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Racism in the Green Book Movie Script by Peter Farelly

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ABSTRACT

Racism is still a widespread problem in society and is frequently examined in literature. Few studies have looked at how racism is created and expressed through characterization in movie scripts using literary frameworks, despite the fact that many have tackled it from historical and sociological viewpoints. Using Wellek and Warren's intrinsic element literary techniques as well as George M. Fredrickson's theory of racism, this study attempts to examine how aspects of racism are portrayed in the film script Green Book through the portrayal of its central characters. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to find dialogues and settings that illustrate social inequality, racial prejudice, and the formation of racial identity. While previous research has explored the script of this film but they have not directly discussed the elements of racism that occur in this film, this study can bring the theme of racism deeper into the field of narrative and characterization.

Keywords: Racism, Instrinsic element, Characterization, Narrative Elemen

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INTRODUCTION

Green Book is a biographical story of the life of Dr. Shirley and Tony Lip, where this story took place in 1962 in America during the era of social segregation, specifically where black people or African-Americans lived separately and were not allowed to mix with white people. Green Book tells the journey of Dr. Shirley, a professional pianist of African-American descent who made his first tour to various states in the United States accompanied by his personal driver Tony Lip, who was a white man of Italian descent. Where the character of Tony Lip, who was previously a racist, began to understand how difficult it was for Dr. Shirley as a black person who had to accept racist actions every day, which made Tony begin to feel empathy and awareness that racist actions were wrong and should not be normalized.

The researcher found several research in some journal which can support this research, where several of these studies use the same object, that is the "Green Book", where several researchers studied by Binghui Li & Shuyan Wang discussed analyzes more deeply how Misunderstandings and conflicts are bound to occur between people of different races and classes. Then next journal that made by K Dian Rani & I made Winaya which examines the intrinsic elements and criticizes this film from a sociological perspective by conducting sociological criticism. Another journal that discussed how cinematography is used in this film, discussing how visual and narrative elements convey the social messages that occur in this film. This research that made by Winaya & Rani can support this research because their research uses narrative elements and audio to find out the social messages that occur in this object.

Some researchers have argued that the wide and also inconsistent use of "racism" has meant that the term now "weakens rather than enhances arguments concerning race" (Wilson 1987:12). According to Hughes and Kroehler (2010) "Racism is the belief that some racial groups are naturally superior and others are inferior".





Thus, racism is a belief from someone or a group or race toward others by humiliating or underestimating others race or group. Fredrickson said that racism can be defined as the belief that there are inherent and significant differences among racial groups that justify unequal treatment and discrimination, creating a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. (Fredrickson, 2002). Where he explained that racism itself has points such as discrimination where white people are free to discriminate against black people without worrying about the rules because they are in the upper class and treating black people with unfair treatment is an action that is justified in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of the law during the era of segregation.

Portraits of discrimination and racism in Hollywood have often been shown in various forms, namely performances, scripts and reality shows, where they usually adapt true stories or make biographies of African-American characters who experienced acts of discrimination by white people who thought they were superior.

Green Book is a script set in 1962, where this script tells the story of the journey of the famous African American pianist Dr Don Shirley and his bodyguard Tony Lip, who is of Italian-American descent. In this narrative, this script depicts the differences between them, in terms of race, culture, class, and the way they respect each other's differences. Dr Shirley teaches Tony about dignity and grace, while Tony helps Dr Shirley to better understand the lived realities of ordinary people outside his elite circle. This is in line with what Wellek and Warren said that literary works are a reflection of internal social problems (Bimantara, 2020).

Because in the Green Book script, Dr Don Shirley is described as a black person who is said to not know what life is like for his race outside, because Dr Shirley lives full of wealth which he obtained from his talent as a musician which made him famous. But here, Dr Shirley, even though he is famous for his talent, is still looked down upon by people because he has black skin. Key aspect in this script is the harshness of life and the clear portrait of indiscriminate racism towards black people in America at that time, whether the person was famous or not. Which described race is a group of people characterized by physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair and height. (Liliweri, 2005).

