

BLACK IMAGES IN CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY NOVEL WRITTEN BY WHITE AMERICANS: REFLECTING THE PERSISTENCE OF WHITE SUPREMACY

CITRA ORANG KULIT HITAM DALAM NOVEL PERBUDAKAN YANG DITULIS PENULIS KULIT PUTIH AMERIKA: REFLEKSI BERTAHANNYA SUPREMASI KULIT PUTIH

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Abstract

This study investigates images of black characters in contemporary American slavery novel written by white authors, focusing on two novels; *Property* (2003) and *Rhett Butler's People* (2007). The hegemony of Gramsci's theory is utilized to suggest that if the slavery-themed novels are still rewritten in the era of twenty-first century, it should have a new insight about racism and should be also understood. Three points that revealed by this article dealing with hegemonic discourse on both novels are the representation of black beauty, black behavior, and the relation of black-white attested that the white supremacy is still sustained in the USA. The change of the story composition is there, but the racist ideology kept existed in the smoother way.

Keywords: *black image, hegemony, racism, slavery novel, white supremacy*

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis gambaran tokoh kulit hitam dalam novel perbudakan kontemporer yang ditulis oleh penulis kulit putih, dengan memfokuskan pada dua novel; *Property* (2003) dan *Rhett Butler's People* (2007). Teori hegemoni Gramsci digunakan untuk menunjukkan bahwa jika novel bertema perbudakan masih ditulis ulang di era abad dua puluh satu, pastinya akan memiliki wawasan baru tentang rasisme dan penting untuk dipahami. Tiga poin yang diungkap oleh artikel ini berkaitan dengan upaya hegemoni kulit putih dalam dua novel tersebut adalah representasi kecantikan kulit hitam, tingkah laku orang kulit hitam, dan relasi orang kulit hitam dan kulit putih, membuktikan bahwa supremasi kulit putih masih dipertahankan di Amerika Serikat hingga dewasa ini. Perubahan komposisi cerita novel perbudakan ada, tetapi wacana rasisme tetap eksis dengan cara yang lebih halus.

Kata kunci: *citra orang kulit hitam, hegemoni, novel perbudakan, rasisme, supremasi kulit putih*

Introduction

Slavery novel, basically, is a part of slave narrative in American literature (Davis & Gates, 1985). It is the writing which recording the experiences of enslaved Africans in the U.S.A. and chronicles the evolution of white supremacy particularly in the South (Andrew 2004; Davis & Gates, 1985; Escott, 1979). Davis & Gates (1985) stated that the slaves narratives are the genuine sources of the ontological and epistemological concerns of human beings enslaved in antebellum America. Accordingly, slave narratives were used to serve as “historical document and literary works as well” (Ernest, 2011, p. 95).

As a literary work, Andrew (2004) argued that, slave narratives record the slave experience and give voice to generations of black people, who despite being written off by Southern literature, still found a way to bestow a literary heritage of huge collective significance in the history of the United States. Ryan (2008) further stated that slave narrative is not limited to the blacks’ voice, but also whites in recording the imagined experiences of slavery. Thus, to generalize the idea about the narration of slavery in the United States, Ryan termed it as slavery novels to cope with both black and white writings. Graham and Ward (2011) identified slave narrative as a part of historical fiction. They defined slave narrative as a literary works which interpret the history of slavery, whether it was written in the past or in the present time. To dealt with the fiction, slave narrative could also named as slavery novel for a particular segment of historical fiction in the genre of novel.

There are several books and articles that revealing white supremacy in the slavery novels in American literature. Ryan (2008) in his books *Call and Response: American Novel of Slavery since Gone with the Wind* found a discursive dialogue similar to a continuous cultural call and response in Black and White authors. Individual's ideas about slavery are fundamentally determined by their race. There is hegemony from white writers' discourse, but ultimately, engage in constructive dialogue with certain works of history and fiction, and black writers' novels exist to correct what white writers have written. Moreover, Calisteo (2011) focused the analysis on the reception of *Gone with the Wind* novel as a white novel in the form of fan fictions, sequels and parody to glorify the white attributes through white male and female characters in the novel. There is an effort to create an ongoing romance that readers perceive from the two white characters of the novel and this also can be identified as a part of hegemonic model for the audience. Still, Rasiah (2017) in the research by using representation theory showed the sustaining white ideology in the novel *Gone with the Wind*. The novel sought to civilize the ‘Old South’ life in antebellum America which owned a peculiar institution of slavery and condemned the Civil War. Through the depiction of Southern belle and white gentlemen hero, the natural landscape, as well as the intimate relation of black slave and white master affirmed the life in the Old South was harmonious and stable. It means that the protest against black enslavement was irrelevant. To sum up, the discourse of racism to legitimate white supremacy is continued to be constructed in white novel, as this novel appeared in the twenty century.

