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## **THE REPRESENTATIONS OF HOMOPHOBIA IN GAY-THEMED AMERICAN MOVIES OF 1990S-2010S**

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### **Abstract**

The United States is well-known for its acceptance of homosexuality. Nevertheless, homophobia remains a threat that endangers gay communities in the United States. Homophobia is an intriguing phenomenon for American filmmakers. Through gay-themed movies, those filmmakers intend to raise the awareness that homophobia is elusive to eradicate.

This study scrutinizes the representations of homophobia in the United States as seen in gay-themed American movies. The study carries out Postnationalist America Studies as the paradigm of the study which encompasses the discussions of numerous phenomena in the United States. Also, the study applies theory of representation by Stuart Hall probing the representations of homophobia in gay-themed American movies of 1990s-2010s.

The study uses nine gay-themed American movies of 1990s-2010s as the primary data of the research. The findings of the study show three representations of homophobia in the United States, which encompass religions, gender roles, heteronormativity, masculinity, and HIV/AIDS as the highlighted factors that incite homophobia. By highlighting those major factors of homophobia, the filmmakers come up with two major intentions. The first intention is the movies as means to criticize the society who conforms to strict religious beliefs, traditional gender roles, masculinity, and heteronormativity. The conformity has led the society to commit homophobia, hence making homophobia elusive to eradicate. The second intention is the movies are aimed at encouraging gay communities to keep fighting for their issues and equality.

**Keywords:** Homosexuality, Homophobia, the United States, Gay-themed American Movies

### **Introduction**

The United States has recognized the existence of gay communities following its first emergence during 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bronski, 2011: 65-66). However, the first emergence of gay communities was negatively received by the authorities. The negative attitudes towards gay communities at that time were mostly triggered by its negative association with crimes and abnormalities (Bullough,

2005). It was not until the 1960s that finally gay communities were eventually recognized. In the late 1960s, gay organizations and movements which were once secretive finally became public (Jagose, 1996: 25-26). The organizations gradually became popular all over the country. Their contributions documented in media attracted public to gain respect towards the existence of gay communities in the United States.

As gay communities have affirmed their existence through positive contributions, the United States eventually opens a total access to gay communities to express their identity and to fully contribute to the society. A great number of LGBT figures have been recognized through their remarkable works which successfully empower the society. The world's most famous drag queen, Ru Paul, is a prominent LGBT figure, who empowers young gay artists to enhance their creativity and passion for fashion, make-up, and entertainment. Another considerable LGBT figure is Harvey Milk, who became a prominent gay politician in the 1970s.

The presence of prominent gay figures is not the sole proof that the United States has acknowledged the existence of LGBT communities. Thirty six states have even chartered the same-sex marriage law, which indicates another positive recognition from the country towards LGBT community. Most importantly, Barack Obama has confirmed his support for the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reilly, Mollie. "Obama Praises Supreme Court's Decision To Legalize Gay Marriage Nationwide." *Huff Post Politics*. Huffington Post, 26 June 2015. Web. 16 Dec. 2015.

Despite the United States' support for gay people, the country is still struggling with homophobia. There has been a great number of murder, violence, and suicide cases which were motivated by homophobia. Among those cases, hate-crime places as a type of homophobia which is often addressed to gay people. In 2013, FBI released a statistic data mentioning that 20.8% of hate crime were incited by homophobia<sup>2</sup>. In addition to hate crime and suicide, homophobia causes depression and constant fear among gay people which unfortunately eliminates chances for gay people to live normally and embrace a better future. Homophobia against gay athletes is an example on how homophobia risks the future of theirs. A recent study on homophobia in sports entitled "Out on The Fields" launches a statistics report mentioning that the US ranks worst in homophobia against gay athletes<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, this study demonstrates that over 80% of homosexual athletes choose to keep their sexual orientation secret.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. "FBI-Victims".fbi.gov. Retrieved on December 16, 2015 from

<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/december/la-test-hate-crime-statistics-report-released>

<sup>3</sup> Gregory, Sean. "U.S. Ranks Worst in Sports Homophobia Study." *TIME*. TIME, 9 May 2015. Web. 19 June 2015

The increasing number of homophobic acts is intriguing. People might question why homophobia still takes place in the country which is well-known for its immense supports to gay people. Ironically, the number is increasing while the country continuously endorses equality for gay people. Through various means such as art and social media, the country has encouraged people to help preserve the equality for gay people. Nevertheless, the attempts still face challenges.

Regarding art as one means to help preserve equality for gay people, literary works such as plays and movies, consistently promote equality for gay people. For movies, there has been a great deal of gay-themed American movies portraying the lives of gay people, particularly in the United States. Critically acclaimed American movies, namely, *Milk* (2008) and *The Kids Are Alright* (2011) are examples of movies demonstrating positive contributions made by American gay people. On the other hand, *Saving Face* (2004), *Philadelphia* (1993), and *The Normal Heart* (2014) are few names of American movies disclosing the ugly truth of homophobia in the United States.

Intrigued by the representations of homophobia in gay-themed American movies, this study aims to answer the

question on why movies portraying homophobia are still released in the modern United States despite the country's tremendous support towards homosexuality. In order to answer the question, the study attempts to further probe how homophobia in the United States is represented in such movies. Also, the study intends to reveal the triggers behind homophobic acts against homosexuals in the United States. Since there is a great number of gay-themed American movies which have been released in the last 25 years, this study uses some of the movies as the object of this research. These movies are famous for depicting homosexuality and homophobia in the modern United States, which is useful for figuring out the representations of homophobia in the country as well as disclosing the triggers behind homophobic acts.

This study carries out the concept subalternity as it confirms the basic idea of Post-Nationalist American Studies that rejects American Exceptionalism. It also reflects on problems of the minority and oppressed groups since the groups as parts of the United States. Hence, subalternity acknowledges the necessity of encompassing racial/ethnic minorities, gender hierarchy, and sexuality hierarchy

as pivotal subjects to be studied in the context of Post-Nationalist American Studies (Rowe, 2000: 25).

Since subalternity encompasses the discussions on sexuality and sexual hierarchy on grounds of American Studies, the use of theories surrounding homosexuality and homophobia is pivotal to scrutinize the problems of gay communities in the United States. Specifically, the study carries out the theory of homophobia that is seminal to foreground the representations of homophobia in the United States as seen in gay-themed movies of 1990s to 2010s. The following explanation offers concise explanations on homophobia in general and how it is manifested in the society.

The term homophobia was first introduced by George Weisenberg in 1972. The word refers to the situation where heterosexuals show the fear of being close to homosexuals (Shidlo, 1994: 177). However, the term is problematic as heterosexuals who are homophobic frequently display “negative attitudes” towards homosexuals (Herek qtd. in Shidlo, 1994: 177). For years, homophobia has been an institutionalized practice against homosexuals. In other words, negative attitudes shown towards homosexuals are ironically acceptable in

the society and those attitudes shape the way homosexuals perceive their homosexuality (Forstein, Gonsiorek, and Loulan qtd. in Shidlo, 1994: 178).

