

## Unveiling the Structural Layers: An Interpretation of Kath Walker's 'A Song of Hope'

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### Abstract

*This research analyzes "A Song of Hope," a poem by Kath Walker, through a structural approach that meticulously examines each element of the poem to serve as a benchmark for interpretation. The study delves into the intricate structure, language, and stylistic devices employed by Walker, highlighting how these components collectively convey profound themes of freedom and hope. The researcher, acting as the primary instrument, uncovers the poem's deeper meanings and implications, particularly for the Aboriginal people of Australia. The poem eloquently expresses their enduring hopes for a brighter future, encapsulated in Walker's poetic style that subtly yet powerfully communicates their struggles and aspirations. Kath Walker, known for her career as a poet, political activist, and environmentalist, infuses her personal experiences and perspectives into her literary work. Her expertise and background as an Aboriginal woman lend authenticity and depth to "A Song of Hope," making it not just a piece of literature but a realistic and compelling narrative that resonates with readers. Through this structural analysis, the research underscores Walker's ability to craft a vivid portrayal of the Aboriginal experience, bringing to life their collective yearning for freedom and a hopeful future. The poem's realistic impression is a testament to Walker's skillful blending of her cultural heritage with her literary talent, making "A Song of Hope" a significant and impactful piece of Australian literature.*

**Keywords:** *Interpretation, Poem, Aboriginal Australian, Kath Walker, Hope, Literature.*

### Introduction

When enjoy the art, It is not merely appreciating an object. For instance, when it looks at a painting, it does not simply see a pile of paint arranged into a shape; when it observes a sculpture, it does not just see a chiseled stone; and when it reads a poem, it does not just see a series of words. Instead, it discerns the values and meanings behind these artworks. Paintings, sculptures, and poetry exemplify that art comes in various forms, including literature. According to Semi (1988, p. 8), literature is an art form that uses language as its medium and human life as its object.

Language in literature has a broad connotation value and an important denotation, therefore literature has a different understanding for each audience (Rahman & Weda, 2019; Junaid et al., 2024; Sosrohadi et al., 2022). Each word has its own meaning, for example the words 'violent', 'rude' and 'cruel' have the same denotation but the connotations of these words are different. Especially in poems, to give a strong message and impression, the elements of sound, imagery, figures of speech, rhetoric, denotation, connotation, and diction are emphasized. Poets seem to be gods who give life and organize the beauty of language in poems (Sosrohadi et al., 2022; Pattu et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2023; Rahman, 2019). According to Pradopo, a poem is a grammatical rhythm that awakens the feelings and imagination of the five senses (1987, p. 7). "A Song of Hope" is a poem written by Kath Walker who is also known as Oodgeroo Noonuccal, she is a poet, an educator, and a political activist. The poem is about hope, freedom and the fight of the indigenous people of Australia or commonly called Aborigines. This poem reflects the dark experiences, hopes and greetings for the future of the Aborigines. Kath Walker's work

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portrays the situation of Aboriginal people who suffered from British colonialism and the overlapping policies of the Australian government. However, in the midst of their suffering, there is hope and resistance that encourages them to achieve freedom. The language used in “A Song of Hope” is easy to understand but it brings out the elements of the poem that stir the reader’s emotions, which makes this poem very interesting to investigate.

Interpretation in this research will offer an understanding of how a poem is characterized. Several factors such as the elements of the poem, history, and the poet also influence this interpretation. These factors will give a new interpretation to the poem, knowing that everyone’s interpretation will vary depending on the interpreter’s point of view.

This research was inspired by the problem of some people who do not understand reading or interpreting the meaning behind poems. Knowing the meaning behind or interpreting poems is not an easy thing. This is because poems are not written like ordinary paragraphs in other writings. Poems always hide their meaning in lines and stanzas, a way of writing like that makes ordinary people not understand poems. However, it is not impossible to interpret poems. Readers need extraordinary abilities such as experience, feelings, and thoughts to interpret poetry. If the reader’s ability is small, it will produce a small interpretation as well. This research comes as an ‘holy book’ or epiphany created by the researcher in order to tell how to analyze, approach, provide methods and provide technical means in interpreting poetry.

This research can also be related to literary criticism. Literary criticism is the study of literature that deals with the understanding and valuation of literary works. Literary criticism always debates about the quality of criticism, who does the criticism, how to do the criticism, and the assumptions about the criticism. There are debates that want to solve problems and some that are just accusations. If poets have put all their energy into creating poems, then what’s wrong if readers put all their energy into interpreting the poets’ poems? What a sad world it would be if readers thought poets’ poems were bad. However, it would be even more distressing if a bad poem is considered great by the reader. That’s where the study of literary criticism comes in; readers are required to be critical and creative in dealing with literary works. Literary criticism is divided into two, namely creative literary criticism and academic literary criticism. This research can be attributed to academic literary criticism. This research expounds line by line and stanza by stanza to achieve the interpretation in “A Song of Hope” that Kath Walker made.

