

**THE PORTRAIT OF NIKKI GIOVANNI'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN HER
SELECTED POEMS**

THESIS

HANIK FAUZIYAH AGUSTIN

14320030



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

2018

**THE PORTRAIT OF NIKKI GIOVANNI'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN
HER SELECTED POEMS**

THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra*

By:

Hanik Fauziah Agustin

NIM 14320030

Advisor:

Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum.

NIP 196911222006041001



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

2018

APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that the thesis of Hanik Fauziyah Agustin, entitled "*The Portrait of Nikki Giovanni's Personal Experience in her Selected Poems*" has been approved by the advisor for further approval by the Board of Examiners as one the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) in Department of English Literature.

Approved by,

The Advisor



Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum.
NIP 196911222006041001

Acknowledged by,

The Head of
Department of English Literature

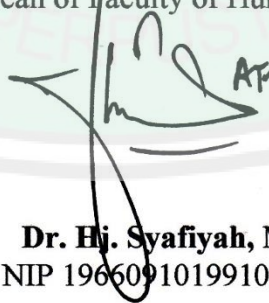


Rina Sari, M.Pd.
NIP 19750610 200604 2002

Malang, 10th of July 2018

Acknowledged by

Dean of Faculty of Humanities



Dr. Hj. Syafiyah, M.A.
NIP 196609101991032022

LEGITIMATION SHEET

This is to certify that the thesis of Hanik Fauziyah Agustin, entitled "*The Portrait of Nikki Giovanni's Personal Experience in her Selected Poems*" has been approved by the advisor for further approval by the Board of Examiners as one the requirements for the degree *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) in Department of English Literature.

Malang,

The Board of Examiners

Signature

Dr. Hj. Istiadah, MA
NIP 19670313 199203 2 002

(Examiner)




Miftahul Huda, M. Pd
NIP 19840329 201101 1 009

(Chairman)

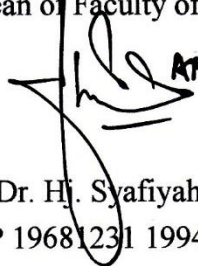


Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum
NIDT 19691122 200604 1 001

(Advisor)



Approved by,
The Dean of Faculty of Humanities,



Dr. Hj. Syafiyah, M.A
NIP 19681231 199403 1 002

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

Here with I,

Name : Hanik Fauziyah Agustin

ID Number : 14320030

Faculty : Humanities

Department : English Literature

Declare that the thesis I wrote to fulfill the requirement for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S) in Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, entitled "*The Portrait of Nikki Giovanni's Personal Experience in her Selected Poems*" is truly my original work. It does not incorporate any materials previously written or published by another person except those indicated in quotations and bibliography. Due to this fact, I am the only person responsible for the thesis if there is any objection or claim from others.

Malang, 10th of July 2018

Researcher,



Hanik Fauziyah Agustin
NIM 1432030

MOTTO

“I want to be clear about this. If you wrote from experience, you’d get maybe one book, maybe three poems. Writers write from empathy.”

Nikki Giovanni



DEDICATION

I proudly dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents Mrs. Nurhayati and Mr. Abd Basith Muhamad, my husband Ananta Pramana, and my sister and little brothers; Putri Mila Aprilia, Moh. Risky Romansa Putra and Moh. Firman Romansa Putra, thank you for the endless love and support ♥



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alhamdulillah, all praises belong to Allah SWT who has given me the strength and guidance until I can finish my thesis entitled “*The Portrait of Nikki Giovanni’s Personal Experience in her Selected Poems*” And I do not forget to uphold my *sholawat* and *salam* to my beloved Prophet Muhammad SAW, who has brought all people from darkness to the lightness.

All happiness belong to the researcher for finishing the thesis. In finishing the thesis, the researcher realizes that there are many supporting factors. Therefore, in this great opportunity, the researcher would like to give the great gratitude and highest appreciation to:

1. Prof. Dr. H. Abd. Haris, M. Ag., the Rector of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang;
2. Dr. Hj. Syafiyah, M.A, the Dean of Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.
3. Rina Sari, M.Pd., the Head of Department of English Literature of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and also as my academic advisor.
4. Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum, my thesis advisor who always guides and helps me in conducting the thesis.
5. All lecturers of Department of English Literature who successfully help me to pass through the entire subjects.

6. My beloved parents, Mr. Abd. Basith Muhammad and Mrs. Nurhayati who has never stopped praying for the success of my life.
7. My brother Risky Dwi Prasetyo and sister Megayati, who always support me even if we were in distance.
8. UKM Kommust, Rhapsody, and Daydreamer Band, thanks for having been my first escape from a complicated study.
9. More than friend that always support and crazy with me, Maharani Violeta Saputra. Please don't forget my birthday.
10. Irga Arbiyanta, Alhabarkah Aziz Irfani, Difa Nur Musalliya, Nindya Arfi Rosyida, Arif Mashudi, Mahardika Reza Lesmana, Fikri Ulalul Hakim, Fitri Dewi Wulandari, Anif Fathul, Nur Laily Rohmawati, Ghalih Ragasatiwi, I just wanna say thank you so much, for all your kindness and memories.
11. Special thanks for someone who always implicitly force me to finish my study, Ananta Pramana.
12. All of BSI Heroes 2014, thank you.

The researcher does realize that in conducting the thesis, there are still many weaknesses and mistakes within the thesis. Therefore, all suggestions and advices are welcome for improving my English ability.

Malang, 10th of July 2018

Researcher,

Hanik Fauziyah Agustin

Abstract

Agustin, Hanik Fauziyah. 2018. *The Portrait of Nikki Giovanni's Personal Experience in her Selected Poems*. Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities. Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang.

The Advisor : Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum.

Keywords : Portrait, Biography Criticism, Personal Experience.

This research focus on the extrinsic element of Nikki Giovanni's selected poems, especially relationship between Giovanni's personal life (biography) and her poems. Nikki Giovanni is one of African American writer, she has many different works in literature. This research uses her three selected poems, *Nikki Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother*, as the research object. The reason why I choose that three poems is because the poems has close relation with Giovanni's personal life. This research uses biographical criticism as the main theory. The theory will answer the research question by describing relation between Giovanni's life and her poems. The researcher divided this research into three steps, those are describing the life of Nikki Giovanni, then analyzing the three poems to get deeply understanding the content and find the relation between Nikki Giovanni's personal experiences and her poems. The researcher gathering the data and information from some books, and other resources. The data source of Nikki Giovanni's biography were taken from book by Virginia C.Fowler *Nikki Giovanni: A Literary Biography (2013)*, and *Gemini (1971)* written by Nikki Giovanni, while the data for the selected poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, and *Mother* were taken from *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni (2003)* by Nikki Giovanni. The result of this research shows that the three poems explain different experience of Nikki Giovanni based on the content in each poem. The poems have same speaker, Giovanni herself, because the three poems explicitly tell about her own experience. The things reflected in her poem are about her childhood, her life during discrimination and segregation as African American people, and her love to the family.

Ringkasan

Agustin, Hanik Fauziyah. 2018. *Potret Pengalaman Pribadi Nikki Giovanni dalam Puisi Pilihan*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Humaniora. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Pembimbing: Dr. Syamsudin, M.Hum.

Kata kunci: Potret, Kritik Biografi, Pengalaman Pribadi.

Penelitian ini fokus pada elemen ekstrinsik dari puisi Nikki Giovanni, terutama hubungan antara kehidupan pribadi Giovanni (biografi) dengan puisinya. Nikki Giovanni adalah salah satu penulis Afrika-Amerika, ia memiliki banyak karya sastra yang berbeda. Penelitian ini menggunakan tiga puisinya, *Nikki Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, dan *Mother*, sebagai objek penelitian. Alasan mengapa saya memilih tiga puisi itu adalah karena puisi-puisi itu memiliki hubungan yang erat dengan kehidupan pribadi Giovanni. Penelitian ini menggunakan kritik biografis sebagai teori utama. Teori ini akan menjawab pertanyaan penelitian dengan menggambarkan hubungan antara kehidupan Giovanni dan puisinya. Peneliti membagi penelitian ini menjadi tiga langkah, yaitu menggambarkan kehidupan Nikki Giovanni, kemudian menganalisis puisi untuk mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam tentang isi puisi dan menemukan hubungan antara pengalaman pribadi Nikki Giovanni dan puisinya. Peneliti mengumpulkan data dan informasi dari beberapa buku, dan sumber lainnya. Sumber data biografi Nikki Giovanni diambil dari buku oleh Virginia C. Fowler *Nikki Giovanni: A Literary Biography (2013)*, dan *Gemini (1971)* ditulis oleh Nikki Giovanni, sedangkan data untuk puisi *Nikki Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, dan *Mother* diambil dari buku *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni (2003)* oleh Nikki Giovanni. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ketiga puisi itu menjelaskan pengalaman yang berbeda dari Nikki Giovanni berdasarkan konten di setiap puisi. Puisi-puisi itu memiliki pembicara yang sama, Giovanni sendiri, karena ketiga puisi itu secara eksplisit menceritakan pengalamannya sendiri. Hal-hal yang tercermin dalam puisinya adalah tentang masa kecilnya, hidupnya selama diskriminasi dan pemisahan sebagai orang Afrika-Amerika, dan cintanya kepada keluarga.

الملخص

أغستين، حنيك فوزية. 2018. صورة لتجربة الشخصية لنيكي جيوفاني في الشعر المختار. الأطروحة. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي. كلية العلوم الإنسانية. جامعة الإسلامية الحكومية مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج.

