

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework consists of the main theory which is applied in the discussion. Since the poems have discussed the racial issue of African-Americans portrayed in the character of Paul and Jemima, the writer focuses the discussion to these two African-Americans portrayed in the two chosen poems. Therefore, to find the result of the study, the writer applies the theory of African-American Criticism that is related to double consciousness which adopts W.E.B. Du Bois' criticism about the African-Americans. In order to support the theory, the writer also includes the history of America that happened in 1930 and 1953 as additional source of analysis.

2.1.1. African-American Criticism

As a branch of postcolonial studies, African-American Criticism has the postcolonial features that broadly discusses about the issues of oppression and discrimination which are practiced based on racial differences in America. In this study, the topic of discussion is only focused on the problem of the two different races exist in America: the White and the Black or Negro, in which the Black have always become the major character that is represented in a less favorable way especially in racial discussion. In *Critical Theory Today*, Tyson's opinion agreed this statement that "A conscientious history of African-American literary

genius would have blasted the myth of African-American inferiority upon which so many racist policies and practices rested. A conscientious history of slave resistance would have blasted the racist stereotype of the contented, dim-witted slave who was grateful for the paternal guidance of the white master, without whom the slaves would have been either a lost child or a dangerous savage (138)".

According to the American intellectual leader, historian, civil right activist, author, Pan-Africanist, editor and sociologist W.E.B (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, in his *The Soul of Black Folk*, "Negro is a sort of seventh son, after the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian were born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world (Du Bois 2-3)".

Du Bois's opinion about the Negro above is one example of English influence which still exists in America as the country that was once colonized and experienced in the racial differentiation through the practice of slavery policy. The fact belief that the White supremacy toward the Black slave has been adapted since the European civilization during the slavery period in America becomes the primary factor in treating them unequally which is based on the racial physical differences. The practice of unequal treatment that based on the racial differentiation was experienced by Du Bois during his childhood in one of the states of America, New England.

It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, -- refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil (2).

Therefore, the racial discussion that is interpreted through literary texts, as mostly discussed African-American Criticism includes two purposes. First, a literary text that broadly discusses the problematic issues between two different races in America is believed as the reflection of the real situation. Second, the purpose of the racial issues which are presented through the literary texts were actually the White's political strategy in maintaining the White cultural hegemony in United States through the illustration of suffered Blacks, as Tyson has stated in his *Critical Theory Today*:

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

and culture from official version of American history before that time. Only over the past few decades have American history books begun to include information about black Americans that had been repressed in order to maintain the cultural hegemony, or dominance, of white America (Tyson 380-381).

2.1.1.1. Double Consciousness

One sub-feature in the racial discussion such African-American is double consciousness. Being people who live in the dual races, African-Americans are faced by the double self identity. In Tyson's opinion, the double self identity that African-Americans experienced, called 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 soil, and the European culture imposed by White American. Tyson stated "For many black Americans this means having one cultural self at home and another cultural self in White-dominated public space, such work and school (Tyson 383)". Du Bois also states the similar case about the double-consciousness that "Double-consciousness is a perception that one feels as appears in his double self identity,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois 3)".

According to Du Bois, it is peculiar sensation, where the Blacks experienced in the double consciousness, the sense of always looking at one's self

through the eyes of others, of measuring one soul from the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity in purpose to get the equality among the American society. In *The Soul of Black Folk*, Du Bois shared his opinion that the African-Americans' double-consciousness is one of their self-defenses in protecting themselves from the unequal treatment which based on the prejudice of racial differences in purpose to constitute their identity to be equal among the American society. The equality that African-Americans want to get is represented through Du Bois' statements.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Africanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (Du Bois 3).

Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek, -- the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty, -- all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding

each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying the ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack (Du Bois 8).

Although Scott and Shade stated in their *An African-American Reader: Essays on African-American History, Culture and Society* that there were Thomas Jefferson's writing in 1776 which stated that all men were created equals and Abraham Lincoln's racial emancipation proclamation on September 22, 1862 in order to release the Blacks from the slavery oppression, a number of racial emancipation attempts were still struggled by some familiar African-Americans human rights activist such as Malcolm X and Marthin Luther King Jr. The attempts of racial emancipation that struggled by the familiar African-Americans are aimed to get the equality among the American society due to the racial emancipations struggled for the African-Americans that do not give truly freedom to the African-Americans. In Du Bois' opinion, "The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude the grasp, -- like tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terror of Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends

and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom (5)". According to Du Bois, the racial emancipation just gives them a free land to the African-Americans and frees them from the slavery period but it does not mean for their lasting life in America.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event in the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites (4).