## Literature Review

### *Previous Studies*

The master's thesis, Woods (2010) entitled "Indigenous Identity, Oral Tradition, and the Land in the Poetry of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Luci Tapahonso, and Haunani-Kay Trask," explores how these three poets articulate the relationship between indigenous peoples and their lands, and their commentary on the territorial annexation under colonialism. Using postcolonial methods, the thesis examines the effects of colonialism on indigenous territories and cultures, as reflected in the poets' works. Despite their different backgrounds (Australian, American, and Hawaiian), the poets share a common goal of emphasizing the importance of legitimizing their cultures and highlighting the impact of colonialism.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) uses her poetry to advocate for ethnic unity, political equality, and civil rights for Aborigines. Her poem "A Song of Hope" voices the effects of colonialism on Aboriginal life and calls for a unified, hopeful future. The research concludes that the poets, through their unique cultural perspectives, convey traditional stories and the deep connection between indigenous people and their lands. Their works serve to educate and engage both native and non-native audiences, offering an indigenous perspective on the chaos wrought by colonialism.

### *Theoretical Framework*

In this research, the theory of interpretation will be used to find meaning in the poem “A Song of Hope”

by Kath Walker. The theory chosen in this research comes from Atmazaki. He stated that, “Menginterpretasikan sajak adalah upaya memberi makna terhadap sajak” (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 121). The translation of his statement means that interpreting poems is an attempt to give meaning to poems. According to him, analyzing poetry is an attempt to take away the meaning of poetry, while interpreting poems gives meaning to poems. It sounds out of sync, but it’s actually in sync. This is because we have to analyze the poem first before interpreting its meaning, that is he believes. He thinks the foundation of the interpretation of poems is because poems are always ambiguous without being able to ascertain which one is the most accurate.

### *The History of Aboriginal Australians*

Aboriginal Australians is a term used to refer to the indigenous people who first set foot in Australia, especially on Tasmania Island, Fraser Island, Hinchinbrook Island, Tiwi Island, and Groote Island (Behrendt, 2021). Australian Aborigines are estimated to have lived since 50,000 years ago (Tobler et al., 2017, p. 183). For thousands of years, Australian Aborigines lived in areas near the sea. Abundant resources allowed them to fish, hunt, farm, and trade between tribes. Trade between tribes takes place harmoniously, one of which is the trade in sea cucumbers with Makassar people from Indonesia (Syam, 2014). Australian aborigines moved from place to place to adapt to the seasons, so their survival activities only lasted four to five hours a day. In their free time, they engage in traditional activities and rituals (Griffiths & Russell, 2018).

In 1770, James Cook as captain of HM Bark Endeavor – a British Royal Navy ship – arrived in eastern Australia and claimed the continent belonged to England. James Cook's journey was carried out on the orders of King George III for the sake of British scientific and strategic progress (Russ, 2022). In 1788, British ships arrived in Australia with the aim of establishing a penal colony at the behest of the British government under King George III (Benwell, 2024). The First Fleet consisted of 11 ships carrying 1,400 people including government officials, military, workers, and more than 700 prisoners (de Grijis & Jacob, 2023). After the First Fleet arrived, they conquered the Eora tribe's territory and resources, resulting in violence between the two sides. The arrival of the First Fleet marked the beginning of the colonization of Aboriginal Australia (Gunn, 2017).

This part of the research focuses on key events relating to Aboriginal Australia from 1920 to 1960, which was Kath Walker's lifetime. This period was chosen to understand Kath Walker's views on making "A Song of Hope".

## **Research Methodology**

### *Types of Research*

This research used Descriptive Qualitative method to find the meaning of freedom in the Aboriginal poem "A Song of Hope" by Kath Walker. According to Nicholas W. Jankowski and Klaus Bruhn Jensen in their book, *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*: “qualitative analysis focuses on the occurrence of analytical objects in a particular context, as opposed to the occurrence of formally similar elements in different contexts...qualitative approaches examine the production of meaning as a process that is contextualized and integrated with broader social and cultural practices.” (Jensen et al., 1991, p. 4).

More specifically, this research will use descriptive-comparative methodology. In this methodology, each element of poetry is identified, recognized and explained (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 124).

### *Source of Data*

One of the elements that make up scientific research is data. With the existence of data in scientific research, it will provide answers to research questions as well as achieve the objectives of the scientific research. The data collected by the researcher is primary data collected directly by the researcher, which

is the poem “A Song of Hope” by Kath Walker. The primary data was found through internet browsing, and resulted from discussions between the researcher and his supervisors. Meanwhile, secondary data is data that has been processed by other people or institutions for the same purpose or has the same correlation with this scientific research. Examples of secondary data in this scientific research are books, online books, journals, online journals, theses, documents from international organizations, articles in encyclopedias, entries in online dictionaries, group websites, organization websites, government websites, and other things that can be useful for this scientific research.

## Research Findings and Discussions

### a. Element of “A Song of Hope”

#### *Enjambent*

Enjambement is the clipping of a word or phrase at the end of a line and then continuing the clip on the next line, with the aim of strengthening the reader’s impression (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 28). Enjambement gives emphasis to the word, from the emphasis comes the impression of the reader. The following enjambment of “A Song of Hope” is indicated in the fourth stanza of the poem:

See plain the promise, Dark freedom-lover!

...

And joy complete us

In our new Dream Time.