الكلمة الرئيسية : الصورة، نقد السيرة الذاتية، تجربة الشخصية

يركز هذا البحث على العنصر الخارجي لشعر نيكي جيوفاني خاصة العلاقة بين حياة جيوفاني وشعرها. نيكي جيوفاني هي واحدة من الكتاب الأمريكيين من أصول إفريقية ولديها إعداد من أعمال الأدبية المختلفة. تستخدم الباحثة عن ثلاث شعرها وهم "نيكي روزا"، "كنوكسفيل تينيسي" و "الأم" كالمبحث. السبب عن اختيار الشواعر الثلاث لأنهما لديهما العلاقة الوثيقة مع حياة نيكي جيوفاني. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نقد السيرة كمنهجية رئيسية. ستجيب هذه النظرية على أسئلة البحث من خلال وصف العلاقة بين حياة نيكي جيوفاني وشعرها. تقسم الباحثة إلى ثلاثة خطوات، وهي وصف حياة نيكي جيوفاني، ثم تحليل الشعر لإكتساب محتويات الشعر، واكتشاف العلاقة بين تجربة نيكي جيوفاني وشعرها. تجمع الباحثة البيانات والمعلومات من العديد من الكتب والمصادر الأخرى. مصادر بيانات السيرة الذاتية لنيكي جيوفاني مأخوذة من كتاب لفيرجينيا س فولر وهو "نيكي جيوفاني: سيرة أدبية" (2013) و "جيميبي" الذي نُكبت بنيكي نفسها. فأن البيانات المتعلقة بقصائد "نيكي روزا"، "كنوكسفيل تينيسي" و "الأم" مأخوذة من كتاب "جمع الشواعر لنيكي جيوفاني (2003) بقلم نيكي نفسها. أن النتائج هذه الدراسة يبين تجربة مختلفة في كل الشعر. تحتوي الشواعر على نفس المتحدث، جيوفاني نفسها، لأنهم يتحدثون عن تجربة نيكي نفسها. في شعرها يُعكس عن حياة الطفولة، وحيات أثناء التمييز والانفصال كأمركيين من أصل أفريقيين، وحبها لعائلتها.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL SHEET	i
LEGITIMATION SHEET	ii
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY	iii
MOTTO	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem of the Study.....	3
1.3 Objective of the Study.....	3
1.4 Significance of the Study	3
1.5 Scope and Limitation	4
1.6 Research Method.....	4
1.6 Previous Studies	6
1.7 Definition of Key Terms	8
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
2.1 Biographical Criticism	9
2.2 Biography of Nikki Giovanni.....	12
2.2.1 Nikki Giovanni’s Family, Childhood and Friends.....	13
2.2.2 Nikki Giovanni’s Education and Achievement	23
2.2.3 Nikki Giovanni in Discrimination and Segregation.....	28

CHAPTER III ANALYSIS

3.1 Nikki-Rosa32

 3.1.1 Explication of Nikki Rosa33

 3.1.2 Analysis of the Poem.....34

 3.1.3 Relation between Nikki Rosa and Giovanni’s Life36

3.2 Knoxville, Tennessee39

 3.2.1 Explication of Knoxville, Tennessee39

 3.2.2 Analysis of the Poem41

 3.2.3 Relation between Knoxville, Tennessee and Giovanni’s Life.....44

3.3 Mother49

 3.3.1 Explication of Mother.....50

 3.3.2 Analysis of the Poem.....52

 3.3.3 Relation between Mother and Giovanni’s Life52

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion56

4.2 Suggestion.....58

BIBLIOGRAPHY59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into several parts. Background of the study discusses the reason of choosing the topic. Problem of the study which becomes the focus of the research and its objective. The scope and limitation which is the borders of the research. Significance of study states the benefit of the study. Research method explores the steps of collecting data and data analysis. Previous study describes the related study which supports the theory of this research. The definition of key terms provided to make the reader easier in understanding the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is expression of personality. All about human life is written in literature. In other words, literary works such as drama or play, novel and poem expose the human life (Hudson, 1913:16). The expression of personality stated above can be the “Personal experience” of the writer, which has been rightly said “is the basis of all real literature”; and to enter into such personal experience, and to share it, is similarly the basis of all real literary culture Hudson (1913:17).

The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the oldest and best established methods of literary study (Wellek and Warren, 1962:67). It means this theory is one of the oldest theories to analyze a literary work and it stresses on the creativity of the author in creating his or her work based on the creating history which the work has relationship with the author’s

life. In this case, biography of the author will sometimes be reflected in his or her work. (Wellek & Warren 1962:35). Biographical criticism assumes that there is a relationship between the writer's life and work. This theory focuses on the particular incidents, people and historical occurrences in an author's life (Gillespie 2010:23). It means biographical criticism was focuses on links between a work's content and the writer's life such as the writer intentions, experiences, motives, or beliefs to interpret his/her literary works.

Nikki Giovanni is one of America's foremost poets. She has written many revolutionary poems reflecting on the culture and heritage of her race. Spending much of her youth growing up in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1943, Giovanni's childhood has greatly influenced her writing. Nikki Giovanni (Yolande Cornelia Giovanni is her given name) is the younger of two daughters in a close-knit family. She gained an intense appreciation for her African-American heritage from her outspoken grandmother (Fowler, 2013:3)

Giovanni set up her own publishing company and published her very first collection of poems, *Black Feeling, Black Talk*. Since then Giovanni has written many powerful poems and collections, as well as a few albums of her poems recorded to gospel music. The National Association of Radio and Television Announcers chose one of these recorded albums, "*Truth is on its way*", best Spoken Album in 1972. Mademoiselle also crowned Giovanni as Woman of the Year, and groups such as Psi Phi fraternity and PUSH have honored her for her wonderful work. (Fowler, 1992:84)

The reason why the researcher uses Nikki Giovanni's life and poems to be analyzed in this thesis is because Giovanni has many interesting experiences, even about her childhood or her life as an African American. Many of her poems represent her life experience but these three poems, *Nikki Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother*, are the most popular poems that have many relations with Giovanni's personal life.

1.2 Problem of the Study

Based on the explanation in background of the study, the researcher find the problem of the study is:

How is Nikki Giovanni's personal experience reflected in poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville*, *Tennessee*, and *Mother*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

With regard to the problem stated above, the main objective of this study is:

To describe Nikki Giovanni's personal experience reflected in poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville*, *Tennessee*, and *Mother*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study will be useful to the writer and the readers, such as in increasing and enriching the insights of the writer and the readers about poems and literary criticisms, especially in biographical criticism, to know further about the relationship between Nikki Giovanni and her work. Practically, this study will give a contribution to the lectures, which it expected can be a reference

to teach in literature, especially about analyzing poem by biographical criticism. While for students, it is expected to give better understanding to apply biographical criticism in analyzing literary work. Furthermore, this study might be an input and additional reference for the following research on biographical criticism.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

In order to make the discussion in this study more focus on the problem, the writer decides the scope and limitation. The scope of this study is to analyze the relationship between Nikki Giovanni's personal experience and her poems. While the limitation of this study is using the three selected poems of Nikki Giovanni, those are *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, and *Mother* because this three poems has close relation with Nikki Giovanni's personal life.

1.6 Research Method

The method used in this study includes the research design, data source, the technique of collecting the data, and the process of analyzing and interpreting the data.

1.6.1 Research Design

The researcher applies literary criticism by Gillespie (2010) to analyze this research. In literary criticism the researcher analyzes the extrinsic element of the object using biographical criticism by Wellek and Warren (1962). In using biographical criticism there are three point of view. The researcher applies first point of view, it is biography of the

author explicates the creating process of the literary work. This is based on the focus of analyzing Nikki Giovanni's personal experience through the selected poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, and *Mother*

1.6.2 Data Source

The researcher collected the data and information from some books, journals, theses and websites with the quotation as the evidence to support the analysis. The data source of Nikki Giovanni's biography were taken from books of Virginia C. Fowler (2013) *Nikki Giovanni: A Literary Biography*, and *Gemini: an Extended Autobiographical statement on My First Twenty Five of Being Black Poet (1971)* written by Nikki Giovanni, while the data for the selected poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, and *Mother* were taken from *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni (2003)* by Nikki Giovanni.

1.6.3 Data Collection

Researcher took several steps in data collection;

1. The researcher read the poems and scan a major foundation that will be analyzed.
2. The researcher collects the data and inputs that are related to Nikki Giovanni's biography.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

Researcher took several stages in data analysis;

1. Reading Nikki Giovanni's poems and her biography repeatedly to get more understand about the contents of them.

2. Seeking the connection with the events of the author's life that have relation with the poems.
3. Finding out and interpreting the correlation between the author's life and her poems using biographical criticism.

1.7 Previous Studies

Before the analysis of this work is initiated, there were several previous studies concerning the similar issues have been administered to support theory used. The first thesis is "*The Main Characters in Charlotte Bronte's Biography and Her Novel 'Jane Eyre' (A Comparative Study)*" written by Natalia (2008), which focused to analyze the main character's portrayal in the novel *Jane Eyre* and Bronte's biography, *The life of Charlotte Bronte*, and to discover the comparison both of them. She thought that Bronte brought the influences of her own life character into the main character of her novel. In order that, this study wanted to find out the resemblance of character of Jane Eyre and Charlotte Bronte by analyzing physiological, psychological, and sociological dimensions. Natalia used qualitative method to analyze data based on that theory of three dimensions (physiological, psychological, and sociological dimensions). She used theory of biographical approach from Wellek and Warren (1962), which is combined with theory of intrinsic element specifically main character portrayal proposed by Kenney (1966). Natalia succeeded in comparing a novel with author's biography. By analyzing three dimensions of character, she found the conclusion of similarities between character of Jane Eyre in novel and character of Charlotte

Bronte. One of the primary ideas of this study contributed on my thesis, that is the used of biographical approach by Wellek and Warren.

The second previous study is Dian (2010) through her thesis entitled *The Feminism of Virginia Woolf in "Mrs. Dalloway"* also concerned on the comparative study but including the feminism discussion as main idea of the study. Dian applied biographical and psychological approach to identify the way Virginia Woolf expressed the feminism idea in her novel "Mrs. Dalloway". She focused to find out extrinsic elements of novel by analyzing Woolf's biographical and psychological condition. She used those approach that originally proposed by Wellek and Warren (1962). By biographical approach, she not only found the life of Woolf itself but there was also the situation of England at the time which influencing her life and British people so much. Dian also found the creative writing process of a novel by using psychological approach. In order that, those approach can give a conclusion briefly about the reflection of feminism issue itself from writer's side. Overall, the study was impressive in exploring behind the issue to be delivered by author through biographical and psychological approach.

All those undergraduate theses supported this study through the analysis of extrinsic aspect. two undergraduate theses concerned on the study by using biographical approach within. Absolutely, those theses contributed to this study in discussing the relation between the author's personal life and their works.

Contrast to other thesis, which mainly discussed about characterization in fiction. This thesis focuses in discussing the relation between the three poems *Nikki Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother* with the author's life. The two previous studies

using comparative approach while this thesis only applies one theory, biographical criticism. The different things also come from the object of the study, each previous study used novel as the object while this thesis using three poems *Nikki Rosa, Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother* by Nikki Giovanni. Overall, this study was interesting especially about biographical criticism in comparing the poems and its author's personal life, in order to find that the works of this author reflected her life experience.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

In this research, there are some key terms which significant to the reader to make easy in understanding. Those are :

1. Portrait: Portrait is a representation or impression of someone or something in language or on film or television. (www.lexico.com)
2. Biographical Criticism: Biographical criticism is the theory focuses on the particular incidents, people and historical occurrences in an author's life. It is relationship between the writer's life and work (Gillespie 2010:23).
3. Personal Experience: Personal experience of a human being is the moment-to-moment experience and sensory awareness of internal and external events or a sum of experiences forming an empirical unity such as a period of life. (<https://www.definitions.net>)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the related literature which is relevant with the topic of the study. It is divided into two parts. The first part explains about biographical criticism. The second part describes Nikki Giovanni's biography.