In regards to causes of homophobia, religions, heterosexism<sup>4</sup>, inaccurate representations of homosexuals in media, and HIV/AIDS are immensely referred as the causes of homophobia (Roggemans, 2015: 254; Girshick 337 qtd. in Jagose, 1996: 94). In accordance with religions, Roggemans et al (2015: 270) revealed that religious people generally show negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Religious people believe that homosexuality is against religions’ teachings; hence it is permitted to display negative attitudes towards homosexuals (Duck and Hunsberger qtd. in Roggemans, 2015: 258). Heterosexism as one main trigger of homophobia asserts that homosexuality violates traditional gender roles and heterosexuality as the normative sexual orientation. Culturally, the traditional gender roles have adhered to the concept of masculinity and femininity.

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<sup>4</sup> Tin (2003, p. 436) defines heterosexism as “a vision of social world that articulates the promotion of heterosexuality and the exclusion of homosexuality.” In other words, the term is used to refer to discriminatory acts against homosexuality. Tin also adds that heterosexuality is strongly associated with theological explanation that emphasizes the ideas of men are created for women and vice versa.

Homosexual men are seen as the “traitors” of masculinity. Their homosexuality has been accused of emasculating the image of men as masculine figures (Tin, 2003: 440). On the other hand, lesbian women are victimized by homophobia due to the fact that they courageously fight for their equality. In other words, their courage is seen as the violation of their femininity (Girshick, 2005: 336).

The representations of homosexuals in media have also generated homophobia. For years TV shows and movies have inaccurately portrayed homosexual characters as ridiculous, weird, violent, and even dangerous (Davis, 2005: 338). Such representations have inevitably antagonized homosexual people. They have been persecuted and abused following the representations. In addition to the inaccurate representations, the constant misconception about HIV/AIDS and homosexuality triggers homophobia. Since the first outbreak of HIV/AIDS occurred in gay communities, people have falsely and persistently accused homosexuals as the sole carrier of HIV/AIDS (Meyer qtd in Jagose, 1996: 94). Hence, the false accusation contributes to the “growing homophobia” (Creed qtd. in Jagose, 1996: 94).

There have been many negative attitudes which can be identified as homophobia. Tin (2003: 389) mentions that verbal abuse is a form of homophobia mostly committed against the members of the gay community. Words such as *faggot* and *poof* are mostly slurred to humiliate homosexuals. The worst form of homophobia is hate-crime, which mostly involves physical abuse and murder. Tin (2003: 440), regards physical and sexual violence against the members of the gay community as the worst form of homophobia and is mostly perpetrated by men who are “conditioned by the social climate of masculinism”. In other words, men who are homosexual are considered as unmanly. Thus, they have to be exterminated since they have spoiled the image of men as masculine.

### **Methodology**

This study examines the representations of homophobia in the United States as seen in gay-themed American movies of 1990s-2010s. Therefore, the use of theory of representation is an essential approach of this research. According to Hall, representation is inseparable from culture (1). Hall clarifies his statement by firstly defining culture as “shared meanings”.



Through culture, people share values and meanings. This process is made possible only by language for it becomes the medium of producing meanings and values. Language is able to carry meanings as it functions as a “representational system”.

One important point highlighted by Hall in the theory of representation is the use of connotation and denotation, as the seminal process in the study of representation. Connotation and denotation are actually terms which have been introduced by the prominent semiotician, Roland Barthes. Referring to Barthes, Hall agrees that representation is not solely about finding a description of something in another thing (denotation). Representation, in fact, also takes a “broader cultural level”, which Barthes then refers as connotation (qtd. in Hall, 39). In other words, representation requires deep understandings on social or cultural backgrounds that help us understand meanings and values of particular things or phenomena.

In this study, gay-themed American movies play an important role as it carries meanings, thoughts, and expressions which are associated with homophobia in the United States. All elements of the movies, namely settings, actors, storylines,

dialogues, and even titles, can describe homophobia in the United States. In regard to connotation and denotation, all movies’ elements serve as the denotation. On the other hand, social or cultural explanations on homophobia and the United States can be referred as connotation.

Regarding the method of the study, the study carries out document analysis as the method of the study. There are two types of data used in the study: The primary data and the secondary data. The primary data is gay-themed American movies produced in 1990s to 2010s. More than 152 gay-themed American movies have been produced from 1990s-2010s.<sup>5</sup> However, the study only comprises nine gay-themed American movies produced in the 1990s to 2010s. The movies are *Philadelphia* (1993), *The Incredibly True Adventure of True Girls in Love* (1995), *But I’m A Cheerleader* (1999), *Latter Days* (2003), *Saving Face* (2004), *Pedro* (2008), *The Wise Kids* (2011), *Dirty Girl* (2010), and *The Normal Heart* (2014). There are two reasons

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<sup>5</sup> The number is taken from researches called “Studio Responsibility Index” by GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) in the 2010s (2012-2016) and a study by Michael Bronski entitled, “The Queer 1990s: The Challenge and Failure of Radical Change”. Bronski’s study is documented in “American Film History: Selected Readings, 1960s to the Present” edited by Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon (330).

underlying the selection of those movies as the primary data. The first reason is those movies offer vivid portrayals of homophobia in the United States. Specifically, the movies' portrayals are hugely concerned with three major issues related to homophobia, namely religions, gender, and HIV/AIDS. The second reason is the fact that the movies come up with good intentions for both gay and heterosexual people. For gay people, the movies aim to encourage gay communities to strive for equality. For heterosexual people, the movies raise the awareness of homophobia as an institutionalized practice that is challenging to eradicate.

## **Discussion**

### **Connecting Religions and Homophobia in the United States**

Religions, namely Christianity, Islam, and Orthodox Judaism, generally condemn homosexuality for being inimical and against the nature. Additionally, religions negatively value homosexuality for its “non-procreative” purpose. Religions believe that sexual encounter should be conducted by a man and a woman for procreation. Therefore, due to the absence of procreation in sexual activities committed by homosexuals, homosexuality is castigated. Sands (4)

argues that the sexual encounter between homosexuals is “negatively interpreted” by religions as it solely prioritizes pleasure, which is apparently considered dangerous for procreation.

The condemnation of homosexuality by religions has apparently intrigued American filmmakers to create movies that deal with the issues of homosexuality and faith. Approximately, in the last 25 years, there have been 30 gay-themed American movies that are concerned with the issues of homosexuality and religions (GLAAD, 2013-2016). Those movies also highlight that religious teachings become one main factor inciting homophobia in the United States.

Regarding the representations of homophobia and religions in the United States seen in gay-themed American movies, the study uses three movies as the primary data in the discussion about religions and homophobia. The movies are *But I'm A Cheerleader* (1999), *Latter Days* (2003), and *The Wise Kids* (2011). The movies generally emphasize that homophobia is triggered by religious teachings. In addition, the movies underline that Christianity is a religion frequently associated with homophobia in the United States.

The first movie, *But I'm A Cheerleader* (1999) is a story of Megan Bloomfield, a teenage girl who is sent by her devout Christian parents to True Directions, a rehabilitation camp that aims to cure homosexuality. Megan is at first reluctant to go to True Directions since she never identifies herself as a lesbian, although it is obvious that she is sexually attracted by her female friends. However, as the therapy proceeds, she begins to embrace her homosexuality and falls in love with another girl at the camp.

The second movie discussed in the section is *Latter Days* (2003). The movie renders the romantic relationship between Aaron, a closeted gay Mormon missionary, and Christian, Davis' openly-gay neighbor. Unfortunately, their relationship faces challenges as Davis' fellow Mormon missionaries discover the relationship. Hence, Davis is excommunicated from his church and is assigned to undergo a conversion therapy to cure his homosexuality. The movie basically highlights one issue in which homophobia always confronts someone's attempt to reconcile his faith and homosexuality.