Between the lines See plain the promise and Dark freedom-lover! there is an enjambment that establishes a close connection between the two. When the two lines are syntactically joined, they become “See plain the promise, dark freedom-lover!” and it gives the impression that the promise that Aboriginals and peace-loving people have been waiting for is in front of their eyes. The enjambment seems to be saying “O Aboriginal and those with us! Our hope is near”. Let’s continue with the lines And joy complete us and In our new Dream Time. Enjambement is found in the clipping of the words us and in. The clipping of the word us aims to complete the anaphora of the previous lines for rhetorical effect in order to impress the reader. If the two lines are put together syntactically, they become “And joy completes us in our new Dream Time.” which will convey the idea that happiness will solidify them in the essence of life as taught by their ancestors (Dream Time).

### b. Denotation & Connotation

Associations and emotional meaning attached to a word. If denotation is the primary meaning that is objective, then connotation is the second meaning that is subjective (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 35). The word sun as an example, denotatively means a planet filled with fire, while connotatively it can be a sign of vigor, the beginning of the day, and so on. The denotation and connotation table below shows the denotations and connotations in the poem “A Song of Hope”.

| First Stanza         |                             |             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Line                 | Meaning                     | Diction     |
| Look up, my people   | Command to look up.         | denotative  |
| The dawn is breaking | The new era for Aboriginal. | connotative |

|                        |                                       |             |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| The world is waking    | The new era for Aboriginal.           | connotative |
| To a new bright day    | The new era for Aboriginal.           | connotative |
| When none defame us    | A bad view of Aboriginal people.      | connotative |
| No restriction tame us | The restriction they have felt.       | denotative  |
| Nor colour shame us    | Racism has been experienced.          | connotative |
| Nor sneer dismay       | No one will sneer at them ever again. | denotative  |

In the first stanza of the poem, each line carries significant meaning and employs different types of diction to convey its message. The line "Look up, my people" is a command urging the Aboriginal people to raise their heads, with its diction being straightforward and denotative. The subsequent lines—"The dawn is breaking," "The world is waking," and "To a new bright day"—use connotative diction to symbolize the emergence of a new era for the Aboriginal people, filled with hope and renewal.

The line "When none defame us" reflects a future where negative perceptions of Aboriginal people no longer exist, employing connotative diction to highlight the cessation of defamation. "No restriction tame us" uses denotative diction to emphasize the lifting of past limitations that constrained the community. "Nor colour shame us" addresses the issue of racism that the Aboriginal people have endured, with connotative diction underscoring the end of such experiences. Finally, "Nor sneer dismay" uses denotative diction to convey a future where they will no longer face disdain or mockery from others. Each line in this stanza works collectively to paint a picture of liberation and newfound dignity for the Aboriginal people.

| Second Stanza           |   |             |
|-------------------------|---|-------------|
| Line                    | Meaning   | Diction     |
| No brood no more        | Aboriginal people don't have to feel sad about what has happened to them.                       | Denotative  |
| On the years behind you | The dark history of Aboriginal people.  | Connotative |
| The hope assigned you   | Hope for a better future is on the horizon for Aboriginal people.                               | Denotative  |
| Shall the past replace  | Reminiscing about their dark history.   | Connotative |
| When a juster justice   | Aboriginal people hope that there will be no discrimination or racism against them in social or | Connotative |
|                         | state law.  |             |
| Grown wise and stronger | Aboriginal peoples will be learning from their history and being stronger as an outcome.        | Connotative |

|                           |  |             |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| Points the bone no longer | Aboriginal witchcraft practices that were depicted as misery during colonialism. | Connotative |
| At a darker race.         | The average shade of skin of Aboriginal people.                                  | Connotative |

In the second stanza, the poem continues to convey a message of hope and transformation for the Aboriginal people through a mix of denotative and connotative diction.

The line "No brood no more" uses denotative diction to express that Aboriginal people no longer need to feel sorrowful about their past sufferings. The phrase "On the years behind you" employs connotative diction to refer to the dark history that the Aboriginal people have endured, implying a painful past that they are moving beyond.

"The hope assigned you" is denotative, indicating that there is a promise of a brighter future for the Aboriginal people, suggesting optimism and forward-looking aspirations. In contrast, "Shall the past replace" uses connotative diction, highlighting the act of reflecting on their troubled history while moving towards a hopeful future.

"When a juster justice" conveys the hope for an era where there is no discrimination or racism against the Aboriginal people within social or state laws. This line uses connotative diction to emphasize the desire for fairness and equality. "Grown wise and stronger" reflects the idea that the Aboriginal people will learn from their history and emerge stronger, using connotative diction to highlight the growth and resilience gained from past experiences.