2.1 Biographical Criticism

This research focus in analyze the extrinsic element of Nikki Giovanni's selected poems, especially in relationship between Giovanni's life (biography) and her poems. In order to analyze it, this research will use biographical criticism by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1962).

According to Abrams biography was full account of a particular person's life, involving the attempt to set forth character, temperament, and milieu, as well as the subject's activities and experiences (Abrams 1999:22). In short, biography presents the subject's life story (in this case, the subject here means the author of a work), various aspect of his or her life, including intimate details of experience and activities.

The eighteenth century in England is the age of the emergence of the full-scale biography, and also the theory of biography as a special literary genre. It was the century of Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (1779:81) and of the best known of all biographies, James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (Abrams 1999:22). At least in England, biography has been one of the earliest and

certainly one of the most persistent forms of literary study (Wellek and Warren 1962:68).

Biography can be judged in relation to the light it throws on the actual production of poetry and it also as affording materials for a systematic study of the psychology of the poet and of the poetic process (Wellek and Warren 1962:67). That means through biography of an author, we can know how the poem was created and how the condition of the poet when he created his poem.

Biographical Approach is used because of the awareness of an author existence behind a work. This is the line with the statement of Wellek and Werren in *Theory of Literature* (1962:79).

Still, there are connecting links, parallelism, oblique resemblances, topsy-turvy mirrors. The poet's work may be a mask a dramatized, conventionalization, but it is frequently a conventionalization of his own experiences, his own life. If used with a sense of these distinctions, there is use in biographical study.

There are some benefits in analyzing a work with knowing the author's biography. Biography has exegetical value, it may explain a great many allusions or even words in an author's work (Wellek and Warren 1962:73). It means, through biography of the author we can give explanation of the allegory words in a work. It also helps us in studying the most obvious of all strictly developmental problems in the history of literature, the growth, maturing, and possible decline of an author's art and it accumulates the materials for other questions of literary history such as the reading of the poet, his personal associations with literary men,

his travels, the landscape and cities he saw and lived in (Wellek and Warren, 1962:73).

Biographical Criticism is the relation between a written work and the biographical experiences of the writer (Ellis,1951:971). It has never been doubted that a poet's experiences, public and private, historical and psychological, reappear, distorted, refined, generalized, reordered, in her poetry. hence it follows that the reconstruction of the poet's experiences from diaries, letters, accounts of friends, and public records, may illuminate his poetry. But the converse of this proposition is also assumed to be true: if the biographical experience illuminates the poetry, the poetry must also illuminate the biographical experience. the poem in other words, is an autobiographical document (Ellis, 1951:971).

In using biographical criticism, there are three points of view should be noticed carefully. The first is biography explains and illuminates the actual product of poetry, is directly relevant. It means the biography of the author explicates the creating process of the literary work. The second is advocating the intrinsic interest of biography, shifts the center of attention to human personality. It means the author is the main focus in analyzing a literary work. And then, the third is considering biography as material for a science or future science, the psychology of artistic creation. It means biography can be used as a science to analysis the poem through the condition of the poet when create his work (Wellek and Warren, 1962:67).

The biographical method has some weakness. According to Wellek and Warren (1962:78), the biographical approach forgets that a work of art is not only simply the embodiment of experience but always the latest work in a series of such works; it is in drama, a novel, a poem determined, so far as it is determined at all, by literary tradition and conventions. The biographical approach actually obscures a proper comprehension of the literary process, since it breaks up the order of literary tradition to substitute the life-circle of an individual.

The biographical approach ignores also quite simple psychological facts. A work of art may be the 'mask', the 'anti-self' behind which his real person is hiding, or it may be picture of the life from which the author wants to escape (Wellek and Warren, 1962:78).

In conclusion, the main aim of biographical criticism is to do some digging into the facts of an author's life and times, then to relate that information back to the author's work (Gillespie, 2010:23). Hence, through this theory we will understand and comprehend a literary work by studying deeper about the life of the author. This research will try to understand Nikki Giovanni's personal life and then know how her life was reflected in her poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Love is*, and *Mother*. Furthermore, in using this theory, we must know the biography or the personal life of Nikki Giovanni because the biography of Nikki Giovanni will be the important thing as the main source to find the correlation of Nikki and her poems also her experience life was reflected through her poems.

2.2 Biography of Nikki Giovanni

This part describes Giovanni's life experiences. The researcher divides this section into 3 parts. First is about Nikki Giovanni's childhood, family and friends,

Giovanni's education and achievement, and Giovanni's life in discrimination and segregation as an African American.

2.2.1 Nikki Giovanni's Childhood, Family and Friends

Nikki Giovanni was born on June 3, 1943, in Knoxville General Hospital, Tennessee. She grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her roots, like those of many of her contemporaries were in the South, and many of her values were shaped by Southern black culture, which reflected in many ways its African origins. Her values and sensibility were also shaped, however, by the urban rhythms and the confident outlook of the North, even though Cincinnati, the Gateway to the South, was urban but hardly Northern in its values.

She was second daughter of Jonas Gus Giovanni (1914-1982) and Yolande Cornelia Watson (1919-2005), who, having hoped for a son, named her Yolande Cornelia Giovanni, Jr. The name that eventually stuck, which is now her legal name, was bestowed on her by her older sister, Gary Ann (1940-2005) who inexplicably began calling her "Nikki" when she was still a toddler. (Fowler, 2013:2)

Giovanni's parent married in July 7, 1939. After the marriage, Yolande and Gus settled into an apartment not far from the Mulvaney Street family home. Yolande settled into the role of housewife. Gus continued to work for the Tennessee Valley Authority, which was still in its early years, and completed his final year at Knoxville College. He graduated in June 1940 and the first child of the marriage, also the first grandchild in the Watson family, was born a little more than two months later, on September 2, 1940. Christened Gary Ann, she

represented a joyous milestone in the family, spoiled and pampered by her parents, grandparents, and aunts (Fowler, 2013:8-9)

Meanwhile, Gus Giovanni's college degree made little difference in the job opportunities available to him in segregated Knoxville. He continued to stoke furnaces for TVA, as he had throughout college, and picked up occasional jobs as a bell hop, but was not able to find employment that was commensurate with his education. For three years, he continued to do back breaking work for low wages, a situation that could not go on indefinitely, given his own personality, ambitions, and the responsibilities he bore as a husband and father. Near the end of Yolande's second pregnancy (with the poet, Nikki), Gus received an offer from a school outside Cincinnati that would pay better wages and establish a career track. Thus, just two months after Nikki's birth, Gus and Yolande moved to Cincinnati with their two little girls (Fowler,2013:9).

Gus's old mentor, Lee Render, helped open up new opportunities. Gus and Yolande, both, became house parents at Glenview School, a home for black boys. Although both of them worked, they drew only one salary, and a rather low salary at that. But they were in an urban area where opportunities arose more frequently than in small town Knoxville, and they continued at Glenview for four years. Yolande took her babies home to Knoxville for holiday and during the summers. It was at some point during the years at Glenview that Gary dubbed her new baby sister "Nikki" (Fowler, 2013:9).

Eventually, the low wages at Glenview School became inadequate to support four people. In 1947, Gus moved his family to Woodlawn, a neighboring suburb of Cincinnati, where he took a teaching position at South Woodlawn School and worked evenings and weekends at the YMCA. At the time, Woodlawn had no elementary school for black children, as a result, young Gary was sent to live with Gus's cousin, Bill Atkinson, and his wife Gladys so that Gary could attend second grade. A year later the family moved a short distance away, to a house on Burns Avenue. Giovanni began kindergarten at nearby Oak Avenue School and her sister came back home and enrolled in the third grade. Giovanni completed grades 1, 2, and 3 at Oak Avenue School (Fowler, 2013:9).

As a child, Giovanni was very much a "mommy's girl", by all accounts in fact, she found separation from her mother extremely difficult. A dreamer herself, Yolande Giovanni did not attempt to stifle her young daughter's imagination, nor did she push her to be or become anything in particular. Yolande's first child, Gary, was outgoing, talented, and cute. Nikki, by contrast, was quiet, observant, and somewhat withdrawn (Fowler, 2013:11)

In one of Nikki's book *Gemini*, (1971) she said that

I knew someone who could do all those marvelous things they asked about. And sometimes someone would think to ask, "Well, what do you do?" and I'd say, "I'm Gary's sister!" If I hadn't been taught to be respectful to older people I would have added, "Dummy". I was Gary's sister and that really was quite enough. And I don't think I could have survived without that as a buffer. I watched the world through her eyes and saw what she saw and what I saw. And the family would say, "You're a fool about Gary. She's gonna use you." And I never understood that to be bad. I mean, if you must be used it should be by someone you love. (Giovanni, 1971:138)

Several critical motifs in Giovanni's adult life are apparent in this description of her childhood. The communal sense of identity that she shows here, which reflects her Southern and, before that, African roots, is central to Giovanni's interactions with those close to her. The accomplishments of those people become her accomplishments, not in the sense that she denies their proper ownership, but in the sense that she takes pride in what people close to her have done, often even appropriating those accomplishments as a part of herself (Fowler,2013:11)

Given the three-year difference in their ages, Nikki's attitude toward her big sister seems natural enough. In an emotional maneuver that she would grow to use regularly, she takes pride in her sister's accomplishments rather than allowing herself to feel daunted or intimidated by them or jealous of them. The only evidence that she might have felt left out of the tight-knit family trio which pre-dated her own existence is found in the second sentence of the passage quoted above; "sometimes someone would think to ask" suggest that, most of the time, big sister Gary and her accomplishments were what others noticed. Despite the awareness of being somehow secondary, however, which this line implies, Giovanni actually seems to find the situation a positive one. Her sister was a buffer for her, apparently against direct contact with the larger social world and its expectations. (Fowler, 2013:11)

Throughout *Gemini* (1971), one sense a tension in Giovanni's narratives about her immediate family, her mother, father, and sister. And, especially in regard to her sister, Giovanni seems to be struggling to identify her own role in

the family. Her parents and sister had well established patterns of interaction by the time she was born, patterns she has stated she never understood.