Dunham (2016) investigated a slavery-themed film entitled *Django Unchained* and found the subject effaced: identity and race in "*Django Unchained*". Dunham states that director of the film was to create a film that grapples with "America's horrible past with slavery, but do them like spaghetti westerns". This article suggested, although the

spaghetti Western may be particularly well suited to depict the nihilistic and dehumanizing violence that undoubtedly characterized chattel slavery, the genre's resistance to the representation of human subjectivity reflects the relative silence around the psychological dimension, not only of slavery, but also of continuing crisis of structural racism in the post-civil rights era. The director unintentionally undermines his own pretensions to social consciousness, producing instead a film that reflects and reproduces the ignorance, strategic silence, and white guilt surrounding America's ongoing history of slavery and racism through the specific narrative and aesthetic strategies he employs, particularly, for twenty first century audiences.

It is believed that literature reflects human experiences of a certain phenomenon in a society and zeal of the era. Iser (1978) mentions that literature is not born in a vacuum, it follows the spirit of age, such as politics, social, and culture. In this case, slavery novels that appeared in twenty first century have a connection to the social circumstances, cultural, historical, political, and social background of American society in the present decade. Hero & Tolbert (2014) indicated that the twenty first century America is marking the post-racial era. It refers to a society of country that is already at a point that there are no more racial preferences in social practice. Molina (2011) added that the phenomenon of the post-racial era in America starting at the end of the twentieth century which was marked by changes in the American political landscape that led to no more racial preferences, although the role of race was still ambiguous. The election of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States in the early twenty-first century has further strengthened popular media speculation that America has entered a new era, namely the post-racial era. So, it can be said that the post-racial circumstances in twenty first century would affect the representation of slavery and racism in the novels. Namradja (2015) suggested that the authors of the post-millennium slave novel genre in North America continued and/or expanded on the revisionist purposes of the neo-slave narrative genre of the Civil Rights Period. The massive production of slavery novels in the 21st century adds to its appeal as a study, specifically in understanding a number of aspects that surround it.

This study is intended to show the persistence of white supremacy through the depiction of blacks' characters in slavery novels written by white authors in the beginning of 21st century. Two novels selected purposively to be the bases for this study are Valerie Martin's novel *Property* (2003) and Donald McCaig's novel *Rhett Butler's People* (2007). These two novels are fulfilling the consideration of the gender balanced information either from the writers and the leading characters in both novels. They represent the voice of white man and woman in writing the experience of black enslavement in the United States from white's eyes. Another reason is, besides these two novels are quite popular in early of 2000s, they also represent the invention in constructing black characters in the genre of slavery novel written by White authors. They raised the issue of race and reproduced it from a fresh perspective to fit the zeal of the era. Valerie Martin's *Property* (2003) and Donald McCaig's *Rhett Butler's People* (2007) seemingly represent the anti-slavery discourse through the depiction of black beauty, attitude, and harmonious race relation. However, depiction of blacks sought to make the story of slavery be comfortable to be read in the recent time. The anti-slavery is symptomatic response to, not only, the blacks consciousness on the blackness, but also the context the present era. Bonilla-Silva (2010) argued that the 21st century surrounded by colorblindness that embraces the notion that racial discourse is

irrelevant to the United States. However, this is only a pseudo-reality that exists in American society, as the white authors work to preserve their legitimacy as superior group in the United States.

Investigating the black images in contemporary slavery novels written by white authors can provide a significant contribution to enrich the information about the role of slavery novels in constructing reality and engaging with current sociopolitical concerns in the United States. This study surely can enrich the study of racism and ideology in slavery novels and how the roles of literature in reconstructing racism are performed. In connection with the goal, this article formulates the problem that highlighted in this article into the question: How was blacks' images represented in the contemporary slavery novels written by white authors and how was the white supremacy ideology embedded in the images?