| <b>Third Stanza</b>  |  |                          |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Line</b>          | <b>Meaning</b>   | <b>Diction</b>           |
| So long we waited    | Aboriginal people's hope for a better future.  | Denotative               |
| Bound and frustrated | The pain of discrimination and racism that they feel leads to frustration.   | Denotative               |
| Till hate be hated   | In denotation, this is an expression of disgust at the   | Denotative & Connotative |
|                      | mistreatment of Aboriginal people. In connotation, it encourages Aboriginals to forget or forgive the past.                |                          |
| And caste deposed    | The laws, levels, treatment and perspectives of Aboriginal people have always been inferior compared to other Australians. | Connotative              |

|                          |   |             |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|
| Now light shall guide us | A form of Aboriginal waiting for the proximity of freedom. The freedom referred to in the interpretation of meaning in this research is a better future because since the granting of citizenship in 1948 there have been many beneficial advancements for Aboriginal people until the poem “A Song of Hope” was created in 1960. | Connotative |
| No goal denied us        | Equality for Aboriginal people in achieving their dreams and goals.   | Connotative |
| And all doors open       | Equality for Aboriginal people in achieving their dreams and goals.   | Connotative |
| That long were closed    | Equality for Aboriginal people in achieving their dreams and goals.   | Connotative |

The third stanza of the poem continues to emphasize the journey of the Aboriginal people towards hope, equality, and freedom, employing both denotative and connotative diction to convey its powerful message. It uses a combination of denotative and connotative diction to depict the transition from a history of discrimination and frustration to a hopeful future where the Aboriginal people can achieve their goals and enjoy equal opportunities. It speaks to the anticipation of freedom, the end of hate, and the dismantling of systemic inequality, symbolized by the imagery of "light" and "open doors."

| <b>Fourth Stanza</b>      |  |                |
|---------------------------|--|----------------|
| <b>Line</b>               | <b>Meaning</b>   | <b>Diction</b> |
| See plain the promise     | Excitement for the promise of the future.  | Connotative    |
| Dark freedom-lover!       | Aboriginal people and other people who share the same vision of freedom.   | Connotative    |
| Night's nearly over       | The dark history of Aboriginal people is about to come to an end.  | Connotative    |
| And though long the climb | Aboriginal struggles in the face of discrimination were not in vain.   | Connotative    |
| New rights will greet us  | As times have changed, so have the laws that have had a positive impact on Aboriginal people. This is the essence of freedom in this research, and “A Song of Hope” is a poem that hopes for that freedom. | Connotative    |
| New mateship meet us      | Other people around the world who share the same vision of freedom.  | Connotative    |



|                       |   |             |
|-----------------------|---|-------------|
| And joy complete us   | The future, the Freedom, that Aboriginal people yearn for.  | Connotative |
| In our new Dream Time | Walker uses the term Dream Time, a term in Aboriginal totemism, to describe the essential life as the true meaning of Dream Time.<br>Dream time is a way of living according to the | Denotative  |
|                       | instructions of their ancestors.  |             |

In the fourth stanza, the poem expresses the optimism and excitement for the promise of a better future for Aboriginal people. The line "See plain the promise" conveys a clear vision of this hopeful future, using connotative diction to evoke excitement. "Dark freedom-lover!" refers to Aboriginal people and others who share their vision of freedom, emphasizing solidarity and shared aspirations through connotative language. "Night's nearly over" signifies the imminent end of the dark history of oppression, while "And though long the climb" acknowledges the arduous struggles faced in the fight against discrimination, both using connotative diction to highlight perseverance and hope. The phrase "New rights will greet us" reflects the positive impact of changing laws and societal progress, symbolizing the essence of the freedom hoped for in the poem. "New mateship meet us" extends this vision to include global allies who share the same aspirations for freedom. "And joy complete us" envisions a future where the Aboriginal people's yearning for freedom is fulfilled. Lastly, "In our new Dream Time" uses both connotative and denotative diction to blend traditional Aboriginal spirituality with the concept of a hopeful future, referring to a way of life guided by ancestral wisdom and the realization of their dreams.

| Fifth Stanza               |  |             |
|----------------------------|--|-------------|
| Line                       | Meaning  | Diction     |
| To our fathers' fathers    | Previous generations of Aboriginal people have experienced tremendous hardships and losses, land relocation, and the discrimination of their culture and language. | Denotative  |
| The pain, the sorrow       | The pain and anguish experienced by Aboriginal people in the past history.   | Connotative |
| To our children's children | Aboriginal youth being prepared for the future.  | Denotative  |
| The glad tomorrow          | The future, the Freedom, that Aboriginal people craving for  | Connotation |

In the fifth stanza, the poem reflects on the historical and intergenerational journey of the Aboriginal people, using a mix of denotative and connotative diction. The line "To our fathers' fathers" denotes the immense hardships and losses endured by previous generations, including land relocation and cultural discrimination. "The pain, the sorrow" uses connotative diction to evoke the deep emotional suffering experienced throughout this history. The phrase "To our children's children" denotes the current generation of Aboriginal youth being prepared for a brighter future. Finally, "The glad tomorrow" employs connotative diction to symbolize the hopeful and joyful future that the Aboriginal people yearn for, emphasizing their long-awaited freedom and fulfillment. Together, these lines highlight the enduring legacy of struggle and resilience, while expressing hope and preparation for a better future for the coming generations.



*c. Metaphor*

Metaphor is a comparison between senses, there is a comparison and there is also a comparator. The comparison is termed the tenor, while the comparator is termed the vehicle (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 51). Here is metaphor in “A Song of Hope” is situated in the last stanza:

To our fathers’ fathers The pain, the sorrow;

To our children’s children The glad tomorrow.

Tenor: fathers’ fathers Vehicle: The pain, the sorrow Tenor:  
children’s children Vehicle: The glad tomorrow.

