

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to explain the theory that will be applied in this study as a tool to analyze the drama, *Mulatto*, written by Langston Hughes. The African-American criticism is applied to help the writer in analyzing the issue raised in the drama, as stated in the statement of the problems. Particularly, the writer applies the concept of double consciousness as the source of “double” identity, suggested by W.E.B Du Bois on his book, *The Soul of Black Folk* and The writer also applies the racial discrimination theory suggested by Vincent N. Parillo, through his book *Strangers to These Shore: Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States* to analyze the kinds of racism, which perform by the Whites. However, the writer of this study also uses suggestion from other sources which help in supporting the analysis, in order to compose the analysis comprehensively.

Furthermore, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is theoretical framework which consists of African-American criticism in general, that includes the concept of double consciousness, black vernacular and racism as the focused concept. The second part is review of related studies which consists of other studies that are related to the issue of African-American identity.

#### **II.1 Theoretical Framework: African-American Criticism**

The virtual of African-American history and culture from African education, which began to be addressed only in the late 1960s, reflects the essential elimination of African-American history and culture from official

versions of American history before that time. Only over the past few decades, American history books have begun to include information about Black Americans who have been repressed in order to maintain the cultural *hegemony* or dominance of White America. According to Louis Tyson, on his book *Critical Theory Today*, African-American literature has focused on the number of chronic historical and sociological themes, all of which reflect politics – the realities of political, social and economic power – of Black American experience (380).

African-American criticism foregrounds race (racial identity, African-American cultural traditions, psychology, politics and so forth) as the object of analysis because race in America informs African-Americans as individual and cultural psychology, and therefore, their literature in thoughtful ways. As a theoretical framework, then African-American criticism can be used to analyze any literary text that speaks about African-American issues, regardless of the race of its author, although the work of African-American writers is the primary focus (Tyson 380-398).

On the book, *Loose Canons*, Richard Wright once argued, polemically, that if White racism did not exist, then Black literature would not exist and he predicted the ending of latter with the ending of former, or in another words the White racism towards Black, gave birth to Black literature, as a form of literary works that noted the experience of oppressed Black people. Wright also add that he expect that when the White Racism come to its end it was just the beginning for the Blacks literature to take its first step in witness and told about all story of discrimination towards Blacks. It is difficult to deny that certain elements of

African-American culture are the products of cross-cultural encounters with White racism, since Black culture is radically underdetermined by the social dynamism of White racism. While it is important to criticize nativistic essentialism or disapprove with anti-cross-cultural discourse, in doing so we can lose sight or forgot that people is part of the larger social dynamic, the things that make people come together into groups in the first place. Developments in African-American studies have helped to reveal the element that not produced naturally of an “American” identity; which had been systematically excluded has now been revoiced as a mainstream concern (Gates 103).

The important feature in African-American criticism is to analyze the politics and psychology of subjugation in Whites racism towards Blacks, in other words, political and psychological strategies of Whites domination. Moreover, it seeks to analyze the politics and psychology of resistance or political and psychological strategies of personal and cultural survival (Tyson 400).

### **II.1.1. Racism**

According to Vincent N. Parrillo, on his book entitled *Strangers to These Shore: Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States*, racism is the form of any actual beliefs, awareness, action or attitude, conscious or unconscious, which classifies and subordinates an individual or group based on his or her race or skin color. Racism can be performed individually or institutionally. Parrillo also highlights that racism can be meant to connect a human being natural form with his or her attitudes and manners. At the time individuals think that one race is greater than others due to financial gain of particular accomplishment, it means

that there is some kind of racist thinking. As a result, the group considered as inferior will experience prejudice and discrimination, which the superior group justifies by implying of such awareness (18).

The story of *Mulatto* abounds with powerlessness and restraint to a freedom based on racial background and the resistance of African-American emerging as the result of discrimination practices towards characters that suffering from racial-based oppression. The African-American at that era can only be slaves and the Whites domination restricts them from receiving proper education, job and housing, (Rodriguez 40-42) which significantly leads to the one of several problems in *Mulatto*'s drama.