In this script, Don Shirley toured South America in 1962, at which time the region was heavily influenced by racial segregation. He decided to go on tour to show the white community that black people also have extraordinary abilities, both artistically and intellectually, where he played classical music, a genre of music that has always been associated with European culture, where he challenged this stereotype. This explain that literature can record the characteristics of the era. Through the sociology of literary works (Wellek & Warren, 1977).

The search for an identity for the characters in this script is also an important object, where it is not only the character Don Shirley who has problems with his life and proving himself in society. However, Tony Lip's role here can also be discussed using an intrinsic approach and an extrinsic approach which connects the context of American history in the era of segregation in this script. Tony Lip was Don Shirley's personal driver during his tour, but Tony Lip's portrait at the beginning of the script depicts him as a racist person. Where he doesn't really like African-Americans, which is an irony that occurs. In this script, racial issues are very much emphasized through intrinsic and extrinsic approaches as stated by (Warren & Wellek, 1977).

Many films have the theme of racism, where the role of film actors is to raise the issue of racism to make people aware of the impact of racism on the people affected. They feel insecure about their skin color and experience verbal and non-verbal bullying, which has an impact on their mental health. Even in this day and age where African Americans are accepted by society, there are still many people who commit acts of racism against them. Black people are always seen as doing bad things and they are considered dangerous; film often use racism as a critical lens to understand historical context and social dynamics. Green Book, as a script rooted in a specific historical period, provides an opportunity to look at how narratives of racism are created and how they reflect broader societal conflicts and principles.





Wellek and Warren in the Theory of Literature emphasize an intrinsic approach which focuses on internal elements in a work such as narrative, characters, plot, symbolism and theme. As stated by Warren & Wellek "The portrayal of characters is inseparably connected with the thematic structure of the work. "Characters represent attitudes, beliefs, and values, and thus contribute to the larger thematic concerns of the text." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). Where characterization represents attitudes and has a greater contribution than the text. Then there is an extrinsic approach which examines works that have historical, social and cultural contexts. Where these two approaches are suitable for analyzing the script Green Book as an object, in this script there are many narratives that are intrinsic to racism and extrinsic relationships experienced during the era of segregation in America in the 1960s. This approach implies that the meaning of a literary work must be based primarily on the text itself, not relying on external factors or the author's intention (Sevia, Raditiyanto, 2024).

Green Book by Peter Farrelly presents a realistic picture of how the world really works, a real portrait of American society in the 1960s, where they openly rejected the presence of blacks in public places such as restaurants, bars and clothing stores. Because they think that someone with black skin is dirty unlike white skin, which is why black people here have to create their own place, namely a special place for black people to just gather or chat. They often face acts of undress and bullying from white people who consider them to be inferior humans.

There are several examples of sentences in this film's script that show evidence of how racism occurs through dialogue between characters, such as "He's colored? You wouldn't last a week with him." here is an example of dialogue from one of the characters in the script who quotes "He's colored?" shows that he is a black person in this context. Then there are also quotes from several other sentences such as: "Lists all the places coloreds can stay down south. Like if you're traveling while black" (Farelly, 2018, p. 28.) in this quote is a list of places where black people can travel safely in America, where these places are locations where black people are accepted and treated like human beings. "Segregation and exclusion are the most visible manifestations of racism. By legally and socially separating groups, the dominant race asserts its superiority and control". (Fredrickson, 2002). This explains how the quote above separates social groups based on race in the era of segregation.

Peter Farrelly made this script because he was interested in the real lives of Donald Shirley and Tony Vallelonga, he took references from the guidebook The Negro Motorist Green Book created by Victor Hugo Green. This book is a travel guide for African Americans, where the contents of this book explain which places black people can visit and which places they are prohibited from visiting. He made this guidebook to enable them to travel safely because Victor himself was of African American descent who certainly felt how hard it was to live in America during the era of segregation, that's why he made this book so that his people could live and travel safely.