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon Negro people, -- a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people (4).

Paul and Jemima reflect Du Bois' experience as African-Americans' descent who ever been differentiated by his White friend. Therefore, in order to protect themselves from the differentiation, Paul and Jemima experience in double consciousness, one sub feature of post colonialism.

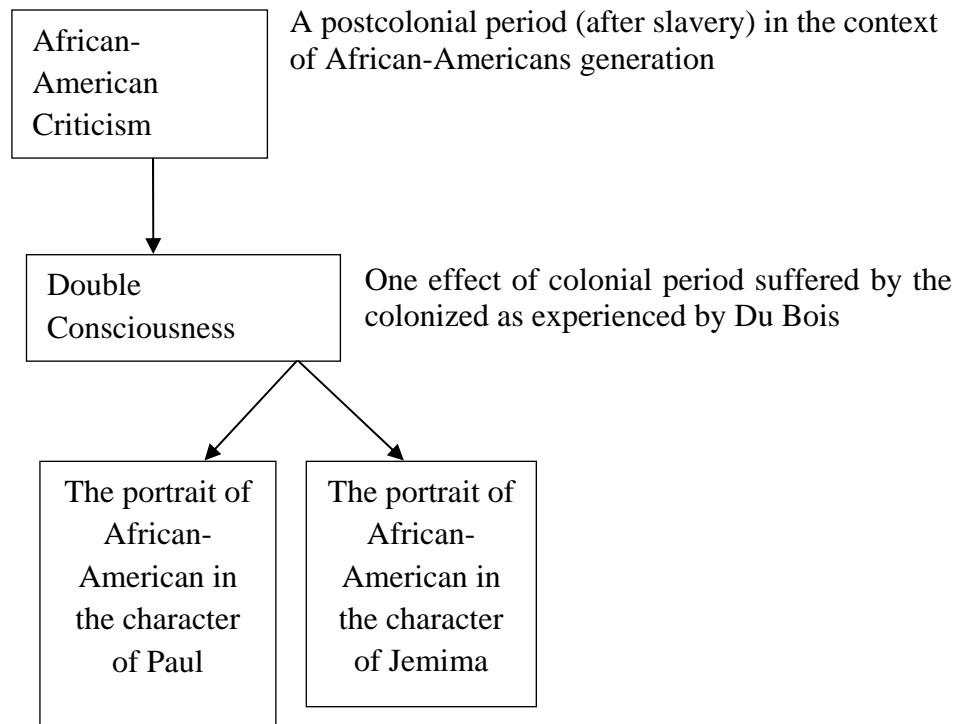


Figure 2.1 The theory sequence in analyzing African-Americans portrayed in the character of Paul and Jemima.

2.1.2. The History of America in 1930 and 1953

In the year of 1930 and 1953, American people were familiar with the name of Jim Crow. The name of Jim Crow is adapted from a well-known song, a song which illustrates the suffering Black at that time. This song is written by the struggling White actor, a solo player skit who play between the play scenes named Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice at the Park Theater of New York. Rice performs his show when the Black sing that song. He is the first White actor who acts as the Black in each show by darkening his skin using burnt cork. His routine performance of Jim Crow song-and-dance becomes his astounding success that

take him from Louisville to Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, New York, London and Dublin.

As the period occurred after the United States civil war (1861-1865) and United States Black Codes (1865-1866), the racial prejudice towards the Black existed in this era is represented through the racial segregation based on the custom law which ruled the Black's behavior. The racial prejudice still exists in the Jim Crow period that lasted during 1876-1965. In his *Escaping Jim Crow*, the history professor of California State University at Northridge, named Ronald L. F. Davis stated the kind of racial segregation custom law which had been practiced in Jim Crow era is by separating the races in public spaces such public schools, parks, accommodations, and transportation and preventing adult black males from exercising the right to vote. As the result of practicing this racial segregation rule, the image towards the White existence as the supremacy ones becomes stronger at that time in United States.