Method

This study is a qualitative library-based study and was approaching the data by intersecting Gramsci's Hegemony (1971) and Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) perspectives to see how white authors' representing the black characters in their novels as 'Other'. By employing Said and Gramsci's concept of hegemony on both novels, this paper attempts to elucidate the way by which white writers employ hegemony on black Americans in Martin's *Property* and McCaig's *Rhet Butler's People* novels to preserve the legitimation of white supremacy.

Dealing with legitimacy preservation, this article addapting Edward Said counts on Gramsci's concept of hegemony to indicate the relation of colonizer and colonized (West and East) that "there are efforts to establish the legitimacy of the superiority of the colonizers to the inferiority of the colonized people and culture" (1978: x). Consequently, the cultural hegemony is supposed to be "an endless practice that continue to be constructed in colonial and post-colonial discourse". Gramsci (1971) conceptualized hegemony as the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities in which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules. Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (1998: 116-117) clarified the term of hegemony by referring it to the model of domination that is wielded not by force, nor by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and comprehensive power over the economy and state apparatuses, such as education and the media. The ruling class' interest is presented as the public interest and thus comes to be taken for granted. Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (1998: 116-117) added that domination by hegemony model is achieved by the interpellation of the colonized subject by imperial discourse so that the values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes are accepted as a matter of course as the most natural or valuable.

In the racial hegemony, Daniels (2002) specified that it is centered upon the belief that white people are superior than nonwhite. The criteria of superiority is based on specific traits and attributes to other racial people backgrounds; skin color and life style (Vaughan, 1995; Frederickson, 1971; Mellinger, 1992). In the context of the United States, racial hegemony dealt with white supremacy, that is, typically, used to describe a political ideology that disseminated and maintained in the social, politic, historical, and industrial domination as evidenced by historical and contemporary sociopolitical structures such as the Atlantic slave trade and Jim Crow laws (Wildman, 1996;

Wellman, 1997). However, white supremacy in the United States performed not only in the black-white model relation, but also by other groups, such as; Asian-American, Latin, Arabic, and American Indians, which is the sources associated with religion, clothing, culture, nationality, gender, and language factors (Gold, 2002). White supremacy has been created a border in the society, where, the non whites groups perceive marginalization for the racial and cultural reasons. Lipsitz (as quoted in Curiel, 2000: 9) argued that the discourse of marginalization is the model of transnational political alliances". Marginalization (such as in internal colonization of black American) is apparently continued to be persisted, even, in post Civil Rights movement declaration. Lipsitz urged to continue to scrutinize the active awareness of the racism legacy for racism have deep-rooted the United States. Wellman (1997) asserted that Americans continue to hand over a color-worshipping mentality that; white is better than yellow, yellow is better than brown, brown is better than black, and America remains unable to formulate a simple color equation because white still have all the power, thus, they continue to make rules.

Bonilla-Silva in *Racism Without Racist* (2010: 3) introduces "new racism" as "practices" that is subtle, institutional, and apparently non racial. Bonilla-Silva examines the context of colorblindness and the existing of the persistent inequality. The contemporary paradigm viewed that the issue of race and racism in America have been hard battled and triumphed (Johnson, 2012). However, "new racism," according to Bonilla-Silva, persuaded against Affirmative Action; to counterbalance and remediate past de jure discrimination in the area where such discrimination utilized. Bonilla-Silva (2010) alerts of the promotion of race neutrality, because it may evolve into racial stratification. This stratification embraces class differences as opposed to race due to prejudice, bigotry, or racial inequality which those are perceived as the issues of the past. He claimed that the subsequent problems may persist when "colorblindness or race neutrality is promoted" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010: 185). Johnson (2012) argued that although the power for African American to write their racial histories must be recognized, the negative stereotyping that occurred during slavery will persist and carry forward incorrect representation that begin and end with white perspectives.

Result and Discussion

Depicting Black Beauty: Sustaining White Ideal Beauty

Patton (2006, p.24) stated that beauty is "a subject to the hegemonic standards of the ruling class". That is why beauty is defined as "an elusive commodity" (Saltzberg & Joan 1997, p.135). Regardless the fact that definitions of beauty are miscellaneous among cultures and historical period, the ideal image of woman beauty keeps attached to white women, with the attributes of white-skinned, blond hair, blue-eyes, slim or slender-bodied. These attributes dealt with the standard of ideal and preferred beauty all the time (Thompson, 2006; Hall, 1997).