From a young age, apparently, she learned to make herself useful and to do chores that others disliked; for example, she loved to polish furniture and to empty the trash. At the same time, she lived very much inside her own mind, so much so that she was often oblivious to the world around her. There are dozens of stories told by different family members, including the poet herself, about her tendency to forget what she had been sent on an errand to do; the reason nearly always involved her having seen or thought of something along the way that so held her attention that she could not remember, when she arrived, for example, at the corner store, what she had been sent to buy. Her aunts have also remarked numerous times that Giovanni seemed, as a child, like changeling, an unearthly creature. What they intended is not entirely clear, but it does seem that they recognized a spirit sort in her that made her different. Photographs of her as a child confirm her ethereal appearance; she was a tiny girl with large, luminous eyes and a lovely, somewhat shy, smile. Fortunately, she seemed to have been something of an emotional genius as well as an intellectual one, and the insight her emotional intelligence provided her shaped her determination to walk to her own beat. She knew, for example, that it was much easier to be an obedient child, especially when unimportant things were at stake. Unlike Gary, Nikki did not push parental boundaries (Fowler,2013:12).

Aside from frequent trips to Knoxville to visit the Watson grandparents, the most significant event in young Nikki's life occurred when she enrolled in her

sixth-grade science class at St. Simon's School and first met the teacher of that class, Sister Althea Augustine. Sister Althea became, and remains, a significant person in Giovanni's life; she is now, in fact, the friend Giovanni has had for the longest period of time. When Giovanni was young, Sister Althea not only made her feel loved and accepted, but also tried to nurture, rather than stifle, her imagination. Unfortunately, after Sister Althea left St. Simon's, the two lost touch with one another until Giovanni's expulsion from Fisk, which resulted in her coming back to Cincinnati, at which time they resumed their friendship (Fowler, 2013:13).

Had Sister Althea remained at St. Simon's and she and Giovanni stayed in touch, the older woman might have been able to help the young girl find ways to cope with her home situation, which became increasingly difficult. Although her parents evidently loved each other, their relationship was increasingly fraught with tension and, eventually, violence. Even before Gary left for college in 1957, her busy social life meant that she was rarely at home for any length of time; nor did she and her little sister do much together. The reclusive Nikki spent much of her time at home, helping her parents with household chores, reading book, and listening to her radio. She, thus, was a frequent witness to her parents' quarrels. Even as an adult, she finds raised voices disturbing and physical violence abhorrent. As a mommy's girl, she found her father's abuse of her mother intolerable. She grew to dislike Gus intensely, but she was equally frustrated by her mother's refusal to extricate herself from the situation (Fowler, 2013:13-14).

As what she writes in Joanne V. Gabbin's book, *Shaping Memories: Reflections of African American Woman Writers*;

My father was one of those people who give liquor a bad name. No one ever had to wonder, or at least I never had to wonder, what I would be doing on Friday and Saturday nights: I would be listening to arguments. Well, that's not exactly true. I would be listening to my father cursing and hitting and my mother, who was silent and taking it. It's a bad thing to hit your wife. Number one: it taints your daughter's view of marriage and the place of men in her life. (Gabbin,2009:4)

Thus it was that, in 1958, she asked her grandparents if she could spend the summer with them; only after she had settled into the house on Mulvaney Street did she share her real plan: she proposed to live with them and attend high school in Knoxville. Not surprisingly, they agreed. In her grandparents' home, Giovanni found a refuge from what she came to see as the madness of her parents (Fowler, 2013:14). When she stayed at their mother's childhood home on Mulvaney Street, absorbing its smells, its foods, its values, and especially its love, embodied by her maternal grandparents. Here, they came to know their small extended family, comprised of aunts, uncles, and cousins (Fowler, 2013:3)

In small town Knoxville, Giovanni attended the all-black high school where her grandfather had once taught Latin, Austin High. Although she knew many of the students at Austin, because she had spent so many of her summers with her grandparents, she was nonetheless regarded as an outsider by those students, who belonged to the sort of closed cliques so typical of small towns. Giovanni was an outsider, not only because she had not grown up in Knoxville, but also because she could not afford to dress the way many of the other students

did. Yet, despite her tendency to be a loner, Giovanni had already begun to be possessed of the charisma that has played so important a role in her career.

Whatever she did, then, soon came to be copied by others. For example, she was in the habit of wearing all black because she had a limited number of outfits; soon, everyone in Austin High was also wearing black and trying to act like her.

(Fowler, 2013:15)

In Knoxville, Giovanni found support not only from her grandmother but from several other black women, mostly teachers. In particular, Alfreda Delaney and Emma Stokes, her English and French teachers, recognized her intellectual abilities and encouraged her. These women were surely among “my ladies over fifty/who birthed and nursed/my Blackness,” whom she described in a poem for Anna Hedgeman and Alfreda Duster. Perhaps because of her grandmother, whom she adored, Giovanni has gravitated her whole life toward “little old ladies,” black women who nurtured and cared for her in one way or another and helped her along the path toward self-realization. (Fowler,2013:15)

She gives full expression to her recognition of the role these women played in her life in *Racism 101* (1994):

The poet contemplated her grandmother and her friends. How at church on Sundays they would ask about and expect a report on her grades. How her grandmother would give her books the book club was readings so that the grandmother and she could discuss them before Grandmother was due to make her report. How grandmother would stop and listen to what the poet said, though in retrospect the poet knows she brought no insight. Ahhh, the beauty of the games of black women. They make you feel smart and courageous and brave (Giovanni, 1994:84).

When her grandfather died in 1959, she drove her mother and her nephew to Knoxville for the funeral; she found herself devastated by his death, not just for her own self, but for her grandmother's too. She said in *Gemini*, they got up early Saturday morning and grandmother made fried chicken for them. Nobody said they were leaving but they were. And they all walked down the hill to the car, and kissed, and Giovanni looked at her grandmother standing there so bravely trying not to think what she was trying to feel. And she got in on the driver's side and looked at her grandmother standing there with her plaid apron and her hair in a bun, her grandmother's feet hanging loosely out of her mules, sixty years old, waving good bye to them, and for the first time having to go into 400 Mulvaney without John Brown Watson. Giovanni felt like an impotent dog. If she couldn't protect this magnificent woman, her grandmother, from loneliness, what could she ever do? (Fowler,2013:18)

This is one of many passages in Giovanni's work where her capacity for empathy with others is evident. That capacity, of course, is an essential quality for a writer but what is interesting in this passage, and so many others is Giovanni's tendency to assume a kind of responsibility for her grandmother and yet, simultaneously, her recognition that she is impotent to make the situation better (Fowler,2013:18)

Giovanni experienced the greatest loss of her life to date when her grandmother died just two months later after she graduated from Fisk University, on March 8, 1967, roughly five years after her husband. Giovanni had been desolating when she realized her inability to help her grandmother after her

grandfather's death, and the years which followed had simply brought more grief. 400 Mulvaney, which had been home to the Watson girls and their children, was one more victim of the urban renewal that displaced so many black people in the 1960s. as Giovanni states in Gemini, "Mulvaney Street is gone. Completely wiped out. Assassinated along with the old people who made it live" (Fowler, 2013:20)

The family had found another house for Emma Louvenia on Linden Avenue, a house they all tried to persuade her was better in every way. But Giovanni writes, she knew what her grandmother knew, what they all knew. There was no familiar smell in that house, nothing reverberating with the memories of the lives lived there. Although Giovanni tried to make the new house a home by making "ice cream the way Grandpapa used to do almost every Sunday," nothing could bring back her grandfather or 400 Mulvaney. Her grandmother said to her, that she just wants to see Giovanni graduate. Emma Louvenia's death was directly related to the loss of her home on Mulvaney Street, at least in Giovanni's mind her grandmother died because she didn't know where she was and didn't like it. And there was no one there to give a touch or smell or feel and she think she should have been there (Fowler, 2013:20)

Although the loss of 400 Mulvaney quite likely had an impact on Giovanni's grandmother, Giovanni also seems, in this passage, to be projecting some of her own feelings onto her grandmother. Her grandmother's death marked the end of Giovanni's childhood. The good safe space her grandmother provided at 400 Mulvaney Street, the place where Giovanni could be warm all the time, died even before her grandmother, and her grandmother was never the same

again. Significantly, driving her mother, sister, and nephew back to Cincinnati after her grandmother's funeral, Giovanni "ran the heat the entire trip despite the sun coming directly down on us. I couldn't get warm." (Fowler, 2013:20)

Nikki has no husband, she never married. She had a son, named Thomas Watson Giovanni, her only child, birth on August 31, 1969. She later stated that she had a child out of wedlock at twenty-five because "*I wanted to have a baby and I could afford to have a baby*" and because of her conviction that marriage as an institution was inhospitable to women and would never play a role in her life. (Giovanni, 1971:69). Giovanni's thoughts about marriage arise because of his bad childhood experience. The violence experienced by her mother made her feel that marriage was not needed in his life. Different from Gary who had been married 5 times, maybe because she often wasn't at home and far away from her parents. "Gary's been married five times and I none." (Fowler, 2013:12)

By 1995 in mid-January Nikki was diagnosed with lung cancer. Travel to Cincinnati for a second opinion and has surgery at Jewish Hospital. She underwent surgery and lost a lung but is living, healthy as a cancer survivor. Mother and her sister, Gary, also have cancer and died in 2005, it was the saddest year because she lost his beloved over and over again (Kwame A, 2004:231). Her experience struggles the cancer give her a reminder that she should love and take care of her life.

2.2.2 Nikki Giovanni's Education & Achievement

In the fall of 1960, 17 years old Giovanni journeyed to Nashville to enter her grandfather's alma mater, Fisk University. One of the oldest black

universities, Fisk has, for many years, been a liberal arts institution; it was the first black institution to be granted a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, and it counts among its graduates, W.E.B. Du Bois and John Hope Franklin. For many years, including the years of Giovanni's attendance, it was considered, along with Morehouse and Spelman, one of the most prestigious of the historically black colleges and universities. Like those school, Fisk was (and remains) a conservative institution that promoted essentially middle-class values. Following the letter of its rules and regulations (as opposed to the spirit) was of paramount importance. It was not prepared to tolerate the independent thinking of a student like Giovanni, nor was she ready to recognize its authority (Fowler, 2013: 17)

Clash and conflict were inevitable and immediate, as Giovanni would explain in *Gemini*:

I could not/did not adjust to the Fisk social life and it could not/did not adjust to my intellect so Thanksgiving I rushed home to Grandmother's without the bitchy dean of women's permission and that dean put me on social probation... And the funny thing about that Thanksgiving was that I knew everything would go down just as it did. But I still wouldn't have changed it because Grandmother and Grandpapa would have had dinner alone and I would have had dinner alone and the next Thanksgiving we wouldn't even have him and Grandmother and I would both be alone by ourselves and the only change would have been that Fisk considered me an ideal student, which means little on a life scale... I was "released from the school" February I because my "attitudes did not fit those of a Fisk woman." Grandpapa died in April and I was glad it was warm because he hated the cold so badly. (Giovanni, 1971:7)

What the passage above reveals is her absolute conviction that she had been right to defy of students and go to her grandparents' home for Thanksgiving.