The last movie discussed is *The Wise Kids* (2011). The movie follows three Christian teenagers, Brea, Tim, and Laura who are also best friends to each other.

Brea is a daughter of a minister at a Baptist Church, in South Carolina who apparently begins questioning her faith. Tim is a gay teenager who dreams of becoming a director. Laura is a devout Christian, urges Tim to choose between his faith and homosexuality as she believes that he cannot choose both things. *The Wise Kids* explores someone's attempt to preserve his faith while reconciling it with his sexual orientation. Therefore, throughout the movie, we will be exposed to Tim's story whose coming out sparks off mixed reactions from his surroundings, including the hostile reactions from his best friend, Laura, and his brother.

Those three movies share the same points in which the all gay characters receive resentment from their families and friends. In the first movie, Megan's parents- Peter and Nancy- assert that homosexuality is unnatural and sinful. The assertion is reflected in Peter's prayer which demands God guide Megan to living a "natural, healthy, and sacred" life, which implies his hope for Megan to dodge from homosexuality. Those words are the antithesis of how homosexuality is perceived in Christianity. In other words, Christians often use unnatural, sinful, and unhealthy as the terms that affirm their condemnation of homosexuality

(Roggemans, 2015: 258). Moore (2003: 12) explains that Christians often address those strong terms to homosexuals as they believe that homosexuality is against the will of God which is written in the Bible and dangerous for human existence. In the context of the movie, Peter's prayer can be inferred as Peter's resentment over his daughter's homosexuality.

Peter's hope may resemble his concern over his daughter's homosexuality. However, his hope can also be associated the Christian view on sexuality that mainly emphasizes heterosexuality. As mentioned previously, Christianity lives by the concept that humans play the key role in sustaining the procreation purpose as God has commanded in the Scripture. Hence, heterosexual marriages are seen as the pivotal way that can help humans accomplish the procreation purpose. In addition, Christianity also takes heterosexual marriages for happiness. As Moore (2003: 12) writes, Christians believe the Bible has guaranteed happiness through heterosexual marriages.

Connecting Peter's prayer and the Christian view on marriage, it can be inferred that Peter is concerned that Megan will not be able to fulfill her role as a Christian who is able to accomplish the

procreation purpose. Besides, Peter fears that Megan will be trapped into an unforgivable sin if she preserves her homosexuality. Thus, through his prayer, he attempts to warn Megan about her homosexuality in hope that she suddenly converts herself to be a heterosexual woman.

In Latter Days, Aaron's homosexuality is also considered unforgivable and sinful to his devoutly Mormon parents. Aaron's mother, Susan throws a hostile reaction after Aaron declares that homosexuality is a part of his identity. She claims that the homosexuality is an evil act that is unforgivable. Susan's firm statements which correlate Aaron's homosexuality and God vividly reflect the opposition that the Mormon Church has towards homosexuality. The Mormon Church is undeniably notorious for its opposition towards homosexuality. In the United States, the Church even remains as one of Christian denominations defying homosexuality and associated with homophobia.

The opposition towards homosexuality comes from the fact that Mormons conform to the Law of Chastity. As cited in the official website of the Mormon Church, The Law of Chastity is a law in the Mormon Church that

accentuates the sacredness of “sexual purity” (lds.org). The core principles of the law are the prohibitions of sexual activity before marriage and adultery. In addition, the law recognizes homosexuality as a serious sin. According to the Church, homosexuality is considered a sin for it prevents humans from receiving blessings and happiness that can be achieved through family. In other words, the law highlights that heterosexual marriage brings humans happiness and abundant blessings.

Susan’s response to Aaron’s statement about his homosexuality as a part of his identity, in fact, reflects Mormons’ viewpoint that homosexuality is not a natural thing. Homosexuality is not something innately passed down on humans. In fact, based on the Bible (Romans 1: 24-32), they believe that homosexuality is against nature. Once a Mormon commits to homosexuality, he must show repentance to redeem his sin. Therefore, adhering to her Mormon belief, Susan furiously demands Aaron repent for his homosexuality.

In *The Wise Kids*, Tim-the main gay character of the movie, receives an adverse reaction from Laura (his best friend), which is provoked by his homosexuality. She preserves the belief that

homosexuality is wrong according to the Bible. She keeps reiterating that the Bible contains God’s words which are “important and holy”. Therefore, despite how “confusing, weird, and complicated” the Bible is, Christians must live by it (Cone, *The Wise Kids*, 01:08:13-01:08:26).

Laura’s statement that it is oxymoronic for someone to be Christian and gay at the same time actually represents the strong denunciation of homosexuality made by fundamentalist Christians. If looked thoroughly, Laura also represents those fundamentalists who take Biblical explanations literally to justify their opposition against homosexuality. In other words, fundamentalist Christians mostly misinterpret the Biblical verses on same-sex relationships, hence religious homophobia frequently incited in this group (Sossa, 158). Ackley (2014), in his article for HuffingtonPost.com, mention that many fundamentalist Christians in the United States have carried out a literal application of the Biblical text, which lays the foundation of their discrimination against homosexuality.

Another major problem that is closely related to Biblical interpretation and homophobia is the strong bias and subjectivity towards sexuality,

demonstrated by many interpreters and translators of the Bible. The bias undoubtedly reveals substantial “discrepancies” between the Biblical texts, interpretations, and real contexts. The discrepancies in the Biblical interpretations unfortunately may impose homophobic views among Christians, since the interpretations are underpinned from the translators’ negative viewpoints on homosexuality (Sossa and Kane pp. 156-157).

For instance, fundamentalist Christians often use the Biblical verse from Romans 1:26-27 as the common reference to condemn homosexuality (Sossa, 157). Romans are the compilation of letters written by Paul, one of Christ’s disciples to his followers in Rome. According to Sossa and Kane, fundamentalist Christians have interpreted that the passage condemns homosexuality as sinful and unnatural (159). The phrase “vile affections” is not directly referred to homosexuality. Rather, it serves as Paul’s assertion that Paganism is against nature and God’s will; thus Christians must avoid it (160). However, fundamentalist Christians define “vile affections” by generalizing the “affections” as homosexual activities, since

homosexuality has been denounced degrading and unnatural.

All movies highlight two similar points. The first point is the movies elucidate that American people who lead a very religious life are more likely to show opposition towards homosexuality. All gay characters must confront oppositions from their family members and friends who are known for their devotion to religious practices.

The depictions, thus, are consistent with the phenomenon where devoutly religious people in the United States support the condemnation on homosexuality. Shames, Kuo, and Levine (2011: 38) noted down that religious people in the United States who adhere to “religious traditions” (frequent attendances to the Church, Bible-reading and praying sessions) are more likely to defy homosexuality. They included the survey conducted by American National Election Studies (ANES) in 2008, which showed that people who frequently attend the Church and pray daily “prefer to ban homosexuality”, while people who less frequently attend the Church show more tolerance towards homosexuality.

Referring to the phenomenon where religions become the justifications for homophobia in the United States, it is

riveting to see how in a secular country like the United States, religions still manage to wield its influence upon personal matters, namely marriage and sexuality. Merriman (2007: 46) argues that the states have a full control over personal matters, namely divorce, abortion, and even same-sex marriage. Hence, the state government is the authority given the full access to enforcing laws that regulate those personal matters. As Merriman quotes the statement by The Supreme Court, “laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices” (2007: 46). Consequently, religions should opt out their involvement in any matters that should be tackled by the government.