In the phrase fathers’ fathers compared to The pain, the sorrow. The metaphor likens the father’s fathers (tenor) to the early Aboriginal people. They must feel the agony and sadness of the colonialism and discrimination they have experienced in the Aboriginal past in the line The pain, the sorrow (vehicle). Whereas in the next two lines it is the other way round, the next generation of Aboriginal young people who are visualized as a tenor in children’s children will have a bright future. The bright future is visualized as a vehicle in The glad tomorrow.

*d. Synecdoche*

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to illustrate the whole, or the whole is used to illustrate a part. Pars pro toto is for a part that illustrates the whole, and totem pro parte is for a whole that illustrates a part (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 57). Here are the synecdoches in “A Song of Hope”:

- Totem:

The dawn is breaking,

The world is waking

(in the first stanza, line two and three) Its parte:

A sign. A sign of a better era for Aboriginal people. One example is the granting of citizenship by Aboriginal people in 1948

Pars:

To a new bright day (in the first stanza, line four)

In our new Dream Time (in the fourth stanza, last line) The  
glad tomorrow (in the last stanza, last line)

Its toto:

The phrase a new bright day, new Dream Time, glad tomorrow are the synecdoche of a better era for Aboriginal people where there is no more discrimination against them, boundaries that limit them, and

insults about them. Pars bright day and glad tomorrow are expressing (pro toto) a better future for Aboriginal Australians. While the pars Dream Time is a belief (pro toto) that is oriented to totemism that Aboriginal Australians believe in. So basically totemism is a belief that states that humans have a close relationship with the spirits of other creatures such as animals or plants (Ahmad, 2021, p. 154). For people other than Aboriginal Australians, many may not know what Dream Time is, Dream Time is a way of life that has been arranged by Aboriginal ancestors (O’Keefe, 1984, p. 50). Totemism in Australia believes in a particular animal because that particular animal is an epitome or symbol of oneness among tribe members, the values that are believed in totemism are used as a moral guide in life (Ahmad, 2021, p. 158).

#### *e. Allegory*

An allegory is a figure of speech about another real situation (Pradopo, 1987, p. 71). Allegory only has a tenor, its vehicle is hidden in a real situation (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 58). In “A Song of Hope”, the poem is about hope and greeting for a better future for Aborigines, this hope and acceptance came about because of colonialism and all the kind of discrimination that they experienced. Let’s take an example of hope as the tenor, as expressed in the first stanza in lines four to eight: When none defame us, No restriction tame us, Nor colour shame us, Nor sneer dismay. Those lines contain both their hopes and their misfortunes at the same time. For the vehicle, we can look at the history of the Aboriginal tribe, they are the indigenous people in Australia who were colonized by the British, from this colonization came the massacre that occurred in 1926, 1928, and other misfortunes that harmed the Aboriginal tribe. From those lines, the poem hopes that the past will not happen to them again. Then acceptance or the greeting for the future is located in the first stanza, in lines one to four: Look up, my people, The dawn is breaking, The world is waking To a new bright day. The vehicle for these lines portrays the dawn that signifies the start of a day. The day being referred to is a new era for Aborigines, a day where equality is happening in Australia.

#### *f. Parallelism*

When lines are grammatically identical and there is repetition of words or phrases on the line, it is called parallelism. Parallelism in terms of rhetorical devices is an expression that repeats in parallel (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 68). In the poem “A Song of Hope” four lines are indicated that have parallelism, here are the four lines:

The dawn is breaking,

The world is waking

(in the first stanza, line two to three)

New rights will greet us, New mateship meet us,

(in the fourth stanza, line five to six)

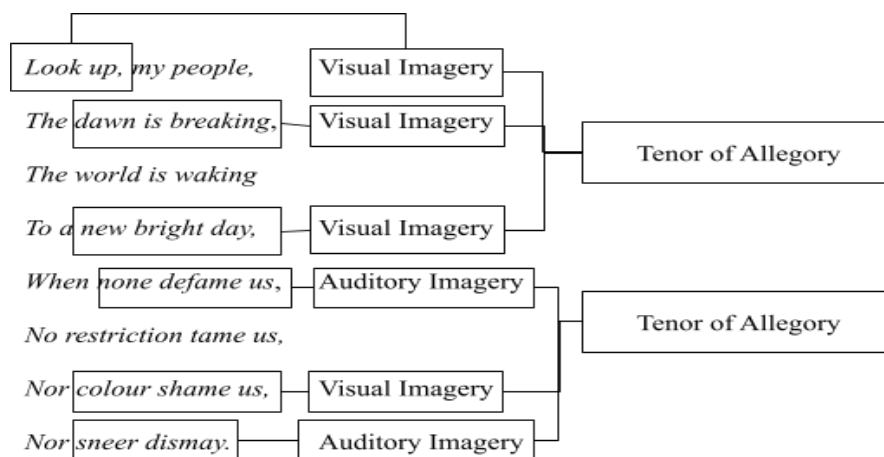
#### *The connection between the elements of “A Song of Hope”*

In the mission to reach the meaning, analyze and interpret the poem as stated in the research methodology and technique of data analysis, this section will connect the elements of the poem that have been described in the previous section. According to Atmazaki, in connecting the elements of the poem, the researcher only selects the dominant elements (1993, p. 126). Other elements that are not dominant usually help the dominant elements. According to Atmazaki, poem elements must be connected because poem elements have relevance and irrelevance to other elements (1993, p. 127). In connecting the elements of the poem, according to him, the researcher must also paraphrase the poem.