Perhaps the real reason for her behavior appears in her account of what she said to Ann Cheatem, the dean of students: “I didn’t need her permission to go home.” Although, in recent years, Giovanni has acknowledged that she was wrong and that Fisk did the right thing, a guiding principle in her life has, nevertheless, always been her refusal to recognize the authority of institutions or individuals to dictate how she lives her life. It is a principle she paid dearly for in her first encounter with Fisk. Yet she must have felt vindicated in some way when her grandmother, so important to her in every way, traveled to Nashville to meet with Dean Cheatem and, later, wrote a letter protesting the decision that the dean had made about her granddaughter. Not once did Emma Louvenia chastise Nikki. (Fowler, 2013:18)

After her dismissal from Fisk, Giovanni returned to her parents’ home in Cincinnati, where she worked at Walgreen’s, did volunteer work, helped take care of her nephew, and enrolled in some courses at the University of Cincinnati (Fowler, 2013:18)

For another two years, Giovanni lived and worked in Cincinnati until she finally decided to visit Fisk to see if it would be possible to enroll once again. She was thrilled to discover that Dean Cheatem had left Fisk. Her replacement, Blanche McConnell Cowan (“Jackie”), not only had radically different values than her predecessor, but was to become Giovanni’s friend and mentor, as Giovanni has stated on many occasions, “Jackie Cowan saved my life.” Dean Cowan’s first action was to purge the files Dean Cheatem had accumulated on Giovanni her second was to encourage Giovanni to return to Fisk. A trained social

worker, Dean Cowan became the repository of the fears, anxieties, and unhappiness engulfing Giovanni during those years. Through Dean Cowan's encouragement and emotional support, Giovanni was able to become the sort of student she should have been during her initial matriculation at Fisk. Majoring in history, she excelled academically and developed into a campus leader. Finally, in 1967 she graduated with honors from Fisk University (Fowler, 2013:19)

Since 1987, she has been on the faculty at Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor. Giovanni taught at Virginia Tech during the tragic shooting in 2007 and composed a chant-poem which she read the memorial service the day after. Of the poem, Giovanni said "I try to be honest in my work, and I thought the only thing I can do at that point – because all I knew was that we are Virginia Tech, this was not Virginia Tech." She was off campus that day in April when student turned violent. When the massacre was over, 32 people were dead. The next day at a memorial for the victims, Nikki Giovanni was asked to speak. Her words brought thousands to their feet in a tearful standing ovation, a moment it was said of profound healing (Fowler, 2013: 87)

About Giovanni's achievement, she has won numerous awards, including the Langston Hughes Medal and the NAACP Image Award. She has been nominated for a Grammy Award for her poetry album, *The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection*. Additionally, she has been named as one of Oprah Winfrey's 25 "Living Legend". She has also been honored for her life and career by the History Makers along with being the first person to receive the Rosa L. Parks Women Courage Award. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Honor from Dillard

University in 2010. In 2015, Giovanni was named one of the Library of Virginia's "Virginia Women in History" for her contributions to poetry, education, and society (Fowler, 2013:138).

Giovanni has published numerous collections of poetry, from her first self-published volume *Black Feeling Black Talk* (1968) to *New York Times* best seller *Bicycles: Love Poems* (2009), several works of nonfiction and children's literature, and multiple recordings, including the Emmy-award nominated *The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection* (2004). Her most recent publications include *Chasing Utopia: A Hybrid* (2013) and, as editor, *The 100 Best African American Poems* (2010). A frequent lecturer and reader, Giovanni has taught at Rutgers University, Ohio State University, and Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor.

Nikki has published many collections of works; some poetry collections are;

- *Black Feeling, Black Talk* (1967),
- *Black Judgment* (1968),
- *Re:Creation* (1970),
- *My House* (1972),
- *The Women and The Men* (1975),
- *Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day* (1978),
- *Woman* (1978),
- *Those Who Ride the Night Winds* (1983),

- *Knoxville, Tennessee (1994),*
- *The Selected poems of Nikki Giovanni (1996),*
- *Love Poems (1997),*
- *Blues: For All the Changes (1999),*
- *Quilting the Black-Eyed-Pea: Poems and Not Quite Poems (2002),*
- *The Prosaic Soul of Nikki Giovanni: 1968-1998 (2003),*
- *Acolytes (2007), Bicycles: Love Poem (2009) (William Morrow),*
- *Chasing Utopia: A Hybrid (2013) (Harper Collins)*

2.2.3 Nikki Giovanni in Discrimination and Segregation

The struggle against racial discrimination in America made great strides in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court found the “separate but equal” doctrine to be unconstitutional while ruling on the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. While the case specifically discussed the issue of intergrating public school, its basic principle came to be used to tear down racial barriers in all areas of society. In 1955, Rosa Parks, a Montgomery, Alabama resident, refused to sit in the back of a public bus, as blacks were required to do by law. Her arrest and a subsequent boycott of the Montgomery bus system by blacks served to change the law and showed blacks the power of presenting a united front. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy proposed far-reaching legislation to ensure the rights of black citizens a hundred years after President Lincoln had abolished slavery in America with the Emancipation Proclamation (Wallenfeldt, 2011:15)

The Black Pride movement was both a cause and an effect of the push for civil rights. A major psychological barrier was breached as black Americans became increasingly aware throughout the twentieth century that associated black traditions and physical characteristics with shame and ugliness (Wallenfeldt, 2011:34). During the mid-1960s, authors and social critics made a point of emphasizing the beauty of black life. "Black is Beautiful" became a popular slogan in the movement for racial equality, along with "Black Power." In this context, Giovanni's inflamed condemnation of the traditionally white power structure in *Black Judgment* was a fairly common claim for the legitimacy black had been denied for hundreds of years (Giovanni, 1971:108)

In 1947, Nikki and her family moved from Knoxville to Woodlawn, Ohio, which is north of Cincinnati. Nikki was only two months old when Gus and Yolande gathered their little family and their meager belongings and moved to Cincinnati, where they had been offered a position as house parents at Glenview School, a home for black boys. They joined hundreds of thousands of other Southern blacks who had been migrating to the North since the turn of the 20th century, seeking better jobs and living conditions than what the segregated South offered (Fowler, 2013:3). Her mother and father had jobs which had not been possible in Knoxville. They rented a two-bedroom house: kitchen, sitting room, and we had an outhouse toilet (Fowler, 2013:9).

In 1951, Yolande Giovanni obtained a third-grade teaching position at St. Simon's School, an all-black Episcopal school located in the nearby black suburb of Lincoln Heights. Throughout these years, the family had struggled to get by on

Gus's salary as a schoolteacher, which was supplemented by the second and third jobs he seemed always to need to work. What little extra money Gus and Yolande had was invested in a new black housing development called Hollydale, where they hoped to build a home. After several years, however, they realized that racist lending practices would make it impossible for them to obtain a housing loan, despite the promises that had been made when they bought stock in Hollydale. Thus, the following year, Gus sold his stock in Hollydale and used the money to make a down payment on a house on Jackson Street in Lincoln Heights. Originally built as affordable housing for the (white) employees at the nearby General Electric plant, Lincoln Heights began losing those homeowners during the economic boom following World War II. The federal government sold the suburb to a corporation of black citizens, and black Lincoln Heights was born (Fowler, 2013:9-10)

With the money he makes from selling his stock in this venture, her father is able to make the down payment on the Jackson Street house. During World War II, Lincoln Heights had originally been known as The Valley Homes, affordable housing for employees of General Electric, but with the economic boom following the war, white residents of Valley Homes began moving to other suburbs. The United States government sold the homes to a corporation of black citizens, and Lincoln Heights was born (Giovanni,1971:73)

The other discrimination happened with her family, her sister, Gary, enters Wyoming High School as one of the three black students who desegregated the previously all-white school. In 1955, when Emmet Till is killed, her teacher

makes the comment that “He got what he deserved.” Gary and her friend Beverly Waugh walk out in protest. Eventually, the school makes an official apology. By 1957, Giovanni enters the 9th grade at Lockland High School, an all-black school. Her sister’s negative experiences in desegregating Wyoming High School make her and her parents uninterested in having her try to attend one of the white high schools (Giovanni, 1971: 29)



CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

The previous chapter explained about the theory used in this research and also explained about Nikki Giovanni's experience. While this chapter try to answer the problem to find the relation between the personal experiences of Nikki Giovanni that reflected in her selected poems. The selected poems are *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother*.

This chapter explain about explication of the poems, then analyzing the poem to better know the contents inside the poem. After knowing the contents of poems deeply, the last chapter is describing the correlation of Nikki Giovanni's poems *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville Tennessee*, and *Mother* with her life experiences.

3.1 Nikki-Rosa

childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have
your mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
And though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot

it isn't your father's drinking that makes any difference
 but only that everybody is together and you
 and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
 Christmases
 and I really hope no white person ever has cause
 to write about me
 because they never understand
 Black love is Black wealth and they'll
 probably talk about my hard childhood
 and never understand that
 all the while I was quite happy

(Giovanni, 2003:53)

3.1.1 Explication of Nikki Rosa

“Nikki Rosa” described by Margaret Walker as Giovanni’s signature poem, was written on April 12, 1968. This poem is one of the best known of Nikki Giovanni’s poems published in one of Giovanni’s book entitled *Black Judgment* (1968). In this poem, the speaker uses the motifs of happiness, poverty, and negative emotion to justify the stereotypical views that were held upon African Americans who tried to move up in the world. The poem tells about the speaker’s childhood and shows them into biographical images that the reader can imagine in their heads.

Giovanni begins her poem by discussing what would happen if she, a poor black woman, were to suddenly become “famous of something”. She mentions that a white biographer would not focus on how “good the water felt” when taking a bath, but would rather be fixated on the fact that the bathtub is “one of those big tubs that folk in Chicago barbecue in”. likewise, the biographer would not ask her to “talk about how happy you were to have your mother all to yourself,” but would rather focus on her parents “(fighting) a lot”. Then, assuming that this

black woman had become “famous or something,” the biographer would likely sell her story as a “rags-to-riches-in-the-face-of-adversity”/ “the realization of the American Dream despite extreme poverty” kind of story. But, Giovanni argues that the white biographer would miss the point of her life story: “Black love is Black wealth... (they would) never understand that all the while I was quite happy”. That is, it is not “poverty that concern (her),” but rather that “everybody (in her family and community remains) together,” because it is through this sense of community that she achieves her happiness. As the poem comes to a close, the reader is left with the impression that white America was unhealthily fixated upon material wealth and has forgotten the importance of including familial bonds and community when ascertaining their wealth.