Based on the explanation above, Use of Wellek & Warren's theory which uses an intrinsic and extrinsic approach is the right step to explore and understand the elements in the text, historical, social and cultural context in the Green Book script. As Wellek and Warren said, literary works function as reflections, where this script shows important issues. In this approach, Peter Farrelly's Green Book illustrates the issues of racism, discrimination, searching for identity, and how the characters in this script can seek answers and enlightenment in their lives.

METHOD

Literary criticism is the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of literary works. Literary criticism involves examining a text's themes, style, structure, historical context, and cultural significance. Critics use a variety of theoretical approaches to explore how literature functions, what it means, and how it affects readers. In literary criticism there are four types of criticism, which is mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective, which have different focuses on literary works. The purpose of using literary criticism here is to be able to understand a message and meaning contained in a literary text, as well as assess the aesthetic





quality, and also place a literary work in the existing historical, social, and cultural context. In literary criticism, there is mimetic, which focuses more on the relationship between literary works and reality, then pragmatic which focuses more on the relationship between literary works and their readers, then expressive which brings them closer to literary works and their creators, and finally objective which sees literary works as objects separate from the real world whose internal elements must be analyzed.

Because this research describes the elements in the Green Book film script in depth, namely exploring the characters, dialogue, plot and symbolism in the script, as well as delving more deeply into the social and cultural historical context that occurred. Objective criticism can be used in this study because in the objective element that analyzes the internal elements of a literary work such as theme, symbol, style of language, and narrative structure which are indeed suitable for use in this study, because in this study the focus is on examining the racism that occurs in the script. The forms of racism that occur in the scripts discussed are in the form of discrimination, unfair treatment and creating heirarcy which is also part of the scientific question in this study. The Green Book. In the script there are many dialogues between the main characters, Dr. Shirley and Tony which form racial tension and there is also symbolism that occurs there which if studied can convey the meaning of the racism that occurs. One example in the script is when Tony first meets Dr. Shirley who is a black person but he's dressed neatly and full of luxury, not like what Tony expected when he met someone with black skin, also when they stayed at a hotel but they both stayed at different hotels where Dr. Shirley had to stay at a hotel specifically for black people. As quoted from Fredrickson "Racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it believes are hereditary and unalterable" (Fredrickson, 2002). Then in terms of the narrative pattern where Tony's tour with Dr. Shirley changes Tony's characteristics, who was previously a racist, but as they get to know each other, Tony finally begins to accept that Dr. Shirley or someone with black skin is not as bad as he thought all this time, which makes it possible for objective criticism to be used in this research by looking at the explanation and several examples of data that have been attached.

In this research, the researcher examines the script Green Book which represents the social discrimination and racism that occurs in this script. which can be examined using the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches in Wallek & Warren's theory. In this research, the researcher focuses on the source of the social problems that occur in this script, which can be understood as this script actually brings up racial problems and shows them to a wide audience. The problem of racism and discrimination that occurs here is presented with the narrative and actions of the characters towards a race, specifically the African-American race, which makes them feel uncomfortable and disgust about the reaction to this treatment.

This script is suitable for using Wallek & Warren's theory by using an intrinsic and extrinsic approach because this approach focuses on the elements in the script text itself which contains plot, dialogue and symbols and also carries historical, social and cultural context which is closely related to conditions. "Characters in literature are not merely representations of individuals they often serve as types or symbols, reflecting broader societal and cultural patterns." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). Here the author explains in more detail the elements of character in literature, by illustrating that in literature characters are individuals with personalities, backgrounds and certain motives. But the characters not only function as something real, but these characters are designed by the author to be able to convey and illustrate existing ideas for broader aspects of society. Where real world social at that time cases of racism always happened to African Americans where they were looked down upon regardless of their social status at that time.