If the poem is seen and read rationally without poeticism then the poem is like a flawed language that has no correct grammar. In addition to connecting the elements of the poem, the researcher's task in this section is to restore correct grammar to the poem by paraphrasing the poem. The purpose of paraphrasing a poem is to make it easier to understand the poem, because if the poem can be understood easily then paraphrasing is no longer needed, even for poems consisting of lines and stanzas (Atmazaki, 1993, p. 127). The way to paraphrase a poem according to Atmazaki is to turn the poem into prose, by making the poem into paragraphs that do not lose the essence of the poem.

In stanza 1 there is a relationship between the elements of imagery and allegory. Imagery elements such as visual imagery and auditory imagery form two allegory sections in stanza 1. The researcher found that lines one to four (look up my people, dawn is breaking, and new bright day) form the tenor of the allegory which allegorizes (vehicle) the atmosphere of dawn when the day has just begun, the four lines consist of three visual imagery. Dawn in vehicle lines one to four means a new era for Aboriginal Australians, an era where equality in Australia will be realized. As for the tenor of the allegory from lines five to six, it is formed by two auditory imagery and one visual imagery (none defame us, color shame us, and sneer dismay). To better understand stanza 1, here is a paraphrase of the poem and its diagram:

All of you Aborigines, look! The dark days are behind us, our lives are heading towards a brighter future. A time when there is no more stigmatization of us, no more barriers against us, and no more racism or humiliation against us.



**Diagram 1.** The First Stanza

In stanza 2, there is a relationship between the elements of synecdoche, pleonasm, alliteration, and imagery. The totem of stanza 2 is built with a kinesthetic imagery in order to describe the parte according to the poem through an intense and vivid sensory experience. In order to lead the audience to the essence of the parte in stanza 2, pleonasm and alliteration are cultivated in “juster justice”. In this line, the exaggerated repetition of words plus the repetition of the same sound is like a deadly combo that leads the poem's audience to the understanding of the parte. To better understand stanza 2, here is a paraphrase of the poem:

Now forget your past, Aboriginal hope commands you to erase the past.  
When the law is truly fair, all sides will understand and empower each other.  
There will be no more harm to Aboriginal people like in the past.

## Stanza 2:

*Now brood no more**On the years behind you,**The hope assigned you**Shall the past replace,**When a juster justice*Pleonasm & AlliterationTotem of Synecdoche*Grown wise and stronger*Kinesthetic Imagery*Points the bone no longer**At a darker race.***Diagram 2.** The Second Stanza

In stanza 3 there is a relationship between the imagery element and the synecdoche element. Visual imagery is deployed to achieve the parte on the totem in the fifth to eighth lines. Through the sensory experience of sight found in “Now light shall guide us” and “all doors open”. The two visual imagery can give the poem’s audience a strong impression in order to achieve the parte in the poem.

We have waited for so long that we have been physically and mentally hurt, leading to vengeance between us and them which resulted in the collapse of our throne and theirs. Now it's time for us to live in the future, nothing can prevent us, and all our unrealizable desires can finally be realized.

## Stanza 3

*So long we waited**Bound and frustrated,**Till hate be hated**And caste deposed;**Now light shall guide us,*Visual ImageryTotem of Synecdoche*No goal denied us,**And all doors open*Visual Imagery*That long were closed.***Diagram 3.** The Third Stanza

In stanza 4 there is a relationship between the elements of parallelism and anaphora. The relationship is found in the sixth and seventh lines (New rights will greet us and New mateship meet us). Both lines

contain elements of parallelism and anaphora. In this line we see how skillful Kath Walker is in poetizing or creating poems, she makes the two lines connect rhetorically and support each other in terms of sound.

As explained in the parallelism and anaphora section, parallelism forms when there is a repeated expression. Meanwhile, anaphora occurs when there is repetition of sounds, words, and syntactic structures in successive lines or sentences to create a certain effect. For parallelism, the lines New rights will greet us and New mateship meet us express or imply Aboriginal Australians' hope for new laws that are more fair for their rights and their new situation when they are equal to other kinds of people in Australia. For anaphora, in the lines New right will greet us and New mateship meet us there is repetition of the word 'New', 'us' and repetition of the 'i' sound in the words 'greet' and 'meet' in both lines.

Dear Aborigines and all those who love humanity! Look to the future.  
After a hard struggle, we will finally be equal in the eyes of the law. With  
our equality in the eyes of the law, we can return to a normal life as our  
ancestors taught us.