Nonetheless, religious groups keep urging the government to prohibit several issues and actions which are considered morally unacceptable to their religions. Same-sex marriage is the example in which religious groups have been pushing the government to take the opposing stance, since homosexuality is considered to be a “violation of their religion” (Merriman, 2007: 47). Until today, religious groups opposing same-sex marriage and homosexuality have been aggressively condemning the actions. In

2014, The Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission held a conference encouraging faith leaders to oppose same-sex marriage (Bailey, 2014).

Despite the government’s fervent attitude on the separation between religions and the state, the government still faces challenges in overcoming religious homophobia, which is also permeated in the official level. According to Merriman, the challenges exist since religions used to take control over personal issues, namely marriage and abortion for years. Besides, the government apparently establishes organizations that accommodate religious groups to address several issues becoming their concerns, namely homosexuality and abortion, to the government (Merriman, 2007: 28). In other words, through the organizations, those religious groups urge the government to resolve the issues. In consequence, it is problematic for the government to maintain the separation between religions and the state. Merriman further elucidates the matter in his discussion about challenges faced by the legalization of same-sex marriage,

Marriage was originally a church matter, and though it is now controlled by the state, religion is still intertwined with marriage in the eyes of many, even if the exact

reasons for the connection cannot be articulated (2007: 47).

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that the three movies address the phenomenon where religious homophobia appears as one of the major issues confronted by the United States. Biblical interpretations and morality embody the justifications for the religious homophobia in the United States. Such justifications, ironically, have brought repercussions for religious homosexuals to reconcile their faiths and homosexuality.

### **Homophobia and the Conformity to Traditional Gender Roles, Heteronormativity, and Masculinity**

In this section, the study discusses three movies: *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, *Saving Face*, and *Dirty Girls*. The first two movies are hugely concerned on homophobia in relation to gender roles and heteronormativity. On the other hand, the last movie deals with homophobia and masculinity.

*The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* and *Saving Face* deal with three lesbian characters Randy, Evie, and Wilhelmina who receive hostile reactions from their families and friends. Their families and friends conform to

traditional gender roles and heteronormativity that denounce homosexuality as unacceptable. For instance, in the first movie, Randy and Evie, are shunned by their friends for establishing a lesbian romance. They are targeted to verbal slurs and resentment. Their experience connotes the conformity to heteronormativity and traditional gender roles.

Homophobia that is triggered by the conformity to gender roles can be seen through Randy's experience. Randy is slurred by her friends as dyke, the word used to refer to masculine lesbian women. The word is offensive because it is used by her heterosexual friends to identify her personality. As mentioned by Herbst, the word contains an offensive meaning as it indicates that lesbian women are unattractive and masculine (2001: 79). In other words, heterosexual people perceive lesbian women as strange since these women are accused of violating traditional gender roles which define them as feminine. As a result, lesbian women are also inseparable from homophobia and discrimination. According to Herek, Kite, and Whitley, gender roles and homophobia is closely connected (qtd. Garnets & Kimmel, 2003: 150). They elucidate that homophobia reflects the "distrust of



gender violation” for the perpetrators tend to conform to traditional roles (2003: 151). Also, the perpetrators tend to reject “equality between sexes” and have confining “family and gender roles” (2003: 151). From their explanation, it is explainable then why there is an inextricable link between gender roles and homophobia.

In addition to the aforementioned phenomenon, Garnets and Kimmel note down that members of Western societies privilege sexual orientation as the essence of one’s identity (2003: 149). Most importantly, the emphasis of sexual orientation by the societies overlooks other essential elements shaping a person’s identity, namely “gender, age, and sex” (2003: 149). Therefore they add people’s “affectional and sexual lives” are considered overarching compared to other things (2003: 149). As western societies are mostly heteronormative, such a principle is used to impose heterosexuality and degrade homosexuality. Consequently, it also triggers discrimination and homophobia against homosexual people (2003: 150). The phenomenon is vividly reflected through Randy whose personality is devalued due to her homosexuality. The fact that she is a lesbian and is raised by a lesbian aunt makes her friends shun her.

Additionally, Evie, who is a popular girl, is shunned away by her best friends following her coming out. The fact that they open up about their homosexuality leads them to experience homophobia.

Similar with the first movie, *Saving Face* (2004) also explores the themes of homophobia, traditional gender roles, and heteronormativity. However, the movie specifically discusses those themes on grounds of Asian-American community, particularly Chinese-American community. Wilhelmina’s reluctance to come out about her sexuality implies that the Chinese-American community enforces the conformity to heterosexuality as the acceptable sexual orientation. Wilhelmina is reluctant to come out as she fears the condemnation by her cultured Chinese-American family. In fact, her society strongly upholds the idea that having a husband can retain a woman’s dignity and happiness. The movie perfectly captures the aforementioned phenomenon by showing Wilhelmina’s mother who is very eager in finding a husband for Wilhelmina (Wu, *Saving Face*, 2:51; 56:41). Also, when there is a divorced woman at a Chinese-American gathering, other women will assume that the woman must live an unhappy life (Wu, *Saving Face*, 8:27-8:33).

Consequently, homosexuality is troublesome for the society. To such an extent, homosexuality can even be considered a disgrace for the society. The movie speaks up about the phenomenon through Wilhelmina's experience of coming out. After hiding her sexuality for years, Wilhelmina musters up the courage to come out while hoping that her mother will accept it. However, her mother (later will be called Ma) is not able to cope with it.

Wilhelmina's story can be regarded as the reflection of the concept of silence that determines the way Asian-Americans perceive sexuality. According to Takagi, the concept of silence has been prevalent within Asian-American communities for it connotes with good images of Asian-American community (1996: 26). Connecting sexuality and the concept of silence, sexuality is then seen invisible because it potentially ruins the good images sustained by Asian Americans. Takagi elucidates the connection between sexuality and the concept of silence by defining the concept as "the oppressive cost of a racially biased or heterosexist society" (1996: 26). Takagi's statement implies that the concept of silence represses gay Asian Americans to come out because they are cornered between

declaring their true identity and being demanded to conform to "expected norms in society" (1996: 26).

The most intriguing issue about the concept of silence is the consequence that gay Asian Americans must endure once they come out. Takagi perfectly explains the issue through the concept of "in" and "out" (1996: 27). If someone chooses to hide their sexuality, he will never endure hostile reactions from his community. Instead if someone is "out" about his sexuality, he endures homophobic acts in forms of "exclusions" from his communities and being labeled as morally depraved (1996: 27). Such hostile reactions are not solely labeled to her but to her family as well (1996: 28). In fear of the consequences, gay Asian Americans are reluctant to come out to their family and community for the sake of sustaining dignity.

It is important to examine the thread between the aforementioned discussions and the movie. Wilhelmina's coming out as well as the homophobic reactions thrown by her mother and Chinese-American community perfectly represents the issues surrounding sexuality in Asian American community. Wilhelmina's pre- and post-coming-out experiences represent how Asian American people tend

to restrain themselves from sexuality. Besides, it proves the idea that Asian Americans consider heterosexuality and traditional gender norms as the normative things in the society. Hence, when Wilhelmina insists on coming out as homosexual to public, homophobic reactions are the immediate responses she receives because the community believes that she has stripped her family of dignity.