Parrillo clarifies five levels of discrimination practices by approaching each subsequent practice performed in the increasing tension. The first level is *verbal expression* (a statement of dislike, hate, insults or apply offensive word and expression), followed by *avoidance* (an action resulting from prejudice which keeps people away from each other; preventing them from building any communal contact with the disliked group), then *exclusion* (from certain education, career, housing or social organization; known in the United States as the practice of *de jure segregation* (set up throughout law) and *de facto segregation* (set up throughout social traditions, customs and institutions)). The fourth level of discrimination practices is *physical abuse* (an offensive, hurting action, or attacks towards the disliked group). The last level is *extermination* (an act resulting in death against disliked people, such holocaust, genocide, and massacres).

**a. Discrimination Practice Level One: Verbal Expression**

Discrimination by verbal expression is a kind of discrimination practice by creating an account of dislike or using offensive statement, insulting term and disrespecting expression (78). In *Mulatto*, discrimination practices in form of by verbal expression are significantly found. Some of them appear in the narrator's explanation about the characters' thought. They become clearer with the expression demonstrated in the offensive or insulting terms used by certain characters which indicate dislike response, both from the speaker and the hearer.

**b. Discrimination Practice Level Two: Avoidance**

People who practice unfairness towards other groups who are seemingly different with them will set an attitude to escape, to keep themselves away from any possible contact with the group despised. This is a step of evade in which a person with prejudice takes from creating any social interaction with the discriminated group (78). In separated book entitled *The Force of Prejudice on Racism and Its Doubles*, Pierre-Andre Taguieff explains:

When prejudice takes place and become severe, the individual will take distance away from members of the disliked group, and it will even be possible for them to create inconvenience. The performer of prejudice does not straightly impose harm upon the group he dislikes, since he acquires the burden of the action and withdrawal upon himself (57).

**c. Discrimination Practice Level Three: Exclusion**

Exclusion is discrimination practice which prohibits the disliked group(s) from obtaining certain life rights, such as education, job, and shelter. The disliked group will be exiled from any potential social organization. Their chance of receiving any proper needs for living will be closed or restricted. Parrillo adds that in the United States, the practices of exclusion can extent to the application through law institution which is called *de jure segregation* and *de facto segregation* which is applied through social customs and institutions (78).

**d. Discrimination Practice Level Four: Physical Abuse**

Taguieff mentions that the practice of physical abuse appears in the violence which is demonstrated against persons and possessions of the disliked group. He highlighted that as follows:

Under conditions of heightened emotion prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semi-violence. An unwanted Negro family may be forcibly ejected from a neighborhood, or so severely threatened that it leaves in fear (59).

The member of the disliked group receives violence and attacks. Additionally, they are also offended. Parrillo explains such discrimination practice was received by the African-Americans and the Chinese in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**e. Discrimination Practice Level Five: Extermination**

Extermination practices towards the disliked group member means as the demonstration or attitudes resulting in the loss of the live of the disliked group

member or the group themselves.

The strategies of the different group will be rather different; on the one hand, the dominant racial frame of reference, discrimination, legal exclusion from the society or its citizenship, 'law and order' enforcement, and the distribution of knowledge, and, on the other hand, protest, disruptive behavior, non-conformity, acceptance of racial frame of reference and a group identity exalting blackness and cultural distinctiveness, and attempt to set up one's own, or even an attempt 'to play' the existing system. At the end of his explanation, Figuera explicitly delivers the idea that there is an in-built tension between the dominant and subordinated groups because of their different structural positions. This tends to result in their having different and probably conflicting constructions of reality (16).

From the explanation above, it shows that racial and cultural differences have strong relation and they create discrimination upon different race, as well as differ race to be as 'dominant' and 'non-dominant'. The dominant will do every necessary thing to overrule the system and put the non-dominant race in different structural position; benefiting the dominant to be able to control the non-dominant race.

### **II.1.2. Stereotype**

One of the most common reactions to the strangers is broad categorization of them. Prejudice at the cognitive level is often the result of false perceptions of others, which are enhanced by stereotypes, either cultural or racial. According to Vincent N. Parrillo, on his book entitled *Strangers to These Shore: Race and*

*Ethnic Relations in the United States*, a stereotype is an oversimplified generalization by which we attribute certain traits or characteristics to any person in a group without regard to individual differences. Most cultural stereotypes emphasize variance from societal norms. Racial stereotypes suggest that there are peculiarities about certain traits or characteristics that are hereditary and will thus continue, regardless of what society does. Both forms of stereotypes are doubly abusive. Parillo adds that, not only do they deny an individual the right to be judged and treated on the basis of merit, but by being applied to the image of the entire group, they become a justification for discriminatory behavior (60). Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when the stereotype is unfavorable.