“Nikki Rosa” is a picture of difficult childhood’s life as African Americans in an era of discrimination. from line 1-26 she tells about various unpleasant things for common children. after that on line 27-33 she showed her confidence, even though she had a lot of bad things, she still felt happy, and didn't care about what white people said.

3.1.2 Analysis of the Poem

The character here uses first person point of view “*I, My, Me*”. It can be analyzed by psychological character which the character showed by the inner mechanism of the character’s mind as his habitual responses, attitudes, longing, purpose, likes and dislikes (Dinnurriyah 2013:116). In this study the character explained through the character’s thought and the response about her childhood

struggled live among the white people. It also can be analyzed physically because Nikki shows that the character identity or race is a Black woman, as explained in *“I really hope no white person ever has cause/ to write about me/ because they never understand/ Black love is Black Wealth.”*

The character “I” in this poem looks confident, happy, and pride as Black people. It showed by *“Black love is Black wealth”* and *“all the while I was quite happy”*, those line presented about her pride and confident as Black People. She told about poor and very hard life in her childhood, but it does not make her afraid with white people.

Based on the character of the poem Nikki-Rosa that the character “I” is Nikki Giovanni and “you” refers to white people who live around her. Although the setting is mentioned specifically in this poem, the setting is where Nikki lived. It shows in words *“Woodlawn”*. *Woodlawn* is a suburb of Cincinnati in which Giovanni and her family lived briefly before they moved to nearby Wyoming. This was during the age of segregation (Fowler, 2013:381).

After knowing the character “I” is a Black American and the setting is a place where the character’s childhood lived and that was during the age of discrimination and segregation, automatically we concluded that the main theme that suitable for the poem *Nikki-Rosa* is black childhood because the content of this poem shows about the hard life of Nikki Giovanni’s childhood which happen when she lived among white people but she still happy and proud to be Black people. The tone goes back and forth between the positive and the negative

aspects of reflection, by doing the Giovanni creates wonder as to how someone who lived “...with no toilet” could be so happy, created sharp contrast.

The poem begins by introducing the poor living conditions of Black people by stating they had “*no inside toilet*”. It makes the reader feel very sad and frustrated towards the way the children had to grow up but then Nikki changes the tone by stating that although this was true, the aspects were that of enjoying the time with your family or how were poor you still had good holidays. In *Nikki-Rosa Giovanni* shows the duality between happiness and poverty and proves that there can be a balance and life does not just consist of one or the other.

3.1.3 Relation between Nikki Rosa with Nikki’s Life

*if you’re black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn
with no inside toilet*

This part explained about Nikki’s memories when she was living in Woodlawn, it was in 1947:

We moved from Knoxville to Woodlawn, Ohio, which north of Cincinnati. This was during the age of segregation. We rented a two-bedroom house: kitchen, sitting room, and we had an outhouse (Giovanni,2013:10).

This explain clearly that Nikki was living in Woodlawn during the segregation. Her family rented a little house that just have a two-bedroom, kitchen, and sitting room, no inside toilet like what she mentioned in poem.

As Giovanni stated in *Gemini (1971)*:

When I was little we had an outdoor toilet which I only vaguely remember, but I do know sitting on the john was hip. I clearly

remember that. Sitting and daydreaming about all the important heads of states and movie stars waiting for me, an essentially poor sort of muddy-colored colored girl, to emerge.

In line 15 “*as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale*”,

“Hollydale is a subdivision outside Cincinnati that was created for Black people. Giovanni’s father was one of many who pooled their money to buy the land. They intended to use the land as collateral for the loans to build house. But because they were Black, they could not find banks to lend them the money.”
(Fowler,2013:381-382)

In 1951, the family had struggled to get by on Gus’s Salary as a schoolteacher. With little extra money her parents were invested in a new black housing development called Hollydale, where they hoped to build a home. But after several years, however, they realized that racist lending practices would make it impossible for them to obtain a housing loan, despite the promises that had been made when they bought stock there. Thus, the following year, her father sold his stock in Hollydale and used the money to make a down payment on a house on Jackson Street in Lincoln Heights.

In line 18-19 “*your father’s pain as he sells his stock and another dream goes*”, shows her father’s struggled to build a home in Hollydale, but it didn’t last long, because during the segregation some Black people are difficult to find banks to lend them money. The events during this period of time (1947-1952) were eventually used in this poem to show her bad experiences while being black.

and though they fought a lot
it isn’t your father’s drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good

Christmases


These lines explain her another hard childhood when she was forced to be a witness to her parents who often quarreled, even violence. Thus, in 1958, she asked her grandparents if she could live with them and attend high school in Knoxville, they agreed. In her grandparents' home, Giovanni found a refuge from what she came to see as the madness of her parents. She spends many Christmases and have good birthdays with her sister there.

and I really hope no white person ever has cause
to write about me
because they never understand
Black love is Black wealth and they'll
probably talk about my hard childhood
and never understand that
all the while I was quite happy

The civil rights era in the United States was fraught time during which many pitched battles were fought. Schools and other public opportunity in all areas of contemporary life. For this reason, many of Giovanni's poems convey trenchant protest, although some work toward African American lives and cultures. That is by documenting the lives and cultures of African Americans, Giovanni writes these ways of living into being and social significance. However, as Giovanni has made clear, being political and sometimes angry does not mean being unhappy. As she wrote in the last line, "all the while I was quite happy," these quite explain after all she described how her hard childhood experiences are, she still happy no matter what white person say or write about her. Giovanni is

making a political statement about white perceptions of black life. Based on Nikki's experiences described above, those show the relation between her works and her life experience that happen when she was child. Nikki skillfully present her experiences of being black childhood in her poem.

3.2 Knoxville, Tennessee



I always like summer
best
you can eat fresh corn
from daddy's garden
an okra
and greens
and cabbage
and lots of
barbecue
and buttermilk
and homemade ice-cream
at the church picnic
and listen to gospel music
outside
at the church
homecoming
and go to the mountains with
your grandmother
and go barefooted
and be warm
all the time
not only when you go to bed
and sleep

(Giovanni, 2013:59)

3.2.1 Explication of Knoxville, Tennessee

Knoxville, Tennessee was one of the poems that published in *Black Judgment (1968)* book by Nikki Giovanni. In 1994, it was published as a children's book complete with full-color illustrations by Larry Johnson. A

delightful and nostalgic visit to a summertime memory, the poem evokes the voice of a child in the midst of this reverie. The poem is generally not complicated by literary references or stodgy style but leans heavily upon an innate rhythm that seems to rise from the child's own heartbeat.

In each line of this poem, the speaker identifies something about summer. It is clear by the simplicity of language and affections that this speaker is not an adult perhaps a child. It seems to be told from the point of view of a young person who is both nostalgic about a past summer spent and also looking forward to the return of summer's delights. In lines 3-12, the speaker focuses on the taste sensations of summer and the quality of abundance. The presence of the family patriarch is perhaps the only slightly political if one considers the times in which the author was writing this poem and the feeling that black men were under siege. Otherwise, having a "daddy" who has a "garden" could not be more natural to a child's memories. In lines 13-17, now the speaker evokes a higher sensation, perhaps an almost spiritual quality to the memory by asking the reader to consider the "gospel music" and the tight-knit community centered on the "church." The fact that these lines fall in the center of the poem suggests that perhaps this is the heart and soul of the speaker's memory. The importance of this vision of a "homecoming" cannot be overlooked and can perhaps tell the reader that the speaker is not always in this earthly paradise. In lines 18-24, finally the speaker makes the connection to the place itself. The place is identified by "mountains," which often represent truth or vision. That the speaker goes to this place with her grandmother re-enforces the idea that wisdom is somehow shared by osmosis. The

way that the speaker connects to the time and place is like the feeling of a good dream and perhaps that is why the reader is taken to the end of the day, to “sleep.” The overall meaning of this poem is that the poet misses the way her life used to be when she was a child in Knoxville, Tennessee.

3.2.2 Analysis of the Poem

The speaker in this poem is the poet itself, because it begins with “I always liked summer/best” giving the reader a hint that what she says next comes from her personal experience. The tone toward the poem is sense of nostalgia for a happier and simpler time because Giovanni gives off the impression that the things she wrote about were things that she did during her childhood summers back when everything was easier and she was, as stated in the poem “Listening to gospel music/outside/the church” and “going to the mountains”

There are several themes that I have found in this poem. First is simple life. Knoxville Tennessee was written at a time when many writers and social critics identified the experience of black Americans with urban problems such as poverty, crime, and race riots. This poem presents a sense of nostalgia for happier and simpler times, which are all related to summer in the mind of the poem’s speaker. The first half of the poem centers on vegetables that are eaten in the same place they are grown, cutting away the chain of producers and handlers that comes between most city and suburban dwellers and the vegetables they consume. This phase of the poem gives way to another phase, represented by foods that are only slightly altered from their natural ingredients, such as barbecue, buttermilk, and

homemade ice cream. All these products are common, but their processed versions are far from the simple pleasures that the natural versions evoke in this poem's speaker. In a similar way, gospel music is a type of religious experience that invites participants to involve themselves directly in religion, rather than filtering religion through abstract philosophical thoughts.

The second theme is food. Nikki uses food to represent life in Knoxville for two reasons. For one thing, it is a powerful cultural indicator. The foods that this poem's speaker associates with Knoxville give readers a clear sense of the people who are discussed here. For instance, "fresh corn" implies that this poem takes place in the country, but not exactly on a farm, since the farm corn in the poem comes from a garden. "Home made ice cream" similarly implies a rural setting. Several specific vegetables, such as okra and especially greens, are found in the southern part of the country and are strongly associated with the south's culinary tradition. Even though the poem's title makes it possible for readers to locate its setting on map, these foods help readers experience the culture being discussed. Frequently mentioning food also makes the poem a powerful experience for readers by appealing to their sense of taste. Poets often try to help readers experience the reality of the world about which they are writing by using images that affect the five senses. As the sense that is least often used in poems, taste is particularly effective in drawing readers into a situation, making them feel reality as the poem's speaker feels it. This poem uses words to remind readers of foods and their particular tastes, rendering the experience of summer in the south.