*Interpretation from the connection between the element of "A Song of Hope"*

*a. Stanza 1: The Welcoming For Aboriginal Australians New Era*

The first stanza of the poem "A Song of Hope" interprets the welcoming of a new era for Aboriginal Australians where there is no more stigma, discrimination, racism, and humiliation against them. This can be seen from how Kath Walker describes the new era by narrating a situation or atmosphere at dawn where the day has just begun, the narration is called an allegory. The allegory of stanza 1 is built by the elements of imagery, these elements are visual imagery and auditory imagery. The connectivity of the allegory element and the two imagery elements in stanza 1 of the poem makes the reader know what the Aboriginal Australians want as well as knowing what has happened to them through sensory experience. Simply put, the sensory experience effect created by the visual imagery and auditory imagery elements leads the reader to the vehicle of the tenor of stanza 1. For example, in the fifth to eighth lines, from these lines we can know that the bad stigma described in the line When none defame us, discrimination of rights described in the line No restriction tame us, cases of racism described in No color shame us, and humiliation described in Nor sneer dismay have been experienced by Aboriginal Australians and they want freedom from those vile things. If these lines are linked to Aboriginal Australian history it will lead to the Day of Mourning that occurred in 1938 (see C. History of Aboriginal Australians), a day when Aboriginal Australians took to the streets to voice the discrimination and racism they experienced.

*b. Stanza 2: The Aboriginal Hope For The Future*

Stanza 2 interprets Kath's personal view of what Aboriginal Australians hope for in the future, where no more disadvantages happen to them, justice in Australia becomes truly fair, and the unity among citizens in Australia is solidified. At the beginning of the verse, Kath invites Aboriginal Australians to no longer feel miserable about the oppression that occurred in their dark times in the lines Now brood no more and On the years behind you. In the next line where The hope assigned you and Shall the past replace means the hope of Aboriginal Australians, and that hope is expected to erase their dark time memories. The line When a juster justice interprets the hope of justice that was initially unfair to Aboriginal Australians to be fully just or fair. Kath sees justice for Aboriginal Australians in Australia as very fragile, so she tries to emphasize the fragile justice by combining two elements of the poem into one line in order to have a doubly strong effect on the reader. The phrase juster justice was chosen by Kath to illustrate the fragile justice for Aboriginal Australians because it gives the effect of word repetition (pleonasm) and the effect of sound repetition (alliteration). With the implementation of fair justice in Australia, it is hoped that all people in Australia can have mutual respect and strengthen the unity between citizens, which is reflected in the line Grown wiser and stronger. The line has an element

of kinesthetic imagery that imagerize the sense of motion that humans are used to sensing, the line was chosen by Kath to stimulate feelings of mutual respect and strong unity through the movement that can be sensed in the words ‘grown’ and ‘stronger’. These are two of the totemic lines in stanza 2 that describe something (parte), the parte is Kath’s personal view of what Aboriginal Australians can expect in the future and it is this parte that interprets stanza 2. Moving on to the line Points the bone no longer refers to the Aboriginal practice of pointing a bone at someone as vengeance, curse, murder, or punishment carried out by the Kadaitja (Kitching, 1961, p. 213). Walker interprets the practice of Kadaitja as the stopping point of bloodshed among the Aborigines, both to each other Aborigines and to the non-indigenous Australian settlers because the Aborigines have become wiser and stronger as described in the previous array. While At a darker race refers to the Aborigines themselves. “The aboriginal skin is normally reddish mahogany or chocolate brown” (Gates, 1960, p. 43).

#### *c. Stanza 3: The Awaiting Of The Aboriginal Australians*

Stanza 3 interprets Aboriginal Australians’ awaiting a future that liberates them from the restraints and control on their rights, a specific example being the Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1948. So long we waited, Till hate be hated, And caste deposed shows the reader about Aboriginal Australians waiting for a better future where their rights become equal in the eyes of Australia. Aboriginal Australians traumatized by the colonization and discrimination they experienced since the arrival of the British in their past are represented in Bound and frustrated. The line is a representation of the dark past for Aboriginal Australians which makes them look forward to the future in the hope that it will be better. The future they look forward to is described in Now light shall guide us, No goal denied us, And all doors open, That long were closed. When linked to the history of Aboriginal Australians, the four lines refer to the Nationality and Citizenship Act passed in 1948. The Now light shall guide us line refers to the Nationality and Citizenship Act. Whereas No goal denied us, And all doors open, and That long were closed refer to the act’s policies that made the rights of Aboriginal Australians the same as other Australian citizens such as there will no longer be obstacles that prevent Aboriginal Australians from achieving their goals because all opportunities have been opened because of the National and Citizenship Act. The connectivity that occurs between the totem of synecdoche which consists of two visual imageries (Now light shall guide us and all doors open) leads the reader to the parte of the totem of synecdoche. The parte is that the Nationality and Citizenship Act is the future that Aboriginal Australians are looking forward to. The future has a very broad meaning, not only including Nationality and Citizenship. But one thing is clear, the future referred to in stanza 3 of “A Song of Hope” has a positive connotation.

