seized by the colonial nation.

Although dominated by denotative and concrete words, there are also some abstract words such as capitalism, power, legacy, hope, fear, compassion in his poems. These abstract words have referents in the form of concepts and refer to certain qualities, quantities, and thoughts that cannot be absorbed by the human senses. In addition to abstract words, some connotative words contain figurative or non-true meanings. Here are some examples of connotation words found in the Rosaline Bacchus Haiku poems.

The Top One Percent

Earth their playing field
Allegiance to no nations.
Only profits count. (Bacchus, 2011)

The choice of words in this Haiku poem is very interesting. Earth is described as a playground. The playground here has a connotative meaning and is not a real playground but an arena where elites explore the earth for the sole purpose of gaining profit. 'Only profits count.' This word was chosen to symbolize capitalism, where humans are driven by interests to achieve their gain.

Vengeance of Heaven

Mother Earth, we rape
drilling, fracking, no control.
Vengeance of heaven. (Bacchus, 2013)

In the Haiku poem above, the author uses the word with a connotation in which nature is described as the "Vengeance of Heaven". This choice of words is used by the author to show how dilapidated human actions are to nature so that nature wants to take revenge for these human actions.

B. Imagery

Haiku has an inner structure that makes it meaningful. The inner elements of Haiku poetry are constructed by imagery, theme, tone, and message. In contrast to poetry in general, Haiku tends to present subtlety. Haiku is based on harmony, peace, tranquility, and balance. Therefore, the images presented provide a clear picture and make the poem come alive in the reader's

mind. Haiku generally emphasize spiritual values and universal human values. Imagery can be divided into several types, namely visual imagery, auditory imagery, tactile imagery, olfactory imagery, gustatory imagery, and kinesthetic imagery. Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems are dominated by visual, auditory, and kinesthetic imagery.

a. Visual Imagery

Visual imagery is an image that arises by the sense of sight, namely the eye as if it can see something that is not visible. Some examples of visual imagery can be seen in the following poems.

The Top One Percent

Earth their playing field
Allegiance to no nations.
Only profits count. (Bacchus, 2011)

In the poem above, the earth is described as a playground. The word 'playground' is captured by our sense of sight as a fun place for children to explore. From this description, we can conclude that the earth is a pleasant place to explore.

Our Legacy

Naked, we are born.
What will be our legacy
when we are long gone? (Bacchus, 2011)

In the poem above, the word 'naked' gives a picture to our sense of sight about a situation without wearing anything. From this description, the reader is invited to realize his condition when he was born into this world that he did not wear and carry anything.

Street Children

CEARÁ - BRAZIL

From parched lands, they come
hungry faces full of hope.
City streets their home. (Bacchus, 2011)

The first line of the Haiku poem above touches our eyes about an area that is described as scorched. Furthermore, the second line depicted hungry faces who are expecting something from the displacement they are doing.

Purpose Driven

VICTORIA - GUYANA

Eighty-three freed slaves
bought land with barrows of coins.
Purpose driven lives. (Bacchus, 2011)

The first and second lines of the Haiku poem above give our senses an image of thirty-three slaves who collected coins from their labors to buy land. This is the purpose of their life. Our eyes can see the number of these slaves and the coins they collect.

Human Bondage

Tool in dead-end jobs;
Empty stares in long food lines.
Of human bondage. (Bacchus, 2012)

The second line of Haiku's poem above touches the reader's sense of sight. The word "empty stares" or blank stares shows how the eyes of the slaves saw the void of food queues in the era of slavery. There is no hope or happiness in them.

Cane Sugar

Cane Man in cane field
slashing stalk & smashing bones.
Bleeding cane sugar. (Bacchus, 2016)

In the Haiku poem above, our sense of sight gets a picture of how hard life is for sugar cane farmers in the Caribbean. They had to be hurt by the sharpness of the stalks of sugar cane and their bones crushed by the weight of the workload as slaves in the sugar cane plantations. The suffering in this sugar cane plantation is visible to our sense of sight.

Outside the Fence

Chastized, brutalized
landless small farmers languish.
Locked outside the fence. (Bacchus, 2016)

The third line of the poem above touches our senses by showing the image of a farmer locked outside a fence. This image conveys the meaning of how the Caribbean people who have struggled to cultivate their fields and lands do not get their share properly and are instead alienated from their land.

b. Auditory Imagery

Auditory imagery is imagery that is captured by the sense of hearing. The following are some examples of auditory imagery.