The next theme is home. The church event mentioned in the poem is not just any gathering, it is referred to in line 17 as a “homecoming.” This one word extends the meaning of the church beyond its natural religious function to a social function, welcoming people back to the community after they have gone on to live in different places. They may attend religious services wherever they move, but, regardless of where they have gone or how long they have been gone, this church identifies Knoxville as their home. The sense of “home” that runs through this poem is emphasized even more by the attention given to family. A father is mentioned early, in line 4; traditionally, the father is the head of the family and, in this case, he lives up to tradition of a grandmother in line 19 establishes a home that is open beyond the narrowest definitions, a home that includes members of the extended family. But the aspect of the poem that most clearly identifies this situation as “home” is the speaker’s familiarity with the routine that occurs there. The speaker uses the present tense to speak of eating and listening to music and going to the mountains, indicating that she has done these things often and expects to do them again and again.

The last theme I found is security and insecurity. The use of the word “daddy” in line 4 establishes the poem’s point of view as that of a child or at very least as someone who finds comfort and security in speaking of her father. Throughout the poem there is a tone of security in the rituals and familiar foods the speaker finds in Knoxville. This culminates in the final lines, which identify Knoxville in the summer as a place where one can “be warm/all the time/not only when you go to bed/and sleep.” This warmth can literally be the warmth of

summer days, in contrast to cold winter days, but warmth can also be used to symbolize a sense of safety, implying that the speaker no longer feels the need to be guarded most of the day. Using warmth as a symbol for security in this poem leads readers to wonder why the poem's speaker sometimes feel insecure. If she only feels secure in her bed or during summers, when she can wander in nature, then the implication seems to be that insecurity occurs when dealing with other people in society. If such is the case, then Knoxville, Tennessee is a true reflection of the experience of many Americans who moved from farms to cities but who only feel comfortable when they return to a country environment.

3.2.3 Relation between Knoxville, Tennessee and Giovanni's Life

The small-town Knoxville in Tennessee has many memories in Giovanni's life. As I mentioned above in Giovanni's biography, Gary and Giovanni always spend their summer in Knoxville, her grandparents' home at 400 Mulvaney Street, it makes them have so many experiences here. In Knoxville, Giovanni also attended the all-black high school where her grandfather had once taught Latin, Austin High.

This poem begins with "I always like summer/best" and then proceeds to list all the reason for this preference, it tells us that the speaker loves the moment when she was here. The poem is not titled "Summer," however, which suggests that the catalog items, generally associated with a season, somehow represent Knoxville itself in the speaker's mind. Summer is so wonderful to this poem's child because she is not only free of school-year restrictions, but also because

summer is so rich in delights, so full of favorite treats and activities. During the summer months she eats “fresh corn” straight from “daddy’s garden,” and “okra/and greens/ and cabbage/ and lots of / barbecue/ and buttermilk/ and homemade ice-cream.” These foods and treats are, clearly, among the child’s favorites, but then again, which child would turn down “homemade ice-cream” or succulent “barbecue”? indeed, of the poem’s twenty-four lines, eleven begin with the word “and,” and so the reader understands that wonderful delights are many during summer; they pile up; there is, seemingly, a never ending supply of them (“lots of” them, as the speaker hints).

This poem is a personal and a public poem. It is personal in the sense that Giovanni spent most of her childhood summers in Knoxville, and so she is in part remembering her own particular history in this poem (Giovanni was born in Tennessee, moved with her family to Ohio when she was an infant, but, thereafter, returned regularly to her grandparents’ home in Knoxville to spend summer vacations and other holidays). In addition to this personal, the poem has a public, boarder significance, in that it captures any child’s experience of summer. The poem’s personal-public doubleness can be seen in the following lines: “you can eat fresh corn/from daddy’s garden.” The “you” in this first line gestures toward all readers who enjoyed summers like Giovanni’s while the words “daddy’s garden” points to how Giovanni is thinking of her own childhood in particular a childhood graced in part by a private family garden plot.

This is an outdoor life, most children’s favorite kind of life, as one of the isolated words of poem makes clear: “outside.” Further, the poem’s middle

portion, beginning with the line “at church picnic,” is, essentially, a list of the types of special summer events so enjoyed by children: church picnics, other special church events (the “church/homecoming”), hikes to the “mountains” with one’s “grandmother,” and running around “barefooted.” Although it is understood that special events such as church “picnics” and “homecomings” do not happen on the same day, the idea that summer days are full of any number of wonderful activities is nevertheless conveyed by the length and variety of this list, as well as by Giovanni’s choosing to end the poem with the word “sleep.” Since each day is full of so much running around and socializing, each summer day’s end finds the child happily, thoroughly exhausted, thoroughly ready for rest. The poem’s headlong, tumbling rush, then, mimics the exiting pace of a child’s typical summer day, a day that will end in deep, satisfied “sleep.”

Giovanni mentions a “church/homecoming” in particular supports these ideas of an extended church-family, as well as how children feel as if they are, for all their roaming about, comfortably at home for the duration of the summer vacation. This mention of a church homecoming also suggests that, even as Giovanni lived most of her life outside of Tennessee. Tennessee is somehow her first and most special home, either because she was born there or perhaps because she was so close to her grandparents, particularly her grandmother, Emma Louvenia Watson.

As the researcher stated in Biography of Nikki Giovanni, many of her values were shaped by Southern black culture, which reflected in many ways its African origins. While any reader who enjoyed summers like Giovanni’s will

relate to this poem, the poem presents a picture of summers as they are experienced by many southern and African American children in particular. Words such as “fresh corn” and “okra” conjure the U.S South, as these are regional Southern specialties. A specifically African American Southern culture is suggested by Giovanni’s focus on church events, especially “gospel music,” as gospel music is an art form of central importance within U.S. African American cultures, cultures that have their roots in the South. Further, church events and social are, both historically and still today, central components of African American community and public life.

In Fowler’s book, Giovanni also stated that “Gospel music” is her grandmother favorite. *Truth Is On Its Way*, one of her award-winning 1971 album, in which she reads her poems against the background of gospel music performed by the New York Community Choir. One reason she wanted to do the album, is that she wanted something her grandmother could listen to and she knew if gospel music was included her grandmother would listen (Fowler, 2013:2)

The catalog includes many different fresh vegetables as well as barbeque and homemade ice cream, but also makes mention of “church picnic,” “gospel choir,” and “church homecoming.” Most importantly, it mentions the figure who, somehow, is responsible for all this bounty:

And go to the mountains with
 your grandmother
 and go barefoot
 all the time
 not only when you go to bed
 and sleep

The grandmother seems to be the person who provides the food and safety the speaker celebrates. While the poem can be read quite literally, it also surely functions metaphorically. Going barefooted, for example, is something made possible not only by the warmth of summer, but also by the safety of the environment, the absence of nails, or stones, or anything at all that might injure the foot. Similarly, “warm” suggests comfort, safety, security, and peace, qualities that would seem to be missing from the place or places the speaker normally inhabits. Moving to Knoxville, away from her parents’ home in Cincinnati, when read in this light gave Giovanni the environment she so desperately needed at this point in her life. She knew how to be a good granddaughter, but more importantly, John Brown and Louvenia Watson knew how to be good grandparents.

There was a time when they had to lose their home in Knoxville, this happened when her grandfather Giovanni had died, Giovanni tried to restore the atmosphere of the house by making ice cream as she used to do. As in biography tells above “although Giovanni tried to make the new house a home by making “ice cream the way Grandpapa used to do almost every Sunday,” nothing could bring back her grandfather or 400 Mulvaney” this statement shows Giovanni's longing for Knoxville and the things they did during the summer there. “Ice cream” here also mentioned in the poem “Homemade Ice Cream,” it shows that making ice cream is like a routine in her grandparents’ house.

“Knoxville, Tennessee” affirms black tradition by showing the joy of the speaker, who remembers how much she loved growing up in her situation. The fact that the speaker is black is not mentioned openly, which in itself makes a

political point. At a time when black Americans were struggling to show both whites and blacks that black traditions were positive and supportive, Giovanni chose to deemphasize the race of the speaker of the poem, showing readers that black children experience the world in much the same way that white children do.

3.3. Mother

the last time i was home
to see my mother we kissed
exchanged pleasantries
and unpleasantries pulled a warm
comforting silence around
us and read separate books

i remember the first time
i consciously saw her
we were living in a three room
apartment on burns avenue

mommy always sat in the dark
i don't know how i knew that but she did

that night i stumbled into the kitchen
maybe because i've always been
a night person or perhaps because i had wet
the bed

she was sitting on a chair
the room was bathed in moonlight diffused through
those thousands of panes landlords who rented
to people with children were prone to put in windows
she may have been smoking but maybe not
her hair was three-quarters her height
which made me a strong believer in the samson myth
and very black

i'm sure i just hung there by the door
i remember thinking: what a beautiful lady

she was very deliberately waiting

perhaps for my father to come home
 from his night job or maybe for a dream
 that had promised to come by
 “come here” she said “i’ll teach you
 a poem: *i see the moon*
 the moon sees me
 god bless the moon
 and god bless me”

i taught it to my son
 who recited it for her
 just to say we must learn
 to bear the pleasures
 as we have borne the pains

(Giovanni,2003:144)

3.3.1 Explication of Mother

Mother is one of Nikki’s poem that published in her book entitled “My House (1968)”. This poem is about Nikki Giovanni’s mother. It is written to stress the importance of mothers and how much they affect our lives today. In the second stanza she said, “I remember the first time I consciously saw her”, she was describing the time where she began to recognize her mother struggle. While in the fourth stanza the speaker writes “her hair was three-quarters her height which made me a strong believer in the Samson myth.” Samson’s strength lay in his hair, which he told Delilah had never been cut. Delilah exploited his weakness with women both to cut his hair and to blind him (Fowler,2013:405). That is a biblical allusion. Giovanni gives it away to show that her mother was a strong follower of God and believed in being obedient. The speaker concludes the poem with saying that she taught this affection and obedience to her son in which they will recite it along the line of reproduction. This poem is significant because it saying mothers

are responsible for bringing the good and bad people in the world. “We have borne the pains” Giovanni says this meaning that mothers bringing their children up without guidance create the same people who hurt them as mothers in their generation. Giovanni says “we must learn to bear pleasures” means mothers need to learn how to bring better people in the world.