#### *d. Stanza 4: The Struggle Of All Australians*

Stanza 4 interprets the struggle of both Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians for Aboriginal Australian rights. Lines that connote struggle are in See the plain promise, Dark freedom-lover, Night’s nearly over, And though long the climb. These four lines seem to give the figurative meaning that their struggle is not in vain even though they have to go through heavy obstacles. If it links to the history of Aboriginal Australians, some of their struggles such as William Cooper’s 1930 petition and the Day of Mourning were the protests done by Indigenous people along with non-Indigenous people to protest about the discrimination that happened to Indigenous people or commonly called Aboriginal Australians. Not stopping there, here are some of the struggles of Aboriginals in reclaiming and upholding the dignity of Aboriginal rights; such as creating the newspaper 'Abo Call' which only reported about Aboriginals in 1938 (Palombo, 2021), voting rights for some Aboriginal Australians in elections in 1949 (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1949), and the establishment of an organization campaigning for the prosperity of Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders called the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (Taffe, 2001). Meanwhile, the connectivity of parallelism elements and anaphora elements which are both located in the lines New right will greet us and New mateship meet us give connotations about Australian Aboriginal rights. Aside from gaining recognition and their rights, one of the greatest hopes of Aboriginal Australians is their goal of returning to the lifestyle sanctioned by their totemistic beliefs. That greatest hope is ‘Dreamtime’ or ‘Dream Time’ located in the line In our new Dream Time.



*e. Stanza 5: The Remembrance of Elders and Hope for Young Generation Aboriginal Australians*

Stanza 5 interprets the remembrance of the elders of Aboriginal Australians and the hopes for the younger generation of Aboriginal Australians. The remembrance of the Aboriginal Australians elders can be seen from the relationship between the metaphor element and the imagery element. The line 'To our fathers' fathers as the tenor of the metaphor reflects the elders of Aboriginal Australians. While 'The pain, the sorrow; as the vehicle of the metaphor reflects the bad experience that their elders had to suffer through the sensory motion experience (kinesthetic imagery) in the words 'The pain'. If we take a look from the aspect of Aboriginal Australian history, the pain that is being portrayed in the kinesthetic imagery in "A Song of Hope" is the pain experienced by the elders of Aboriginal Australians for all kinds of dehumanizing acts such as discrimination, massacre, and colonialism. Both elements express the misery experienced by Aboriginal Australian elders. Meanwhile, the interpretation of hope for the young generation of Aboriginal Australians can be seen from the relationship between the elements of metaphor and synecdoche.

Overall, This poem interprets hope for Aboriginal Australians, although they do not include explicitly in the poem, the elements of the poem include terms and events experienced by Aboriginal people and that is Kath Walker's style in making "A Song of Hope". The hope referred to in "A Song of Hope" is the hope for a better future for Aboriginal Australians. Hope about the future of Aboriginal Australians illustrates the no-longer bad stigma, restrictions (favoritism), racism, and legal discrimination that happens to them. The hope that there will be no more stigma against Aboriginal Australians can be indicated through the lines 'When none defame us and Nor sneer dismay'. The hope that there will be no more restrictions that apply to the Aboriginal Australian can be indicated through the line 'No restriction tame us'. The hope that no more racism will affect Aboriginal Australian can be indicated through the line 'Nor color shame us'. The hope that there will be no more legal discrimination that affects Aboriginal Australians can be indicated through the line 'When a juster justice, No goal denied us, And all doors open, and That long were closed'. The hope in "A Song of Hope" is also aimed at the younger generation of Aboriginal people, this can be seen from the lines 'To our children's children and The glad tomorrow'. The poem also tries to remind us of the struggles made by the elders of Aboriginal Australians, it is stated in the lines 'To our fathers' fathers and The pain tomorrow.

When "A Song of Hope" gets interpreted stanza by stanza, each stanza will have a different interpretation but has the same meaning or message, which is hope. If we look at the interpretation of stanza 1 then the stanza interprets the welcoming of a new era, but the meaning or message is about hope that there is no more bad stigma, restrictions and racism. If we look at the interpretation of stanza 2 then the stanza directly interprets the hope of Aboriginal Australians for the future. The hope is more general, that they hope that there will be no more law discrimination against them. Similar to stanza 2, stanza 3 has a meaning and message about their hope that there will be no more unlawful discrimination against them. However, the interpretation of the stanza paints a picture of how long and agonizing the Aboriginal Australians have waited for a better future. If we look at the interpretation of stanza 4 then the stanza interprets the struggle of Aboriginal Australians, but the meaning or message is about the hope to return to their totemic lifestyle (Dreamtime). In stanza 5, the poem interprets hope for the younger generation of Aboriginal Australians and remembrance of their predecessors.

## Conclusion

This type of poem is suitable to convey something related to oppression, struggle, and strong willpower in the midst of conflict between camps. The poem consists of five stanzas and thirty-six lines. The researcher identified the poem as having three figurative devices, three rhetorical devices, two sound devices, and one imagery device. Among these devices, rhetorical devices are very prominent in this poem. One of the elements of rhetorical device is synecdoche, synecdoche plays an important role in conveying the idea of this poem. The synecdoche element in "A Song of Hope" gives many figurative speech to the events that have been experienced by the Aboriginal people. As for the interpretation of "A Song of Hope", the researcher interprets this poem to be about hope. There are many types of hope



in the poem; hope for the future, hope for Aboriginal rights, and hope for Aboriginal youth. Besides the elements of the poem, the historical context of the Aboriginal people also influences the researcher's interpretation in this research. Actually, there is no absolute formula in interpreting poems. A person's interpretation ability depends on how rich their life experience is, how they see life, their sensitivity to art, and from how often they interpret poems.

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