In *Property* (2003) and *Rhett Butler's People* (2007), the hegemony of white beauty is expressed in the potraiture of black women physical appearances. Two black women, Sarah and Ruthie Bonneau, are representative on how the authors constructed the

black beauty by implanting the white beauty standard in them. In *Property* (2003), black female appearances could be analyzed through the depiction of Sarah based on the white woman leading character's eyes, Mrs. Gaudet. Gaudet pictured the image of Sarah that:

This is Bam," my husband said. I nodded, turning to Sarah. I knew who she was, that she was my aunt's wedding gift. Her appearance was pleasing, tall, slender, light-skinned, neatly dressed, excellent posture. Her hands were folded over her apron. She acknowledged me with something between a bow and a curtsy, but she wasn't looking at me at all. She was looking past me, with an expression of sullen expectation, my husband (Martin, 2003, p.20).

Sarah is a household black woman slave and depicting beautiful in her physical attributes; tall, slender, light-skinned. These attributes seemingly approached the white woman attributed, Mrs. Gaudet. However, the other household black woman slaves did not depicted as beautiful, because they have a very dark skin, fat, and short, as in the character of Dilcey. The similar depiction also appears in Rhett Butler's *People through the Black* woman character, Ruthie, a free-colored woman. Rhett Butler, the white man leading character described Ruthie as:

a light-skinned, plump young woman, corseted and stayed within an inch of her life. "Good afternoon, captain Butler. Isn't this a fine afternoon?" "No Spring or summer beauty hath such grace" reply young Rhett Butler (McCaig, 2007, p.158).

Ruthie has the same complexion with Sarah, that is, light-skinned, but, she is not slender, but plump. Through these two quotes, there are two aspects that could be highlighted in depicting black beauty based on the physical appearances. The first is the complexion of light-skinned, the second is the body-shaped with the slimness and the plumpness. They are then linked to white acceptance. Sarah is a representation of black woman with a light-skinned and slim, while Ruthie represented as light-skinned alike but with plump-bodied. Light-skinned and slim are very closed to European or white women traits, while plump is related to the symbols of erotic and sexual appeals that commonly had by black woman.

A light-skinned, slim and plump, in fact, not only attested the sustaining of white attribute as the standard of ideal beauty to be approached, but also tended to be stereotyping. Neal & Wilson (1989, p.323) stated that "Africans who were light-skinned had mixed blood of Caucasian and Negro blood". The mix blood of Negro and Caucasian in the United States, in fact, is not regarded as positive mixture, but assessed as degradation of white's gens. The light-skinned African women were seen as "oversexual being" as figured out through mulatto (Bogle, 1973, p.7). So, the depiction of a light-skinned on black women appearance in both novels is to link with oversexual being, as to be required by white men. As it could be seen in Sarah roled as the concubine of the white master in Martin's *Property*.

The assertion of the oversexual being could also be analyzed through the depiction of plumpness and slimness to black women attributes. Bailey (2008) explained that, historically, in Western industrialized cultures, plumpness was considered fashionable and erotic. The female body frequently represented with full rounded hips and breasts. These trends were represented in popular painting of the 1600s, which portrayed a woman with a plump body as the preferred body of the time.

Meanwhile, the idealization of slimness in women is a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1920s. Several scholars argued that the slim ideal is the outcome of successful marketing in the industry of fashion. It has become the standard of cultural beauty in the prosperous industrialized societies of the twentieth century. Thus, the change of black physical representation is not signifying the change of white mindset towards black women physical appearances, but it is an effort to maintain the white ideal beauty as well as black stereotypes. Those attributes are deemed signifying the erotic and sexual appeal of black women in order to fit the desire of white master. Hence, black women keep deliberated as the object of white men sexual appeal.

In literature and popular culture representation, the archetype of erotic Black women appeared in the character of Jazebel (Worsley 2011; West 1995). Jewell (1993, p.46) conceptualized Jazebel as a tragic mulatto with characterization of "thin lips, long straight hair, slender nose, thin figure and fair complexion". Jezebel, according to Jewell (1993), shares the reputation of being sexually seductive, and both are antithetical to the desexualized Mammy caricature. From the early 1630s to the present, black American women of all hues have been revealed as hypersexual "bad-black-girls" (Jewell 1993: 47) as a synonym of Jazebel.