The Word Corrupted

Priests lie with children,
The faithful don bombs to kill.
The Word is corrupted. (Bacchus, 2011)

The first line in the Haiku poem above depicts a religious leader lying to children. The word 'lie' gives an impression to our ears. The author contradicts the image of a missionary or religious leader who is supposed to tell the truth, yet he lies even to children.

c. Kinesthetic Imagery

Kinesthetic imagery describes an activity that can be done. The following are the examples of kinesthetic imagery:

Street Children

CEARÁ - BRAZIL

From parched lands, they come
hungry faces full of hope.
City streets their home. (Bacchus, 2011)

The first line in the Haiku poem above describes a movement from one place to another. The abandoned country is described as a scorched land. The last line describes the street as a new home for the victims of the war. In this case, they have no other choice but to live on the streets.

No Compassion

For sex, they enslave.
Kill children in greedy wars.
Men with calloused souls. (Bacchus, 2012)

In the second line of the Haiku poem above, there is the verb "kill," which indicates a movement or activity. It is clearly described the heinous act of the colonial nation who killed children in the "greedy wars" to seize the colony and the natural wealth in it.

Seeds Among Thorns

They kneel before men
Worship money and power.
Seeds Sown among Thorns. (Bacchus, 2013)

In the Haiku poem above, there are words that indicate movement or activity, such as "kneel" or kneeling, "worship" or worship, and "sown" or sown. These three words indicate the activities carried out by the colonial nation. The author describes the colonial nation as a nation that worships money and power and kneels before humans. The absence of God is described as the sowing of seeds among the thorns. The seed will have difficulty growing because it is squeezed by the presence of thorns.

C. Colonial Representation of the Poems

Analyzing the dictions and imagery will help us to see further about colonial representation in the Caribbean. From the diction and imagery analysis of the Haiku poems by Rosaline Bacchus from the period 2011-2017, we get an idea of what happened in the colonial era in the Caribbean Islands. Rosaline raised the issue of capitalism as the main cause behind the presence of the colonial nation in the Caribbean. The desire to acquire wealth and expand territory encouraged Europeans to explore new worlds. The mission of Gold, Glory, Gospel is based on capitalism to exploit the colonies and make maximum profit.

In her poetry, Rosaline also describes the evangelistic mission carried out by Western missionaries who pretend to be good but contain a hidden agenda to strengthen their power in the colonized country. When they are well received by the indigenous population, they are constantly making efforts to strengthen their position. War to seize territory was inevitable. The impact of the war is clearly described by Rosaline in her poetry, how women are made sex slaves, innocent children are killed and lose their playgrounds, indigenous people are slaves in sugar cane plantations with inhumane treatment and heavy workloads. Not a few of the indigenous people had to be evicted from their ancestral lands and became refugees in foreign lands, and even lived on the streets in poverty. Rosaline describes the conditions in this colonial era straightforwardly with images that easily touch the reader's senses and an accurate choice of words to convey what she feels. Although in form, Haiku poetry is short, it is full of meaning. Events after events that occurred in the colonial era are described clearly so that the reader can also feel the horror. Diction and imagery are chosen by the author in such a way, straightforward, beautiful, and full of meaning.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, the researcher can draw some conclusions. The first objective of this research is to describe the diction and imagery that appear in Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems. The diction of Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems is dominated by denotative and concrete meaning. Denotative and concrete meaning is used by the poet to bring the reader to the reality that happened in the colonization. The imagery of Rosaline Bacchus's Haiku poems is dominated by visual, auditory, and kinesthetic imagery. These imageries create the effect of reality so that the reader can see, hear and feel what happen during the colonialism period of the Caribbean. The second objective of this research is to reveal the colonial representation in the poems. By analyzing the diction and the imagery of the poem, the researcher can reveal the colonial representation such as the hidden agenda behind missionaries' mission; how women are made as sex slaves, innocent children are killed and lose their playgrounds, indigenous people are slaves in sugar cane plantations with inhumane treatment and heavy workloads. The finding of this research give contributions to the island studies related to colonialism that happened in the Caribbean. Literary work, especially Haiku, can be a tool for the poet to deliver the issue of humanity that happened in the past. By understanding the issue, today's generation can learn about the bad impact of colonialism so that it can increase awareness and solidarity among nations. This research is just limited to the Caribbean, the further research about revealing colonialism on another island is still needed. The researcher encourages another research to dig deeper into the literary work from different islands.

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