2.1.2.1. The History of America in 1930

The practice of racial segregation in this era is clearly interpreted in the early year of 1900s which begun by the migration explosion of White European. The spread of White European in United States is mostly found in Northeastern and Midwestern area. As the consequence of the White immigrant explosion at that time, the Black existence in United States was getting narrowed. In *Essays on African-American History, Culture and Society* which is edited by the American

sociologist, William R. Scott and the journalist William G. Shade, the Yale professor of economics and African-American studies, they stated that:

Between 1880 and 1910, nearly 17 million Europeans emigrated to the United States. These immigrants overwhelmingly entered the country through the ports of New York and New Jersey and spread throughout the Northeastern and Midwestern United States where they swelled the size of the labor force and precipitated a great competition for jobs, housing, and other resources. There was little demand for African-American labor outside the South, and migration of the blacks out of the South during this period was relatively low (Scott et al 132).

Due to this overwhelm Europeans migration in the ports of New York and New Jersey which effected to the competition of jobs, housing, and other resources at that time, there are few space and chance for the Blacks to be exist. In New York Times that was published in January 6th, 2010, the author of *Who We Are: A Portrait of America* namely Sam Roberts, shared his opinion in his *No Longer Majority Black, Harlem Is in Transition* about the fact of the Black, “In 1910, blacks constituted about 10 percent of central Harlem’s population.”

This explosion of European migration continued until the First World War in 1914 which left a positive impact to the industrial sector in United States. Because of the great development in industry, the Northern employers asked for labor addition. This condition caused hundreds Northern and Southern labor agents to get more labors from the Southern area in which they promising for free

land and the exemption from the inhumanities occupation with the brutality of landlord's authorities.

Approximately 525,000 African Americans migrated to the urban North between 1910 and 1920 in search of a promised land that had been depicted in an exaggerated way by urban labor agents. Prior to the War, African American migrants in the urban North had been primarily restricted to employment such janitors, porters, and servants, but during the War, blacks, newcomers and old urban dwellers, alike, were hired for jobs that had previously been restricted to whites. For the most part, however, African-American men were still at best employers' second choice to white labor, and the jobs they could obtain often were in areas "designated" for blacks because they required work in extreme heat, moisture, dust, or some other undesirable condition (Scott et al 133).

This Black migration to the North attained the greatest number in the year of 1930 where nearly two million Blacks left the South. The effect of the Black migration to the North increased the Blacks' population in Harlem at that time. In *No Longer Majority Black, Harlem Is in Transition* which was published in New York Times, January 6th, 2010; Sam Roberts stated "The beginning of great migration from the South and the influx from downtown Manhattan neighborhoods where blacks were feeling less welcome transformed them into a 70 percent majority." The major factor that influences this problem is the boll-weevil invasion that destroyed the Southern cotton crops, ruined their crops and

turned their occupation into trouble in 1930. In other side, the European war that occurred in the same time created thousand jobs in the North that were not supported by adequately the human resources. Thereby, the North asked for the addition extra employers from the South. This statement is supported with a sociology professor of Delaware University, Carole C. Marks' notation that states:

At the same time, war in Europe created hundreds of thousand jobs in the North and a shortage of unskilled labor. Recruitment from the South began cautiously but gained momentum as fears of tapping into reserves of unqualified black labor were replaced with experiences of finding numerous able and willing substitutes (136).

2.1.2.2. The History of America in 1953

At this time, there was a popular vaudeville song that was performed by a team of minstrel performers which illustrates *Jemima* as the figure of "mammy". "Mammy" refers to an African-American woman who experienced a racial segregation in her occupation which works for the White. The *Jim Crow Museum* of Ferris State University states, "The 'mammy' exists in this era has a strong sense belonging towards the White. This strong belonging feeling toward the White is caused by the White's exploitation towards the Black through living and nurturing the White." One sense belonging which is experienced by 'mammy' is her defenses towards the White rather than the Black. In this museum's online article, David Pilgrim, the sociology professor of Ferris State University who also

the curator of Jim Crow museum described the characteristics of ‘mammy’ who exist in this era.

Mammy was “black, fat with huge breasts, and head covered with kerchief to hide her nappy hair, strong, kind, loyal, sexless, religious and superstitious.” She spoke bastardized English; she did not care about her appearance. She was politically safe. She was culturally safe. She was, of course, a figment of a white imagination, a nostalgic yearning for a reality that never had been (<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mammies/>).