By carrying out this research, researchers can look for more detailed and in-depth cases of racism and unfair treatment that occur in the Green Book film script. That is, the researcher provides an explanation and analyzes more deeply about the picture of how discrimination, the creation of a hierarchical system, and unfair treatment exist in this script, and in accordance with the qualitative approach. This study will understand more deeply about the stereotypes in this script that form the characters of racism and treatment that are in accordance with what





happens in reality, understand how character development is formed through dialogue, plot, and symbolism in this script. connecting the narrative of the script to the historical context that occurred in the real world when the era of segregation occurred in the United States.

The researcher also used George M. Fredrickson's theory of racism, he examined more deeply the elements of racism that occurred, which made this research compatible with his theory. in his book he quotes that. "Racism is not merely a set of individual prejudices but an ideology that legitimizes and maintains a social system of inequality." (Fredrickson, 2002). Fredrickson defines acts of racism into several things such as justifying unequal treatment and discrimination, creating a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. He believes that acts of racism were carried out based on this desire. He also believes that acts of racism are not just personal prejudice, but are a larger belief that surrounds organizations or groups. Those who have this ideology have the belief that the acts of discrimination carried out are the right actions. Hierarchical systems are also a form of racism that creates dominant groups based on the color of their skin, which gives them power and privilege.

George M. Fredrickson's in his theory states that racism can be defined as the belief that there are inherent and significant differences among racial groups that justify unequal treatment and discrimination, creating a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. (Fredrickson, 2002). The idea that justifies unequal treatment and discrimination of black peoples during segregation comes from several understandings made by white peoples who justify it based on biology, religion, and culture which states that white peoples have higher intelligence compared to black peoples, they also use religious interpretations to justify this action by stating that black peoples are given a lower position by God. Because if it is known to be investigated the truth, it could be that blacks have lower intelligence because of limited access to education and work by white peoples and in the field of religion there is no statement that says that black peoples are in a lower position, because in religion all humans have the same level in the sight of God.

Meanwhile, white people also create a system of superiority and inferiority hierarchy where they separate racial groups in terms of schools, public facilities, transportation and also housing. Even in this case, these minorities are prohibited from owning land and getting loans from banks or the like, this system greatly limits the mobility of black people to be able to live. In terms of education where special schools for black people have facilities that are much worse than schools in general. In terms of employment and the legal system, it can also be seen that people with black skin receive lower pay than people with white skin even though they have the same job and in the legal field, minorities receive much heavier sentences than white people. The stereotype of black people is also always seen as criminals and always considered a source of problems wherever they are.

Therefore, in this research, the focus examined in the Green Book is to show the narrative elements in this script. With historical social conditions where this script not only reflects the reality that happened, but also shows how to understand how racist discrimination occurs not only in the form of works of fiction but also occurs in real life and still occurs in social life today to demeaning people.

The aim of this research is to understand the case of racism, namely how to understand how racism can occur and to open up insight into where discrimination against a race is wrong and can give rise to negative arguments. Researchers also want to make a contribution to the script industry by providing readers with an understanding of narrative, character, dialogue and historical and social context.

The Green Book script is compatible with Wallek & Warren's theory, which was researched using intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. Where this theory can show the historical context and social dynamics that occurred for African-Americans race in 1960 in America which can also be researched in the context of plot, narrative, symbolism and characterization, all of these elements thoroughly are in the Green Book film script.





FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main data source in this research comes from the Green Book film script by Peter Farelly, whose work is the main basis for this research which provides themes of racism, unfair treatment, and also displays the historical context that occurred in real life. Wallek & Warren's theory, namely the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, presents how a film script can reveal the elements contained in it using this approach. "In literature, character is not a simulation of a living person, but rather a construction of words meant to represent a personality, complete with traits and motivations." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). Then also Peter Farelly, wrote the script for this film which was based on a true story during the era of segregation where social discrimination and racism were still widespread in the world. Especially in western countries like America which targets black people. Which is quoting from Fredrickson "Racism... proposes to establish a racial order, a permanent group hierarchy that is believed to reflect the laws of nature or the decrees of God." (Fredrickson, 2002). With a clear data source, further research, in-depth analysis, can reveal answers to the problems that occur in this research.