In *Property*, the portrayal of Jazebel is implied through Sarah, and Belle Watling in *Rhett Butler's People*. Sarah is described has sexual affair with lot masters before having kids with white narrator's husband, Mr. Gaudet, as well as Belle Watling also has a story of affair with several white men that then bearing a child named Taz Watling with unknown father. According to Jewell (1993), the depiction of black women as Jazebel is based on a kernel of historical truth. In the slavery-era, black women sold into prostitution were mulattoes, while, freeborn light-skinned black women used to befallen the willing concubines of wealthy white Southerners. This system, called placage (Jewell 1993, p.50) involved a formal bargain for the white suitor/customer to financially support the black woman and her children in substitute for her long-term sexual services.

It is seen that both white authors still worked through racist ideology in depicting black women beauty on their novels; *Property* and *Rhett Butler's People*. Black is beautiful does not mean they are considered beautiful as they are, but by changing their attributes approaching white women's attributes. Black women with light skinned, slim, and plump bodies are becoming the values to assess one is pretty or not. Schwartz (cited by Hitlin 2003, p.199) stated that the values are "desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity". Patton (2006, p.43-44) specified that beautiful in blacks is not meant that you are not identified with the powers that be, but rather directly challenge the "white supremacist hegemony that has kept your beauty and your body invisible, marginalized, and stereotyped". Black beauty, still, is kept marginalized based on white supremacist beauty standards.

Sustaining the Images of Black as Brutes and Ruthless

Thomas (2002, p.145) stated that the image of black attributed to the racial identity, not merely related to the skin color that marks the geographical origin of Africa as a dark continent, but also has a connotation in behavior. Black often identical with "violent and savage brutes" (Mellinger, 1992, p.416). Violent and savage brutes

represent “the nature of beast which derived much from the persuasion and inspiration from nineteenth-century science” (Mellinger, 1992, p.417). As beast, blacks were deemed a totally different species, or merely a worsening of the same species. Inherent in such intellectual discussions is “the ideology that groups of humans can be attributed the fixing physical and temperamental traits” (Mellinger, 1992, p.417).

Throughout the set of literary representation that displayed in Martin’s and McCaig’s novels, blacks are portrayed as racial other, both physical and behavior. The portraiture displayed unappealing exaggerations and distortions of the human body to depict savagery and bestiality. In *Property*, the exaggeration of the black body to depict savagery and bestiality could be understood through the use of symbols and dictions to associate black behavior. Manon Gaudet, the white woman narrator, depicted the black child as in the following excerpt.

So then, we had the little bastard running up and down the dining room, putting his grubby fingers in the serving plates, eating bits of meat from his father’s hand like a dog. Sarah leaned against the sideboard and watched, but she didn’t appear to enjoy the sight much more than i did. The child is a mad creature, like a beautiful and vicious little wild cat. He has his father’s curly red hair and green eyes, his mother golden skin, her full pouting lips (Martin 2003, p.5).

The use of pejorative diction and the portrayal of physical appearances to encourage the behavioral traits are ways to depict black savagery. Pejorative words like; ‘bastard’, ‘mad creature’, ‘vicious little cat’ indicate the bad behavior that impressing someone bestiality. It was reinforced by the equation with dog and cat to represent their attitude signified that they have no rules and ethics of life. The features of physic infact have a great impact in framing the behavioral traits, for they are crafted as logic as possible. Feagin (2014, p.117) stated that for the ages, many white Americans have crafted images of black American “as ape-like”. Eberhardt et al (as cited in Feagin, 2014) claimed that this such image is connected with the criminal traits to support their discrimination including discriminatory policies.

Property points out the fundamental traits of black behavior in racist discourse that blacks are lacking in emotional control and moral constraint. The white woman narrator, Manon Gaudet, in the novel illustrated black men and women that:

They just want to murder as many of us as they can,” he said. “They don’t think further than that.” In New Orleans, I had heard of an American lady who discovered her maid attempting to poison the entire household by lacing the sugar with arsenic. What benefit would her mistress’s demise be to her, since she would only be sold again, perhaps to a more severe mistress? It puzzled me. “I suppose it is just the numbers,” I said (Martin, 2003, p. 101).