Stereotypes also evolve out of fear of persons from minority groups. For example, many people have the view of a person with mental illness as someone who is harmless. This conflicts with statistical data, which indicate that persons with mental illness tend to be no more prone to violence than the general population. Perhaps the few, but well-publicized, isolated cases of mentally ill persons going on rampages have planted the seed of this myth about these persons. This may be how some stereotypes developed in the first place; a series of isolated behaviors by a member of a group which was unfairly generalized to be viewed as a character of all members of that group.

### **II.1.3. Double Consciousness**

African-Americans must deal with multiple forms of racism; it's not a



surprise that, many African-Americans experience *double consciousness* or *double vision*, the awareness of belonging to two conflicting cultures; the Black culture, which grew from African roots and was transformed by its own unique history on American earth, and the European culture imposed by White America. For many Black Americans, this means having one cultural self at home and another cultural self in White – dominated public space, such as the work place and school (Tyson 383).

In place of the individual doubt expressed in “The Conservation of Races” the later piece announces a concept of what Du Bois calls ‘double consciousness’. There is no longer the assertion of defining the term ‘race’; in its place is a nuanced consideration of the impact of prejudice, in situations of social interaction, on Black consciousness. Double consciousness is at once a denial (an inability to see oneself except ‘through the eyes of others’) and a gift (an endowment of ‘second sight’ that seems to allow a deeper or redoubled comprehension of the complexities of ‘this American world’). In this reformulation, it is reminded that alienation – raised to a conscious level, culture, and directed – has revolutionary potential. In addition, a vision of the goal; a ‘merging’ of these ‘unreconciled strivings’ in a ‘better and truer self’ are provided, it allowed to participate as a ‘co-worker in the Kingdom of culture’ (Edward xiii-xiv).

According to Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, building on the bourgeois ideology of nationalism to account for the constitutive identity of the black nation living side by side with white American society, the black American has a

“double-consciousness:” a “twoness” of being an American, and a Negro; “two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (45).” Through this conception Du Bois attempted to constitute the identity of the black American nation, and refute 19th century racial understanding of black life, which suggested that blacks were racially inferior to whites and had no culture or consciousness aside from that acquired through their contact with “whites.”

Du Bois saw double consciousness as a useful theoretical model for understanding the psycho-social divisions existing in the American society. He has asserted that this conflict often occurred at both individual and group levels. Du Bois saw the prevalence of racism and figured out that sometimes peoples were themselves responsible of their mistreatment by others. He called that having a double consciousness. "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one-self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt (46).” This double consciousness lets the person see themselves through the revelation of the other world. Their behavior is influenced by what the other people think and is distorted through others’ negative image of their race. This leads to low self-esteem because of the racism. Du Bois saw the color line as a scale that divides the people and because of this distinction, people are prejudiced and stereotyped.

Double consciousness sometimes involves speaking two languages. For the Black culture lived at home sometimes includes the use of Black vernacular English (BVE, also called Ebonic or Black English) which fulfills all the

grammatical criteria of a genuine language, but is still dismissed by many White and some Black Americans as substandard or incorrect English rather than recognized as language in its own right (Tyson384).

#### **II.1.4. Black Vernacular**

On the book, *The Signifying Monkey*, Black English vernacular, according to William Labov's three years National Science Foundation study released in 1985, "is healthy, living form of language," one which "show the signs of people developing their own grammar" and one which apparent various linguistic sign of "separate development," Labov's existence research leads him to conclude that "There is evidence that, far from getting more similar to standard English, the Black English vernacular is going its own way." The Black vernacular, he continues, "is reflecting the larger social picture of separated speech communities. The Black's own grammar, which is very rich and complicated, is developing its own way. It looks as if new things are happening in Black grammar." (Edward xix)