To be able to understand the object under study, researchers must read carefully the script of the film Green Book, this is necessary to be able to understand the plot, characterization, and also the depiction of what happens in the script. By reading this way, researchers are able to look for details to find the main problem in this research.

The researcher also noted important points in the film script, which were used to solve existing research problems. These notes will later be examined further to find out whether they are suitable to be attached to the research, which could be in the form of symbolism and expressions. Each note will later be useful to make this research easier to analyzes.

After making notes about what points must be researched, the researcher collects all existing data and identifies the plot that occurs in the script and the characterization of the existing characters, as well as the existing symbolism that must be found out what it means. Researchers also look for the historical and cultural context of that time so that this research has a correlation.

How racism can occur in this script is also to provide social context with what is happening in this script to make readers better understand what is happening in the script as well as the socio-cultural and historical context that occurs. "Racism became institutionalized in the form of legal codes, policies, and social practices that not only reflected but reinforced the prevailing racial ideologies." (Fredrickson, 2002). Racism can occur when someone looks down on a group or race that is different from their group, assuming that they have a lower status compared to a certain group, where they justify discriminatory treatment towards that person because they feel that their social status is much higher than that of a group or race. From the 100 data sample collected, researchers found that within this object, elements of racism included 58 forms of discrimination, 16 forms of unequal treatment, 6 forms of hierarchy, 10 forms of superiority, and 10 forms of inferiority. Thus, the portrait of racism that emerged was overwhelming, specifically forms of discrimination within the script.

"Racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it believes are hereditary and unalterable." (Fredrickson, 2002). One example of the forms of racism that occur in the script is where there is a pair of black workers who are repairing a dishwasher pipe in a white person's house, the workers while repairing are always watched by the owner of the house, one of the characters named "Tony Lip" with a suspicious look and the presence of the workers is very much disliked by Tony, which is where in the script there is a quote.

"Johnny discreetly nods toward the kitchen where we see Two Black Workmen laying down linoleum. The kids, Nick and Frank, play with plastic Green Army soldiers in the corner."

Here the words two black people are marked with capital letters which emphasizes that Johnny doesn't like the presence of black people in his house, this shows a form of racism towards them even though these black people are ordinary workers who are doing their job.





There is also a form of racism that occurs in this script where the main character "Tony Lip" first meets "Dr. Donald Shirley" who is a black man, here Tony did not expect that the person who offered him a job was a black man with a doctorate degree which made Tony think that Dr. Shirley was a white person, this description is shown in the script which written.

"Lip turns...Standing before him is DR. DONALD SHIRLEY, late 30s, black, resplendent in a traditional African robe. Lip's taken aback. He's bedecked in assorted chain necklaces, bracelets, watch, and rings. Dr. Shirley speaks in a clipped, refined manner. Not what he expected. He stands."

In this sentence, Tony Lip took part in a job interview as a driver, but what he didn't expect was that the person who offered him the job was a black man. Then also quoted "Lip's taken aback" where Tony was shocked by what he saw and did not expect that Dr. Donald Shirley is African American, and he wears robes, wear accessories and speaks in a refined manner. The reason Tony was surprised was because Dr. Shirley did not display the stereotype of black people in general, where they spoke harshly in high tones and did not have a luxurious appearance.

For the next sample, it is how characterization elements can form racism in the script of The Green Book, where there is a conversation between a side character who clearly insults black people by calling them "coal" and the character explains that the presence of black people in his house can be dangerous because of the stereotype of black people who are always considered criminals and someone who always brings trouble and causes trouble, the quote is in the script that shows the portrait of racism.