The last movie, *Dirty Girl* (2010), comes up with masculinity as the trigger of homophobia. Different from the previous two movies, *Dirty Girl* revolves around Clarke, a gay student who struggles with his abusive yet homophobic father. Clarke's father, Joseph, has apparently discovered Clarke's homosexuality. Yet, he cannot fathom the fact that Clarke is gay. Instead, he sends Clarke to a psychological therapy and abuses him frequently, expecting that his son will turn masculine and straight. He even considers sending Clarke to military training to help Clarke convert his sexuality.

Clarke's experience regarding homophobia can be related to the manifested idea in which masculinity is highly honored by society. Hence, as men masculinity is attributed to men, the society demands men possess traits which enhance their dominant yet honored roles

in society. Those traits comprise power, confidence, toughness, and courage. In other words, it can be said that the concept of masculinity has placed men to be the dominant human beings. In effect, the concept of masculinity has placed women to be subordinated and powerless (Donaldson qtd in Howson, 2006: 3).

The concept of masculinity, however, is problematic. Men might be attributed to masculinity. Nevertheless, the concept is never attributed to gay men (Donaldson qtd in Howson, 2006: 3). Connell argues that the exclusion of gay men from masculinity is inextricable from the fact that gay men display traits which are inverted from the manifest traits exhibiting masculinity (qtd in Howson, 2006: 79). In other words, gay men are associated with traits which are considered degrading to masculinity, namely being very expressive, effeminate, and powerless (Howson, 2006: 62).

Since gay men are defined with effeminate traits which are considered antithetical to masculinity (Kite and Deaux, qtd. Garnets & Kimmel, 2003: 152), they become the frequent targets of homophobia. In other words, gay men are blamed for violating the traditional gender roles, particularly masculinity (Laner, Laner, and Storms, qtd. Garnets &

Kimmel, 2003: 152). At worst, hostile reactions due to the violation of masculinity are not only thrown at gay people. In fact, heterosexual people who play roles considered demeaning to masculinity are falsely labeled as gay (Deaux and Lewis, Storms et al, qtd. Garnets & Kimmel, 2003: 152). For examples, a man who loves fashion, dislikes boasting about their sexual behavior, and shows no interest in sports are falsely claimed to be gay. In fact, their playing reversal roles do not always identify their sexual orientation. Hence, there is the phenomenon when people misconstrue gender roles with sexual orientation.

Returning to the movie, Clarke's homophobic father, Joseph, actually represents the phenomenon in which heterosexual men tend to be more homophobic than heterosexual women do. According to Kite and Whitley, such a phenomenon happens due to their conformity to masculinity (1993: 166). As they cited from numerous studies, heterosexual men show strong dislike against the term negatively perceives reversal gender roles and considers the term homosexuality an insult to masculinity (Laner, Krulewitz, Nash, Preston, and Stanley, qtd. in Kite & Whitley, 1993:

166). Additionally, according to Stockhard and Johnson, traditional male gender roles are more confining than traditional female gender roles (Stockhard and Johnson, qtd. in Kite & Whitley, 1993: 166). This implies that men are strictly expected by the society to behave in accordance with their traditional male gender roles.

The traditional male gender roles are very restrictive that they "discourage tolerance" for people who "violate" traditional gender roles, especially masculinity (Kite & Whitley, 1993: 166). This phenomenon is apparently prevalent in American society. According to Bern, American society persistently encourages the conformity to traditional gender roles (qtd Kite & Whitley, 1993: 166). Therefore, men are strictly demanded not commit to things which are linked with femininity (Herek, qtd. in Kite & Whitley, 1993: 166).

The aforementioned discussions, thus answer why Joseph becomes extremely abusive and homophobic against his gay son, Clarke. The conformity to traditional male gender roles which privileges masculinity triggers him to perpetrate homophobia against Clarke. Therefore, he will do anything, even if it is abusive, to get his son gain his masculinity.

## **Homophobia and AIDS in the United States**

In this section, the study studies *Philadelphia* (1993), *Pedro* (2009), and *The Normal Heart* (2014). These three movies are famous for distinctly capturing the actions initiated by gay men with HIV/AIDS, who despite battling with the illness, courageously fight for equality and raise the awareness of HIV/AIDS in the United States. For such distinct portrayals of AIDS and homophobia, the movies are thus used as the primary data for this section. In addition to the distinct portrayals, another reason underlying the selection of those movies is the fact that those movies are inspired by real-life events and figures. The fact that those movies are based on real-life events and figures will contribute to the profound and detailed explanations of the discussion regarding AIDS-related homophobia.

*Philadelphia* follows Andrew Beckett who is unfairly dismissed by his law-firm for being gay and suffering from HIV/AIDS. *Pedro* follows Pedro a gay man who is afflicted with HIV/AIDS and courageously raises the awareness of the epidemic. At last, *The Normal Hearts* follows a group of gay activist led by Ned Turner whose attempts to raise the awareness of HIV/AIDS within gay

communities are confronted by homophobic members of American society.

Regarding the representation of AIDS-ridden homophobia in the three movies, those movies vividly capture the false association between HIV/AIDS and homosexuality which is hugely manifested in the United States. Moreover, the movies also depict moments where people unjustly blame gay people for their so-called unhealthy lifestyle which results in their affliction with HIV/AIDS. In other words, people ignorantly draw a conclusion that gay people deserve suffering from the epidemic since they have been deemed to live against moral and religious standards.

In *Philadelphia*, Andrew Beckett represents gay people who are victimized by the false association between AIDS, homosexuality, and sexual promiscuity. As mentioned previously, Beckett believes that his dismissal from the law firm is strongly connected with his homosexuality and his affliction with AIDS. Therefore, believing that he has been exposed to such an injustice, Beckett files a lawsuit against Charles Wheeler and partners as the owners of the law firm.

When the case is brought to the trial, Beckett brings in Melissa Benedict, a paralegal at the law firm where Beckett

works, who also contracts AIDS. Some people at the law firm, including one leader of the firm, Walter Keaton has learned that Melissa contracts AIDS. Fortunately, Melissa is not fired since she is afflicted by AIDS from blood transfusion that she receives when delivering her second child. Melissa's case makes Beckett's dismissal appear unfair to Beckett as he thinks that his dismissal is not solely triggered by AIDS but his homosexuality.

*Pedro* (2008) comes up with a more hopeful depiction of HIV/AIDS and homosexuality. In this movie, almost all heterosexual characters have comprehended that HIV/AIDS can be contracted by everyone. Nevertheless, AIDS-ridden homophobia appears as an inseparable issue from HIV/AIDS and homosexuality.

There is one important scene in *Pedro* that highlights AIDS-ridden homophobia in the United States. The scene shows Pedro who becomes a keynote speaker for an HIV-AIDS seminar. When he is going to enter the venue, he is confronted by a group of religious people who slur "God hates you!" to him. Also, they bring posters condemning Pedro's homosexuality and emphasizing that his HIV-AIDS is a

punishment from God (*Oceano, Pedro*, 19:42-19:52). Pedro is finally able to speak at the seminar, despite the demonstration. However, he addresses the experience at the seminar by saying,

PEDRO. I really wish I had someone in my life who had told me how to protect myself because AIDS is not a moral dilemma or religious debate. It's a physical and mental health issue (*Oceano, Pedro*, 19:88-19:98).

Pedro's experience being protested by the religious group resembles the fear of HIV/AIDS among religious groups in the United States. It also depicts the situation when religious leaders vocally argue that HIV/AIDS is the punishment of God, thus they must repent. Thus, the examination of HIV/AIDS in the United States is surrounded by the endless religious debates, which apparently also interrupt the process of researching the epidemic thoroughly.