This excerpt revealed the comparison of the image of white as innocent versus black as brutes. Martin as the author selected black criminal that murder white people to strenghten the idea that black are fundamentally brutes. This is actually leading to the archetype of black people image as the dangerous one (Feagin, 2014, p. 113). This depiction reinforces prejudices about the nature of the brutality and criminality of blacks during slavery, even to justify blacks’ behavior todays that often committed to crime. Williams (1995) argued that the classification of racialized ciminal actors conceive blacks as persons who committed with criminal. This notion is believed as the

truth specifically in criminal project in the United States. Black as a social category believed consisting of persons with the homogeneity of criminal traits. Feagin (2014, p.114) argued that the image of Black people (particularly men) "as criminal actor and dangerous remains an important part of the racist framing in the white minds".

In *Rhett Butler's People*, the prejudice of blacks as violent and have a seed of savagery tacited through white woman words. She speaks that: "but you all niggers-all you niggers wanna get a white woman alone and take off her clothes and do things to her. Don't you?" (McCaig, 2007, p.370). The white woman presumption is a reflection of prejudice and stereotype of blacks in America as cruel and the rapist. The use of 'niggers' on the above quote is supporting the prejudice of black as criminal one. Parks & Jones (2008) argued that "nigger" is often used within hate crimes law. Consequently, within the realm of hate crimes law, courts should presume racial animus where a white person uses the n-word while committing a crime against a Black person. In literature, "niggers" identified as those who considered as as violent and oversex in the picture of bad buck. Bogle (1973) found the archetype of black as 'bad buck' is characterized as oversex black man and the rapist. Novel, like; Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1915) became the authentic example of how white author widespread the stereotype of black behavior as brutes and violent in their literary work. This novel even was able to evoke the white folk hatred to fight against black people in twentieth century in the United States and rationalized the segregation.

From the analysis, it can be highlighted that the stereotype and prejudice of blacks' behavior as savage, brutes, and ruthless, keeps constructed in the contemporary slavery novels written by whites. Language symbols that used either implicitly or explicitly expressing the traits to refer to savage brutes. This fact reinforces the notion that blacks stereotypes as as savage brutes as a symbol of bestiality in contemporary discourse is persisted.

Black White Relation: Reflecting the Dominant and Subordinate

The concept of dominant and subordinate, in hegemony perspective, refers to "the process in which a dominant class rules a society by leads it through the exercise of intellectual and moral leadership" (Storey, 1993, p.37). Black-white relation (as in colonized and colonizer relation in Edward Said's concept) in *Property* and *Rhett Butler's People*, intellectual and moral leadership are dealing with the relation of black and white that infact, not merely the problem of phenotype distinction, but also establishing hiearchy, pompous, and moralist views. White is constructed as modern, superior, and macho, while black is backwards, inferior and feminine (Hall 1997). Said (1978) explained that modern is dealt with the achievement of technology, education, and culture. Pompous is as a belief that other people have no capacity and capability to be equal with white. Moralist is reflects a moral quality, in which black is not only viewed as traditional and primitive, but also difficult to be conquered. Thus, white needs effort to be conquering, educating, saving, redeeming out of the primitivism and backwardness of black. Whites then define themselves as a group of people who play a central role in educating and elevating black people as well as humanizing them, and it is accepted as universal truth.

A mechanism to sustain white supremacy in the black-white relation in these novels is dipicted through the attitude of white hero and heroine. Rhett Butler as a

white male main character in *Rhett Butler's People* and Manon Gaudet as a white female main character in *Property* performed as saviors, emancipators, and elevators for black people. This is the way to represent white as the leaders and dominants, while black as the followers and subordinates.