"(in Italian) You shouldn't be sleeping in the middle of the day, leaving my daughter here alone with these sacks of coal."

The phrase of "sack of coal", a sentence uttered by one of Johnny's family which refers to the two black workers, this shows that they mocked the two workers just because they were black. Here they use Italian language so that the two workers don't understand what they're saying. "Racism is not merely an attitude or set of beliefs; it also expresses itself in the practices, institutions, and structures..." (Fredrickson, 2002).

Characterization element of racism form in the green book movie script because in this green book script, the characterization element plays a very important role in answering the context of the form of racism that occurred in this study, "Characterization is the presentation of a person in a narrative or dramatic work. Characters may be presented either directly or indirectly: through action, speech, and thoughts, or through description and commentary by the narrator or other characters." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). The characterization elements can be used to assess where the social and cultural context can represent society. Within the elements of characterization, there are elements of attitude, belief, and value according to Wallek & Warren, as quoted. "Characters represent attitudes, beliefs, and values, and thus contribute to the larger thematic concerns of the text." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). Because in this object, the characters have different attitudes, values, and beliefs in responding to the racism that occurs, They have different responses to the racism that occurs, where one of the characters, namely Tony Lip, responds to racism as a common action, but on the other hand, the character Dr. Shirley, who experiences racism, sees racism as something that discriminates against everyone.

Racism does not only appear in the form of dialogue or plot, but can appear in characterization in construction, interaction and development. "Characters are not always individuals; they may be types or representatives of a class, group, or idea." (Warren & Wellek, 1977). The character of Dr. Shirley, who is of African-American descent, is depicted as a highly educated and elegant figure who also speaks using structured and perfect grammar. Here, the character of Dr. Shirley is a representation of black people who reject social and cultural stereotypes. From the 100 data found, the researcher categorized them into 3 characterization categories, namely Attitudes, Beliefs, Values, where the researcher found 54 Attitudes, 29 Beliefs, and 17 Values in the characterization elements in this Green Book script.





One of the examples that happened in the script that can answer one of the research questions about the characterization element of racism is when Dr. Shirley have to go out of the car and he saw black workers working in the field.

"One by one the Pickers stand up and stare back at him from both sides of the road. They've never seen a black man like him before"

This sentence occurs in the script which indicates the occurrence of internalized and structural racism. Because the black workers have just seen Dr. Shirley who looks and acts unlike a black person as usual. "Characterization and plot are intimately connected: character is revealed through conflict and choice." (Warren & Wellek, 1977).

Some other examples are when Tony Lip and Dr. Shirley were stopped by a police officer at night where when the officer saw Dr. Shirley he acted in a very racist manner.

"He can't be out here at night. This is a sundown town".

This dialogue was said by the officer when he saw Dr. Shirley who was in the car driven by Tony where he said that Dr. Shirley should not be in the city of Sundown because this city does not allow the presence of black people which is a structural segregation and a threat.

"He's a world-class pianist, you should be ashamed!"

In this dialogue, Tony Lip defends Shirley from the police officer who arrest him without any clear reason, demonstrating Tony's character development in the script. Initially, he seemed indifferent to Shirley. However, over time, he begins to show empathy and defense for Shirley.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has revealed that the Green Book script serves as a powerful narrative reflection on racism, particularly through characterization and social context. Wellek and Warren's intrinsic approach allows for a deeper understanding of how literary elements such as plot, characters, and dialogue depict the struggles faced by African Americans during the era of segregation. Additionally, George M. Fredrickson's theory of racism provides a lens to identify how racism is legitimized as a social ideology that creates and maintains inequality. The character of Dr. Shirley, along with the discriminatory acts she experiences, illustrates how racism operates through cultural stereotypes and systemic injustice. Tony Lip's character development also highlights his internal conflict between prejudice and his personal growth in accepting the ideology he hates. Thus, the script not only reflects historical realities but also emphasizes the importance of understanding racism as a social system rooted in historical and ideological frameworks.





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