The Black vernacular, in other words, is flourishing despite productions during the civil rights era that it would soon be a necessary casualty of school reconciliation and the larger socioeconomic integration into mainstream American institution. The de facto segregation in schoolchildren, create the unequal diverse treatment between Blacks and Whites students, and the segregation also affect to Blacks unemployment in 1988 which was much higher that it had been in 1968, therefore add the reason why the Blacks educational level decreasing, as result it is impossible to determine if Black vernacular English would have disappeared

under certain ideal social conditions. It has not however, disappeared; as Labov study shows, the Black vernacular has assumed the singular role as the Black person's ultimate sign of difference, a Blackness of the tongue. It is in the vernacular that, since slavery, the Black person has encoded private yet communal cultural ritual (Gates, *The Signifying Monkey* xix). Moreover, the storage area that contains the language that is the source and the reflection of Black difference is the Black vernacular tradition (Gates, *The Signifying Monkey* xxiii).

The Black English vernacular, as early as 1828, was a sign of Black difference, Blackness of the tongue. By 1895, dialect had come to connote Black inborn mental inferiority, the linguistic sign both of human oppression (as origin) and the continued failure of "improvability" or "progress" two turn of the century key words. Dialect signified both "Black difference" and that the figure of the Black in literature existed primarily as object, not subject; and even sympathetic characterization of the Black. Dialect, Black English vernacular and its idiom, as a literary device was not merely a figure of spoken speech; rather, for Hurston, it was a storehouse of figures. Hurston showed the tradition just how dialect could blend with Standard English to create a new voice, a voice exactly as Black as it is White (Gates, *The Signifying Monkey* 92-251).

## **II.2 Reviews on Related Studies**

Even though there is no thesis analyzing *Mulatto* yet, but a lot of criticism and writings have been made concerning the similar theme raised by the novel, particularly on how the African-Americans experience racism in the United States ever since the slavery era until the present day; will the discrimination practices

end with the freedom of the African-American or not, since after receiving new status as freeman, they still did not receive the equal rights as the white Americans do. Therefore, there are some other works focusing on racial issues chosen to support this study, which are:

1. *The Study of the Impacts of Racism on Roxana and Her Son As Seen in Mark Twain's Puddn' Head Wilson*, a thesis written by Posianwati Sutjitro. The thesis is concerned on the impact of racism on the lives of the protagonist in Mark Twain's *Puddn' Head Wilson*, Roxana, and her son. Posianwati gives her concern on the effect of racism which brings Roxana and her son receive different treat which lead into sorrow and destruction.
2. *A Study of Marguerite's Effort in Overcoming Racism in Maya Angelou's Autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"*, a thesis written by Selvia Berlinda. This thesis is concerned on the racial problem in African-American life in South America, focusing on the experience of *Maya Angelou*. Selvia analyzes the main character's effort in overcoming the racism problems. The racism theory used in her thesis explained by Banton (1970), Benedict (1959), Montagu (1972) Shibutani and Kwan (1965), that humans divided from their physical types, physical traits display intrinsically related to the culture, personality and intelligence, and from genetic inheritance some groups naturally superior to the other.
3. *A Study of Questioning The Identity: The Portrayal of The Black Americans in Jacqueline Woodson's Hush*, a thesis written by Bunga Ayu Rosvita from English Department of Airlangga University student. This thesis concerned on

the problem of Black Americans who are questioning their identity and explains generally the portrayal of Black Americans in the novel to picture their identity.

The differences between Posianwati Sutjitro, Selvia Berlinda and Bunga Ayu Rosvita's research with this research are the subject, the concept and the research problem. Posianwati chooses Head Wilson's novel *Mark Twain's Puddin*, Selvia chooses Maya Angelou's novel "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" and Bunga chooses Jacqueline Woodson's novel "*Hush's*" and analyze that by using Racism and Postcolonial theory.

Those study concern on the problem of Black Americans who are questioning their identity and the impact of racism itself to the main character in the novels, while the writer of this study chooses *Mulatto* by Langston Hughes's drama and analyze it by using African-American criticism. This study are focusing on the practice of racism who categorize into five levels by the Whites and how racism resistance applied by the Blacks especially for Cora (the Black wife) and the Mulatto children and also how this condition affects on the construction of their African-American identity. It includes the tradition of Black Vernacular and Double Consciousness as the symbol of African-American identity.