In *Property*, the reflection of white as savior and emancipator represented through the way of white woman secured black woman from inventory. She refused the idea of selling her, even she released the black woman in her status as property. Manon in *Property* says; "I expect we will find her soon. Don't put her name on the inventory. I don't plan to sell her." If I have to live with Walter, so does she." (Martin, 2003, p.140). Manon's way in rejecting to sell Sarah apparently secured her from the harsh life in the outside, and also emancipated her from enslaving. However, it is seemed just a camouflage to keeping the black woman under her control. In the end of the story, though black woman is being freed from enslaving, she keeps doing the domestic job in the white's house and serves the white woman as mistress. Catherine Clinton in *The Plantation Mistress* (1982) argued that the relationship of black and white women in slavery is also displaying a hierarchy. White woman is seen as the second oppressor after the white man as considered as the first oppressor. Weiner (1986, p.384) asserted that the effort of white women to aid black women was merely "a Southern conservative drama". She was operated as mediator to sustain slavery in more diplomatic way.

In *Rhett Butler's People*, a white man protagonist character performed as savior by declining to bequeath the family business on slave trade. He also fights to look after blacks as his father's ex-slave. The white man main character, Rhett Butler, said: "I never wanted to be a rice planter. Langston would go on about rice varieties or negro management and I 'd not hear a word for dreaming about the river." (McCaig, 2007, p.4).

The refusal to be the rice planter signifies the refusal of slavery, because white planter needs and should have slaves in running the plantation. Rhett also conflicted to his father who has a business on bondage. His father, Langston Butler, said "you will not drive our Negroes. You refuse to learn to drive Negroes...you are a renegade." (McCaig, 2007, p.21). This quote ensured that the white man leading character; Rhett Butler, is a fighter for black people's emancipation in the South.

The other important depiction can be observed in the effort of Rhett Butler in saving Will and Tunnis Bonneau, the black men, from the death penalty sentenced to both for the criminal allegation. Rhett Butler seeks a legal assistance to help both black men. Rhett Butler also offers his sympathy and helps these two blacks' wives after their husbands passing away on the punishment. However, the way of the author dramatizes the aids on the legal system remain a paradox. He is not, in fact, successful releasing the both blacks from the death penalty. Even, in case of Tunnis Bonneau, Rhett Butler himself shot Tunnis as requested by Tunnis himself. While in the case of Will, Rhett fell-down himself to the river because he could stand to see Will whipped by the his father's overseer. It seems that white leading character represented as savior actually to bestowing white as benevolent. This is the way to smoothen the issue of black mistreat in these novels. However, in the end of the story, the white character kept establishing a model of leadership, that white as a leader and black as follower, by replacing the status of black as slave to be partner in a more peaceful and acceptable condition.

Feagin (2014, p.91) states that today, as in the past, “there is a strong impulse to break the historical linkage between the genocida and enslaving past and the conditions faced by Americans of color today”. They tend to demonstrate the white innocence by romanticizing the past that reflected the congruent relationship of black slave and white master in the old South in recent literature. Such notion is observed as a way to soften the impact of chaos rejection of slavery and the image of the Old South in the post Civil War and Reconstruction eras, and it reinforced in the late of twentieth century through the depiction of Civil War that has ruined the harmonious life in the South. Likewise, the Hollywood movies dealing with U.S racial history, Feagin (2014) argued that the movie like *Glory* (1989) and *Amistad* (1997) portrayed black American in a substantially less stereotyped and more humane. While, these more recent movies touching on racial issues have sometimes presented a white person as villainous, such images are usually more than balanced by those whites who are honorable or heroic. In recent mainstream films that mostly presented positive stereotypes of whites –as good, civilized, and the central heroes even in the story that mostly about black people (Feagin, 2014, p.92). Vera & Gordon (1998) confirmed that there is a tenacity across time in representing of the ideal white American self, which is constructed as very good persons; powerful, brave, cordial, kind, and generous; a natural-born leader. Therefore, the depiction of white as the antislavery characters actually as a way fit the popular taste in the 21st century, it is also to control the power relation that white is a leader and dominant versus black as followers and subordinates in more acceptable representation.

The second depiction is dealt with white as black elevators. As black elevator, white main caharcters seek to hold blacks back but be selected in those who they promote. Whites are presented not only emancipated blacks, but also developed or enhanced their economic and social life. In Rhett Butler’s *People*, the role of white as black elevator represented through “the white Father” that emancipated Thomas Bonneau, a former black slave. The white father then donated his land for the free black to build a modest home. The novel told that:

As a young man, Thomas Bonneau had been freed by the master who had fathered him. Thomas Bonneau's white father deeded his son five acres of land on a low rise beside the river, where Thomas built a modest tabby house, whose thick, homely walls had resisted previous hurricanoes. Bonneau and a boy about Rhett's age were on the roof, nailing shingles (McCaig 2007, p.20).