*The Normal Heart* shows a bitter depiction of homophobia and HIV/AIDS in which a homophobic member of the US government refuses to help find solutions to curing the epidemic. It shows Ned meeting John Bruno, the advisor to the president of United States. John invites Ned to discuss the importance of researching HIV/AIDS for the country. Ned believes that the research will save

people's lives from the epidemic. However, John is hesitant whether the research is useful for the country since he believes that it hardly affects heterosexual people. In other words, he implies that the epidemic solely afflicts gay people, thus he considers the epidemic unnecessary to be subjected to a serious scrutiny.

The devastating portrayals of AIDS-ridden homophobia in *Philadelphia*, *Pedro*, and *The Normal Heart* are riveting to probe. All movies are set in the 1980s-1990s, in which there was the outbreak of HIV/AIDS in the United States. During those years, the responses towards HIV/AIDS were enclosed with negative prejudice against gay people. For the most part, the majority of American people denounced HIV/AIDS as the consequence that gay people had to suffer. Correspondingly, people declined to direct urgent attentions towards gay people with HIV/AIDS.

One major impulse of the denunciation was the representation of gay people in the media. Gay people were considered to be the carriers of the disease, as the media had claimed that the AIDS epidemic was mostly found in gay people. An article from The New York Times entitled "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals" was the first news article

that broke the silence about the epidemic. In the article, the journalist Lawrence K. Altman, wrote that HIV/AIDS was rapidly transmitted within gay communities for they had "multiple" sexual encounters with different partners.

At worst, Benshoff (2006: 203) noted that media also made ignorant statements by "polarizing" heterosexuals as "clean-living" people and gay as "disease-ridden queers." He further added that the representation became exacerbated as people with HIV/AIDS (both heterosexuals and homosexuals) were classified as "innocent" heterosexuals and "deserving" homosexuals. Innocent heterosexuals refer to the statement that heterosexual people could contract with HIV/AIDS from blood transfusions and needles (2006: 203). Conversely, "deserving" homosexuals is the term implying that gay people deserve HIV/AIDS as the punishment for committing unhealthy sexual lifestyle (2006: 203).

HIV/AIDS as the punishment for gay people was the concept that hugely pervaded in American society. Inevitably, the idea unleashed fear and hatred against gay people. People feared of contracting the disease while reproaching gay people for carrying the disease. The fear and

hatred could be strongly associated to the fact that gay people, whether contracting from AIDS or not, belonged to “feared and disliked groups” in the country (Stoddard and Rieman, 1991: 254). Hence, the situation made gay people with AIDS prone with the danger of injustice and medical negligence.

As mentioned previously, in the United States, such a portrayal has hugely influenced the way people perceive and respond to the disease. Gay people are victimized by the demeaning portrayal. They are denied the chance to get the proper medical assessment. Their chance to live a normal life is even restricted because people have fear of getting afflicted with the epidemic.

The role of media in framing HIV/AIDS and homosexuality in The United States was intriguing since it had fundamentally manifested adverse reactions towards gay people with AIDS within American society. According to Dyer, since 1970s, representation has become an essential foundation in shaping a society’s attitudes towards social and cultural phenomena (qtd.in Watney, 1987: 8). Moreover, he adds that representation has been very powerful in determining the access given to any social group to access “political chances” (1987: 9). Most

importantly, he argues that representations in mass media play a key role in conceptualizing how a social group can contribute to society (1987: 9).

Dyer’s explanation is then in accordance with what happened with the American society following the media coverage on HIV/AIDS and its association with homosexuality. People relied on the media coverage because they claimed that it spoke the truth (Watney, 1987: 9). When media came up with the information on homosexuality and HIV/AIDS which demeaned gay people, people believed that the coverage told the truth. Hence, what had been represented in the media about HIV/AIDS and homosexuality was used as the justification for the AIDS-ridden homophobia.

One irking point to probe is the reasons underlying the homophobic media coverage on AIDS and homosexuality. As explained previously, media was responsible for AIDS-ridden homophobia in the United States due to their reports that tend to demean and accuse gay people for HIV/AIDS. Personal judgment and biases against gay people undeniably prompted journalists to write such reports. Gross stated that journalists failed to dissolve their biases against gay people when reporting the news on the epidemic



(2001: 101). Furthermore, an American journalist, James Kinsella, wrote that “homophobia among media personnel” intimidated journalists concerned on providing in-depth yet unbiased news on HIV/AIDS and homosexuality (qtd. in Gross, 2001: 101). Dismissal and “suspicions of being gay” were the threats that daunted journalists who endeavored to correct the misleading representation of those issues (2001: 101).

At last, it can be concluded that the movies do not only represent AIDS-ridden homophobia by displaying the horrifying images of the epidemic and homophobia. The AIDS-ridden homophobia is ferociously festering for gay people, as they are exposed to both physical and mental sufferings. Nevertheless, the injustices and indignities which they endure spur them to fight for their lives.

Beckett, Pedro, and Ned are not just represented as victims of homophobia. They are portrayed as heroes and inspirations for gay people to keep fighting for equality. Ryan Murphy, the director of *The Normal Heart*, mentions that the movie aims to remind young gay people of the struggle for achieving equality (Fleming, Jr.). Also, he hopes that the movie can pass on Ned’s relentless yet courageous spirit to gay people in this

generation. Thus, they are able to possess the same spirit when striving for equality (Fleming, Jr.). The same statement is also made by Dustin Lance Black, the scriptwriter of *Pedro*. He hopes that the movie can encourage young people, particularly those who come from gay community, to inherit Pedro’s spirit in obtaining justice (TV Guide, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

The study examined the representations of homophobia in nine American gay-themed movies produced in 1990s to 2010s. From those nine movies, there are three representations of homophobia in the United States which encompass religions, gender roles, heteronormativity, masculinity, and HIV/AIDS.

Three movies, *But I am Not A Cheerleader* (1999), *Latter Days* (2003), and *The Wise Kids* (2011), represent how religions, specifically from fundamentalist Christian denominations, play a major factor in inciting homophobia in the United States. The religious beliefs perceive homosexuality as inimical and against procreation. Consequently, religious groups use the beliefs to justify their homophobia. This phenomenon appears as the most serious peril for gay

people who endeavor to reconcile their faiths and sexuality. Furthermore, another peril that gay people endure is the coercion to undergo coercion therapy, which is an act exhibiting homophobia by religious people.

The representations of homophobia and religions in those movies are intriguing to probe in relation to the country's identity as a secular country. Despite being secular, the country apparently manages to accommodate religious groups to address their issues (in which homosexuality turns to be one of the issues). The situation leads religions (through its institutions) to retain their control over private matters namely marriage and sexuality, despite the government has enacted laws regarding the matters. Hence, it leads challenges for the government to tackle homophobia that is triggered by religions.

Other three movies, *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (1995), *Saving Face* (2004), and *Dirty Girl* (2010) present another representation of homophobia. These movies accentuate the fact that homophobia is triggered by the conformity to traditional gender roles and heteronormativity. Traditional gender roles and heteronormativity demand society submit themselves to masculinity,

femininity, and heterosexuality as the norms to live by. Homosexuality is seen as the violation to traditional gender roles and heteronormativity. Hence, gay people are targeted to homophobic actions (in forms of humiliations, resentment, verbal slur, and physical abuse), because they are accused of violating traditional gender roles and heteronormativity.