Giovanni finds her own mother enjoying solitude during the night, and learns a brief rhyme:

*“come here” she said “i’ll teach you
a poem: i see the moon
the moon sees me
god bless the moon
and god bless me”*

The poem’s seemingly innocuous rhyme demonstrates that one can desire the best of life for what they find beautiful while simultaneously wishing the same for themselves. The last lines state that Giovanni will later have her own son recite the rhyme for her mother “just to say we must learn/to bear the pleasures/as we have borne the pains.” The end implies that no matter who sees beauty or wishes blessings on the beheld, both parties will endure struggles and triumphs. Thus, the beholder’s vision holds little sway over the beheld’s existence. Seeing does not define the value of the subject. The subject’s battles, both past and future, will continue to color the subject’s view of self.

In “Mothers”, Giovanni talked about the relationship with her mother and struggles her mother went through. Giovanni thought of her mother as a beautiful woman, but she put so much faith and trust in men. Part of her mother’s struggle

was waiting for Giovanni's father to come home "she was very deliberately waiting/ perhaps for my father to come home/ from his night job.." this struggle Giovanni's mother taught to her so being educated about that, Giovanni teaches the ethics of being a good man to her son; so he will grow and become a good man and see the struggle being a bad one can cause women. Giovanni makes a statement at the end of the poem, "I taught it to my son/ who recited it for her/ just to say we must learn to bear the pleasures/ as we have borne the pains"

3.3.2 Analysis of the Poem

The tone of this poem, as she says she watched her mother in such amazement and that she is so beautiful to look at. The character of this poem is same as other poems before, Giovanni herself, because she uses first person point of view such as "I, me, and my." It also can be analyzed as psychological character because of her feeling about her mother. At the first the setting was taken place at Giovanni and her family lived on Burns Avenue in Wyoming. Then it changes when Nikki Giovanni herself is a mother, as she says in line "I taught it to my son who recited it for her." The theme of this poem is family, as the poem told about the speaker's mother and in the last mentioned "my son" giving the clue about parts of family.

3.3.3 Relation between Mother and Nikki's Life

This poem was reflected of Nikki's mother that she loved so much. As she told in interview with Martin (2013) about her feeling when her mother died;

“Well, it really is that my mom died now in 2005. And so, it's been a while, but, you know, losing your mother, even though it's the right order of things, is sad. I was a mother's child. And I stayed very, very sad. And I finally said, you know, Nikki, you have to get out of this.” Giovanni also told about the kindness of her mom, “Mommy enjoyed anything. But, you know, I could take my mother a glass of water and she would - and that's what I loved about her. She would like, oh, I've never had water this good. What did you do to the water? You know, my mother always made me feel incredibly competent. And I don't think anybody else has taken that place in my life actually”

The conversation gives information about Giovanni's memory about her mother. Giovanni loves her character, her kindness, so that she was a mother's child. When Giovanni was child, she often spends the time at home, help her parents to clean the house or maybe reading books, that makes her closer to her mom than Gary, her sister.

Nikki also become a witness of the violence that did by her father to her mom, it makes her think that her mother is strong person, as what she through as a wife. Even before Gary left for college in 1957, her busy social life meant that she was rarely at home for any length of time; nor did she and her little sister do much together. The reclusive Giovanni spent much of her time at home, helping her mother with household chores, reading book, and listening to her radio. Giovanni, thus, was a frequent witness to her parents' quarrels. Even as an adult, she finds raised voices disturbing and physical violence abhorrent. As a mommy's girl, she found her father's abuse of her mother intolerable. She grew to dislike her father intensely, but she was equally frustrated by her mother refusal to extricate herself from the situation. Giovanni's mother gave her many life lessons, giving an example that being a mother must be strong with everything she goes through.

“We were living in a three room/apartment in burns avenue”

“Burns avenue” in line 10 were Giovanni and her family lived on. It was in Wyoming, a suburb north of Cincinnati, from about the time she was in kindergarten until about the end of her third-grade year (Fowler,2013:405).

Giovanni create a poem which shows about her childhood as a daughter until she became mature enough to understand what her mother really goes through.

Giovanni was a single parent of Thomas Watson Giovanni. Giovanni refuse to have marriage, because of her childhood experience being witness of her parent violence. As she stated in Joanne V. Gabbin’s book, *Shaping Memories: Reflections of African American Woman Writers:*

Reflections of African American Woman Writers:

I never had to wonder, what I would be doing on Friday and Saturday nights: I would be listening to arguments. Well, that’s not exactly true. I would be listening to my father cursing and hitting and my mother, who was silent and taking it. It’s a bad thing to hit your wife. Number one: it taints your daughter’s view of marriage and the place of men in her life (Gabbin,2009:4).

In interview with James Baldwin she said:

I’m going to deal with him. He knows that he is not being treated with the respect due him as a person, as a black man. In order to get that together, when he comes into the house, he begins to brutalize my mother. Which becomes a strange phenomenon to me because I don’t like white people and I’m afraid of black men. So what do you do? It’s a sad condition (Baldwin, 1973:45)

The conversations show that Giovanni was afraid to her father who is a black man, mistreated her mother, hit and brutalized her mother. Giovanni who

often stay at home and being witness of her parent feel uncomforted and finally deal with have no marriage.

After her son's birth, Giovanni rearranged her priorities around him and has stated that she would give her life for him. As she said in her book

Conversation with Nikki Giovanni (1992:32):

“I just can't imagine living without him. But I can live without the revolution, without world socialism, I have a child, and my responsibilities have changed.”

That statement shows that she wants to be a good mother by protect and teach her son well, like her mom, as she mentioned in the last stanza “I taught it to my son / who recited it for her.” Based on the analysis above, the poem *Mother* has relation with her personal experience and represent Giovanni's love to mother and her son.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

After analyzing the three poems of Nikki Giovanni's *Nikki-Rosa*, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, and *Mother*, it can be concluded that each poem reflect Nikki Giovanni's experiences showed by some words inside the poem which has connection in her life. Those poems have same character and setting, those are Nikki Giovanni itself and her childhood environment.

In the first poem *Nikki-Rosa*, the prove that this poem has relation with Giovanni's life experience showed when she explicitly talked about how hard her childhood's life is. She talked about living in Woodlawn, whole family meetings about Hollydale, how her father struggled during the discrimination as an African Americans, and when she was forced to be a witness to her parents who often quarreled, even violence. At the end of the poem Giovanni shows that even though she has a heavy life as a black person, she doesn't care about what the white people say, she still happy with everything she goes through.

Knoxville is a small town in Tennessee, it has many memories to Nikki Giovanni. The second poem entitled *Knoxville, Tennessee* tells of her longing for happy childhood. Giovanni says about "summer", lots of vegetables and food, "church picnic", "gospel music", shows a lot of simple things she can do during the summer. This poem shows Giovanni's writing style which shaped by Southern black culture through the word "fresh corn", "okra" and "gospel music". She also mentioned about her grandmother who always accompanied her to have fun. This

poem implicitly shows simple happiness by black people, showing readers that black children experience the world in much the same way that white children do.

And the last poem, *Mother*, is talk about Giovanni's mom. This poem tells about the amazement Giovanni on her mother. The author written this to stress the importance of mothers and how much they affect our lives today. The relation between the poem and the poet's life is shown by the word burns avenue where it is the place she lived as a child with her parents. She also mentioned about her mother's struggle when she was waiting for Giovanni's father to come home, whether Giovanni didn't tell explicitly about violence happening in the house, she explained it implicitly from the patience of her mother. "I taught it to my son," this statement shows that Giovanni wants to teach her son like what her mom did. She wants him to become a good man. This poem also represents Giovanni's love to mother and her son.

In short, these three poems of Nikki Giovanni explain different experience of Nikki Giovanni based on the content in each poem. The poems have same speaker, Giovanni herself, because the three poems explicitly tell about her own experience. Those poems have similarity that is represents the experience of woman. By this research, it proves that through understanding deeper about the biography of the author we can find the relation between the author and her works.

4.2 Suggestion

Nikki Giovanni is a great woman that have published many books, poetry, and other works. Along with this study, the researcher suggests to the next researcher to conduct analysis in other aspect which has not been analyzed. By conducting analysis in the different aspects, it will give inspiration for the next researcher. Nevertheless, if the next researcher wants to analyze the works of Nikki Giovanni by the same theory, it does not matter. The next researcher may broaden the previous analysis into more detail analysis or by seeking lack of this analysis to be added and completed in order to result better analysis in the same theory.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle.
- Baldwin, James. (1973). *A Dialogue*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.
- Dewi, Dian Purnama Ni Putu. (2010). *The Feminism of Virginia Woolf in "Mrs. Dalloway"*. Thesis. Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Dinnurriyah, Itsna Syahadatud. (2013). *The Basic of Drama*. Surabaya: Sunan Ampel University Press.
- Ellis, Frank H. (1951). *The Biographical Problem in Literary Criticism*. 66 (6): (971). Retrieved July 27, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/460152>
- Fowler, Virginia C. (1992). *Conversations with Nikki Giovanni*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.
- Fowler, Virginia C. (2013). *Nikki Giovanni: A Literary Biography*. Santa Barbara: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
- Gabbin, Joanne V. (2009). *Shaping Memories: Reflections of African American Women Writers*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.
- Gillespie, Tim. (2010). *Doing Literary Criticism*. New Hampshire: Stenhouse Publisher.
- Giovanni, Nikki. (1971). *Gemini: An Extended Autobiographical Statement on My Twenty Five Years Being a Black Poet*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.
- Giovanni, Nikki. (1994). *Racism 101*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Giovanni, Nikki. (2003). *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher.
- Hudson, William Henry. (1913). *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. London: George G Harrap & Company.
- Kwame A. Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, eds. (2004). *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African & African American Experience*. New York: Basic Civitas Books. Retrieved September 29, 2018 from <http://voices.cla.umn.edu/artistpages/giovanniNikki.php>.

Martin, Michel. (2013). *Poet Nikki Giovanni on the Darker Side of her Life*. (Oral Record). Retrieved September 29, 2018 from <https://www.npr.org>.

Natalia, I Gusti Agung Ayu. (2008). *The Main Character in Charlotte Bronte's Biography and her Novel 'Jane Eyre' (a Comparative Study)*. (Thesis). Denpasar: Udayana University.

Selden, Raman, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker. (2005). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Britain: Pearson Longman.

Wallenfeldt, Jeff. Ed. (2011). *The Black Experience in America: From Civil Rights to the Present*. New York: Britannica Educational Publishing.

Waluyo, Herman J. (2005). *Apresiasi Puisi*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Wellek, Rene, and Austin Warren. (1962). *Theory of Literature*. London: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

Wiyatmi. (2006). *Pengantar Kajian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka.

<http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/portrait>. Retrieved July 24, 2019.

<http://www.deffinition.net/personal-experience>. Retrieved July 24, 2019.