The “white father” as expressed on the above quote signifies the intimate impression in black-whites relations. Father can be defined as a man who has led us be, grow, and develop. Still, father can also be interpreted as, besides, the life-giver, also teacher who teach kids about ethics and morality in life. This such analysis reinforces the messege that white people are educator and guardian of blacks existence in the United States.

Another illustration that related to the image of whites as blacks elevator is through the depiction of job access to black people. The selection of Tunis Bonneau as the Chargo ship pilot owned by white signified that white not only give occupation to black but also melt the stigma of discrimination against black. It is illustrated that “these days Tunis was a pilot for Haynes & Son. Every free colored knew Rhett had hired Tunis Bonneau as his pilot, even though many whites wanted the Job” (McCaig,

2007, p.70). This illustration seemingly blurred the discrimination in employment. The preferred to black rather than white signifies of promotion of the racial equality in work places. However, Tunnis status as worker in white-owned companies and working under the supervision of whites, still hinted that he remains under the control of whites.

White also appeared as someone who elevating black music from primitively. Cassius, a black musician, with his banjo, offered himself to be bought, but his music than his physic for plantation laborer. He says "I can not give nothing away for nothing! who buys me, buys my music master, "I can make a Presbyterian kick up his heels!" (McCaig, 2007, p.91). This quote indicates that black have a music as a legacy of his African culture, however, it is the role of white that make it visibly exist. So, white kept having a central role in elevating black culture to be particular in American society. Likewise, in the *Property*. Mr. Roget is a mulatto and former slave of the white family, emancipated from slavery after he bought himself and determined him self to pursue the furniture business. However, the furniture business can not be developed without the support of whites as the former master who also then become his customers and eandevors. White kept having a big role in enhancing black life and prosperous life.

Conclusion

Just as America in 21st century has undergoing the significant changes in the political landscape, the representation of literature that reflects racism also undergoing a period of changes. The slavery novels that emerged in the early 21st century, particularly written by whites reflect the struggle for hegemonic discourse in contemporary American literature. The portraiture of black people's reveals the traces of racism that keep sustained by changing its representation. The representation of black such as the landmark slavery novel *Property* and *Rhett Butler's People* suggest that the black women physiscal appearances are changed into more beautiful images, exageratting black moral constraint and asserting the black-white relation in a hierarchy as well.

However, the representation of racism in both novels necessarily appeared to be subtle. This article has suggested that even apparently black women are portrayed beautiful such as Sarah and Ruthie, the standardized white beauty on black women appearances are attached. Black women could be considered beautiful when they approached to white beauty as ideal one; light-skinned and slender. Also, the attribute of plump also the smooth way to depict black women stereotype as erotic one. Hence, the depiction of black women as beautiful is much stereotyped, that is to represents the oversexual and erotic being as the symbol of seductive women and bad girl.

The same ways also goes to the depiction of black behavior as symbol of violence and savage brutes. Violent and savage brutes represented through the use of pejorative symbols, like; bastard, mad creature, vicious litle cat indicated the nature of beast which was a wholly different species, or merely a degeneration of the same species. The framing of black insurrection, poisoning the master, and the rapist niggers in the novel ensureing blacks' prejudice as criminal race and razionalizing their discrimination and subordination.

The contruction of black and white relation also kept signifying the unequal status. White main characters ensure the status of white as leader and black as subordinate or

follower. White leadership can be understood critically from the depiction of white leading characters' role as Black savior, emancipator, and elevator. White characters strengthen their position as dominant among those black characters.

The change of the American political landscape in the 21st century, in fact, is totally fit with visually literary representation, but not in ideology behind the story. The racist ideology kept maintained through literature discourse. Thus, it can be conversed that the issue of racism surrounding the black-white relation in America is unable to be disappeared, it continues to be constructed in other forms of representation to fit the spirit of the age. The problem of race in the United States is an ongoing process of reconstruction to gain power control and to upshot the recent popular consciousness. This is the reason why the imagined slavery continued to be responded in American literature whites. It is connected with the formation of races that has got its power since hundreds years ago. White continues to seek and maintain its position as a superior class in the United States.

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