The last three movies, *Philadelphia* (1993), *Pedro* (2008), and *The Normal Heart* (2014) render the inextricable link between homophobia and HIV/AIDS in the United States. The movies chronicle the struggle of gay people in confronting the AIDS-ridden homophobia. Gay people who are afflicted with the epidemic suffer injustice and homophobic treatments which endanger their lives. The injustice and homophobic treatments are caused by the media representation that tends to accuse gay people as the carriers of the epidemic.

At last, those are three major representations of homophobia in the United States as seen in gay-themed American movies produced in 1990s-2010s. Nowadays, the country is well-reputed for its acceptance towards gay communities. Nevertheless, homophobia remains a huge challenge to tackle due to

the fact that it has been institutionalized for years.

Regarding the continuous depictions of homophobia in gay-themed American movies, the movies aim to educate people about the struggle of gay people to achieve positive recognitions. Also, the movies apparently serve as the message for gay people to keep striving for justice and addressing their issues. Hence, they can receive equality.

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## THE SURVIVAL OF IDENTITY OF CHEROKEE PEOPLE IN 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AS DEPICTED IN PATRICIA RILEY'S *DAMPING DOWN THE ROAD AND WISTERIA*

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### Abstract

The lives of the Cherokee family in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Patricia Riley's *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria* give a description in how the characters in the family have different viewpoint on seeing Native American, Cherokee. The research is to find out the ways used by the Cherokee people to survive in the whites' culture society and to find the reasons for the Cherokee people survive in such way. The research is conducted under American Studies discipline, by applying postnational paradigm. Moreover, mimicry, decolonization theory proposed by Frantz Fanon, to analyze the ways used by the characters to survive in the whites' culture society, and drive theory proposed by Clark L. Hull to answer the reason for the natives to survive in such ways.

The research finds that both short stories are depicted to do mimicry and to keep their Cherokee culture. The characters who do mimicry are those who want to be accepted in the whites' culture society meanwhile the characters who keep their Cherokee culture are those who have mission in maintaining the Cherokee culture for the next generation. By doing mimicry and keeping the traditional culture, they could survive in the whites' culture society in order to show their existence.

**Keywords:** Cherokee, whites' culture, mimicry, decolonization, and drive theory

### Introduction

Before the arrival of the white men to the natives' land, the natives are portrayed to have a peaceful life living in the tradition. They are believed to have a belief in supernatural power on nature. Therefore, they show their respect toward nature and their ancestors by doing some rituals as well. These characteristics are assumed to be heathen in the eyes of the whites. Therefore, they intend to change or even destroy such culture. Establishing boarding school under Christian order is

assumed to be the government's method in making them loss their native culture. The issues appear in Patricia Riley's short stories *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria* is about the family issue of Native American family who live in the white's culture society in America in 20th Century.

Patricia Riley, who was born in 1950 and a mixed of Cherokee and Irish, is a storyteller and teacher. She works as an Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Idaho,

America. Moreover, she takes part in writing short stories, *Damping Down the Roads* (2002) and *Wisteria* (1996), which were compiled in a collection of short stories entitled *Reckonings* (2008) with other Native American women authors.

*Damping Down the Road* describes a Cherokee family who consists of parents (Eli and Nettie) and two daughters (Ruby and Carnel). The family issue emerges when they have a different perception on being Native American. The mother (Nettie) and the first daughter (Ruby) always wish to be someone else instead of Native American meanwhile the father (Eli) and the second daughter (Carnel) are always proud of being Native American. Nettie and Ruby always perceive that Native American is weird meanwhile Eli and Carnel believe that being Native American is a blessing.

*Wisteria* also describes a quite similar Cherokee family issue with in *Damping Down the Road* by portraying a mother (Eddie T.) who has no good relationship with her Christian daughter in law (Jessie) and how Eddie T. teaches her granddaughter (Justine) a lesson about being a Cherokee. The problem emerges when there is a different viewpoint between Eddie T. and Jessie. These short stories give a depiction on how

colonization era during 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century still could be felt by the characters in in 20<sup>th</sup> Century as seen in the interaction within the members of the family. In *Damping Down the Road*, a native mother is described as a person who has a thought that being part of white people is better than being a native meanwhile in *Wisteria* the mother in law is described as a person who is difficult to accept her Christian daughter in law in the family.

### **Methodology**

The study is conducting through eight stages. First, the problems that emerge in this study are to see the way for the Cherokee people to survive in the whites' culture society and to find the reasons for the natives to survive in such ways. Second, the purpose of the study is to elaborate the ways of Cherokee people survive in the whites' culture society, to find the reasons for Cherokee people survive in the whites' culture society, and to see the life of Cherokee people before and after the arrival of the white men to the natives' land. Third, the study is conducted under Postnational paradigm, American Studies discipline. Moreover, there would be three concepts to be conducted in analyzing the short stories in chapter three: mimicry, decolonization



proposed by Frantz Fanon, and drive theory proposed by Clark L. Hull. Fourth, the method of the study is conducted with qualitative research which is through a series of steps; data collection, data recording, and data analysis and interpretation.

In data collection, the data is taken from the excerpts of both Patricia Riley's short stories, *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria*. Meanwhile the primary data is taken from the short stories; *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria*. The secondary data is taken from journals, internet sources, books, articles and any materials related to Native American's history during 16th to 19th Century and theory that are conducted for this research. Moreover, this secondary data is taken from the result of the processed and analyzed data. Therefore, those primary data and secondary data are read simultaneously in order to gain a deep understanding of the topic.

In data recording, the researcher reads the source of data, primary and secondary data. Next, the researcher finds and lists of the related quotations both in the primary and secondary data regarding to the research topic based on theoretical framework. In data analysis and interpretation, after the data is listed, it is

interpreted and analyzed by using a set of theoretical framework which has been explained in chapter I in order to see Native American's issue in both short stories, *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria*.

## **Discussion**

### **The Cherokee Survival in Patricia Riley's *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria***

Years after the Cherokee and other natives are removed to the Indian Territory, Oklahoma, the lives of the natives begin to come up to the surface again in the 20th Century. Some of the natives prefer to live in town and others prefer to stay in villages or farm and they already mingle and socialize with other people, such as the whites, the African American, and so on. As we already know that the natives once had a tragic relationship with the whites in the past time. The whites came to the native's land, took their land, expelled them from their homeland, cut off their traditional culture, called them heathen, and forced them to adopt and adapt the whites' culture.

Those reasons have made the natives' lives become hard and look difficult to move on. They put their effort in living together with the whites, living in

the same environment, studying and working in the same place, and so on. Moreover, after experiencing a nightmare in the past, how they could survive in the society where the whites culture are the dominance one.

This also correlates to the natives selves. Though they come from the same tribe or family, differences may appear before them. Patricia Riley’s *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria* are short stories that give a portrait about the common problem happening on Native American in general. This chapter would be divided into three parts; the mimicry side, the traditional side, and the cause of the Cherokee people survive in such ways.

### The Mimicry Side

The mimicry side shows in how the characters, who are Cherokee, from both short stories decide to mimic the whites’ culture. The characters who decide to live in this way are showing that they are mimicking to other. This side would be divided into three parts; lifestyles, way of thinking, and manner.