In *The Mammy Caricature*, a historian named Catherine Clinton also states that, “The “mammy” is created by white Southerners to redeem the relationship between black women and white men within slave society in response to the antislavery attack from the North during the ante-bellum period.”

By the popularity that brought by the song, the image of *Jemima* as a “mammy” become the brand for new pancake mix that developed by the Missouri newspaper editor, Charles Rutt and a mill owner Charles G. Underwood. This pancake recipe is bought and promoted by RT Davis Company. As the fascination to market their product, this company used a slave-born Black Kentucky named Nancy Green who represented the figure of *Jemima* until her death in 1923. Being a model that portray *Jemima* in RT Davis Company’s product, Nancy Green become a popular national celebrity. This successful idea is followed by the others company in marketing their products. Since 1910, *Jemima* had become the icon

for many products such mail-in premium, dolls, breakfast club pins, dishware, and recipe booklets. Here are the examples of products which use the icon of *Jemima*.



Courtesy of: <http://www.epier.com/product.asp?1967598>



Courtesy of: http://www.zazzle.com/nancy_green_aunt_jemima_mug-168491662911967545

Figure 2.2 The Black *Jemima* represented in products

After succeeding in using Aunt Jemima as their icon to sell pancakes as their product, the RT Davis Company renamed his company The Aunt Jemima Mills Company in 1914 that was sold to Quaker Oats Company in 1926. The model that portrayed *Jemima* as the icon of the company's products at that time was totally changed. In the year of 1960s, the company was the market leader in frozen food with the new *Jemima* as the American maid icon who was light-skinned or without the handkerchief on her head. Here are the examples of the products with the icon of "new *Jemima*":



Courtesy of: <http://handmadebymother.blogspot.com/2010/02/februarys-not-over-yet.html>



Courtesy of: <http://authenticramblings.com/gym-tales/letting-it-all-hang-out-at-the-gym-7/>

Figure 2.3 The revolution of *Jemima*

2.2. Review of Related Studies

Due the limited discussions concern to the poems, therefore the related studies of this thesis are divided into two discussions. The first is the studies which related to the poems. The second is the studies which are related to the context of African-Americans' portrayal.

Related to the context of the poems discussions, there is only Marc Hempel's seminar paper entitled *Analysis of four poems by Elizabeth Alexander: Race, Emancipation, African Leave-Taking Disorder, Marcus Garvey on Elocution* which discuss about the same poem, "Race". In this seminar paper, Hempel discussed the poet writings about how important and influential classifications are, especially with regard to ethnicity. In the case of "Great-Uncle Paul" and his

siblings, the classifications into a certain racial category are not made according to the actual race itself but by superficial characteristics such as a person's spouse, job or hometown (Hempel 8).

The second related studies are about the discussion of African-Americans' portrayal. There are two studies about African-Americans which had been done by the students of English Department of Airlangga University. There are *The Construction of Troy's African-American Identity in August Wilson's Fences: Double Consciousness, Black Vernacular, and Blues* which had been done by Sasanti Dewi and *Questioning the Identity: the Portrayal of the Black Americans in Jacqueline Woodson's Hush* that had been done by Bunga Ayu Rosvita. In *The Construction of Troy's African-American Identity in August Wilson's Fences: Double Consciousness, Black Vernacular, and Blues*, Sasanti Dewi discusses one main African-American Character in August Wilson's *Fences* named Troy who has a double identity as an African-American as the effect of racial discrimination experiences in America. The discussions of the thesis include the tradition of Black vernacular and blues as the symbol of the double identity of African-American. Sasanti applied African-American criticism in her thesis discussion which is related to Du Bois' double consciousness. For the second one, Bunga Ayu Rosvita discusses the portrayal of Black Americans life in reality in questioning their identity in Jacqueline Woodson's novel *Hush*. In *Hush*, Woodson represents the life of Black Americans in general. The Black Americans' life portrayed in the novel is questioning their identity due to the double consciousness, as Black and Americans in the same time, occur in their

life. The thesis applies Postcolonial theory that focused on the concept of postcolonial identity as suggested by Hommi K. Bhaba.

The differences between Rosvita's and Dewi's studies with this study are the chosen literary work and the discussion. In this thesis, the chosen literary works are poems that are written by an African-American scholar poet named Elizabeth Alexander. The discussion of this thesis is mainly about the portrayal of Paul in "Race" and Jemima in "Ladders" as a representation of African-American character in 1900s who lived among the White.