1.a. Mimicking in Lifestyle: The Use of Material Culture	
Damping Down the Road	Wisteria

<p>“Ruby was three years older than Carnel. Being fifteen going on sixteen had made her overly fond of spicing her conversation with dots and dashes of profanity. She thought it made her sound more mature. Carnel thought it made her sound more like poor white trash” (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 154).</p>	<p>“In the storage shed behind the garden, a modern “radar range” languished new and never lifted from its crate. It had been a gift from her daughter in law, Jessie, but Eddie T. mistrusted the new stove’s shiny chrome and doubted its ability to brown the crust just right on a fresh loaf of bread” (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 166).</p>
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Table 1.a. “Mimicking in Lifestyle: The Use of Material Culture”

In *Damping Down the Road*, Ruby, who is older than Carnel, is interested in using “dots and dashes of profanity” while speaking. The above excerpt shows Ruby is in the stage of adolescence which means she is still searching for her independence and self-identity, therefore she would appear to be somebody else (Psychology today). Such language, was once, used by the whites who were criminal and foreigners (YourDictionary). Regarding to the language she used, she wants to show to her sister that she is not a child anymore and she is different with Carnel. The use of the language is a sign that she is not a Cherokee but a white person.

While in *Wisteria* depicts there is a family relationship between Eddie T and Jessie, who is described as Eddie T's daughter in law and has a complicated relationship with her. She gives Eddie T a new stove which is considered as a modern appliance and would be useful to be used, however, Eddie T refuses to use the stove since she knows the stove is a gift from Jessie and she believes the stove is not useful for her. Moreover, she knows that Jessie is influenced by the whites to use modern appliance and got dependent on it.

What the characters have done is actually almost similar with the Cherokee people when they make a trading contact with the English in the past time. The Cherokee people have a dependence on the English goods that change the lives of the Cherokee people. Then, this dependence has caused them to live as similar as the English or the white people.

The experience in the past seems to occur again by using the material culture, such as the language and stove shiny chrome. They seem to be dependent on these materials culture that has caused them having a tendency to imitate the whites. This could be stated that the characters, Ruby and Jessie, want to leave, what so called as, their traditional or

uncivilized custom and turn into the modern or civilized one.

<b>1.b. Mimicking in Lifestyle: Hairdo</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
<p>“What she needs is a good perm,” Nettie said. When Ruby heard, she got all excited. “Oh, Mama,” she cried. “Can I have one, too?” ..... “But I do, Mama. I want one,” Ruby wheedled. “I want a perm, and I want to dye my hair. I want to dye it blonde. The boys at school like the girls with blonde hair better. Can I get a perm and dye it blonde, Mama?” ..... “Bleach, Ruby, not dye,” Nettie said. “I imagine you can. You’ll be sixteen soon. We’ll go and do it tomorrow if you like” (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 154).</p>	<p>“It’s the haircut.” Justine smiled at the old woman and opened the screen door. “Mama had it done. I liked it long, myself, but you know Mama. She says it tangles too much and, besides, long hair isn’t stylish these days. She told Arleen at the Beauty Barn that she wanted something particularly stylish and this turned out to be it” (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 168).</p>

Table 1.b. “Mimicking in Lifestyle: Hairdo”

Next, in *Damping Down the Road*, Nettie, the mother, wants her daughters’ hair to get perm. Hearing her mother wish, Ruby insists her mother to take her as well. Ruby has an interest in changing her hair and turns it into something else. There is a sign indicating she wants to leave her old

hair, which is straight long and black hair, and changes it into blonde and perm as well.

In the adolescence stage, girl usually starts to think about her male friends. Girl will look worry on her appearance, especially in clothes and hairdos. She begins to express her care on how her look will be at school. She also explores many things to make her appearance look better and to be similar with her friends at school. She admires with the look of her friends, especially the white student, at school.

In *Wisteria*, the story also describes about the change of the daughter’s hairdos. Yet, the difference is that the daughter is willing to do this is because of her mother’s wish. Her mother, Jessie, insists her daughter, Justine, to change her hairdos since she believes that her daughter’s long hair does not fit her anymore.

The reason for the mothers to do this is because there is an indication that she wants to forget about her past as a Cherokee descendant. There is a statement saying that having long hair means the pure thoughts that live in human’s mind will flow from the top to the bottom that lead and guide the human’s attitude in keeping the family and the nation in

harmony (White Wolf Pack). Having new haircut for their daughters will help them to forget everything about the past of the Cherokee. This means that they do not want their daughters to know everything about Cherokee culture. They believe having new haircut refer to start a new life and leave behind the past.

<b>2. Mimicking in Way of Thinking</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
<p>If you didn’t like a thing you changed it somehow so that it would suit you better. It didn’t matter what it was. If Nettie didn’t like it, if for some reason it got on what she called her “bad side,” she was going to change it, and that philosophy extended to everything in the world around her (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 155).</p>	<p>...waving her hands about and calling on the sun and moon and stars. Even the river one time. God only knows who or what she calls on. Anybody does that is a heathen and a heathen’s domain is no place for my daughter on Sunday mornings. Or any other mornings for that matter. And I will say it. I don’t care if she is your mother. I have a right to my opinion and a right to raise my child as I see fit. A heathen is a heathen and children need to be protected from that kind of thing (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 168).</p>

Table 2 “Mimicking in Way of Thinking”

The portrayal of way of thinking in *Damping Down the Road* is discussing about the mother, Nettie, has her own view in seeing and facing life. She believes in change. She believes that if you have something you don't like, just change it no matter what it is. This also includes the people around her, especially in her family.

In *Wisteria*, the depiction of mimicry shown by Jessie, the daughter in law, has similarity concept with the whites'. Jessie sees the way her mother in law prays is not showing a Christian. As a Christian, she believes that if you want to pray to God, you must go to church every Sunday. Yet, this is different with what Eddie T. does. The mother in law has her own way, the Cherokee way, in praying to God, but in Jessie's viewpoint, the way her mother's pray indicating a heathen.

This way of thinking is also considered as imitating the whites' concept of thought because the whites had done this before in the past. They did the same thing as Nettie and Jessie. They thought the Cherokee people were heathen because of their traditional culture, which worshipping the unseen. Therefore, they struggled to change them by converting them into the whites' religious belief because they believed this would be fit for

them. Moreover, they took the children away from their parents in order to cut off the traditional culture. They wished to protect the children from their parents, especially from their traditional culture that could destroy the future of the children. Staying in mission school, learning Bible and going to church every Sunday are methods they believed could protect them from the bad side.

<b>3. Mimicking in Manner</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
"Mama," Carnel said. "Daddy says that when it rains our road dreams that it's a river. I think that must be true, don't you? It's rushing along right now as if it were the Brazos." "Ellie, why do you keep filling her head with all that nonsense?" Nettie asked. "Roads can't dream. That road's nothing more than a bunch of dead dirt pounded flat. And Carnel, if you believe any different, then you're just as crazy as he is" (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 156).	Justine's father, Tom, told her that he figured the combination of the flu and the thunderstorm must have put Jessie in immediate touch with her own mortality because by day seven of vomiting and the green apple trots, Jessie had suddenly acquired what could only be described as a religious personality and rapidly converted to three-times-a day Bible study and absolute churchgoing on a strict Sunday basis (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 167).

Table 3 "Mimicking in Manner"

In mimicking to other the first excerpt taken from *Damping Down the Road*, Nettie shows her response toward Ellie, her husband, discussing about the road where their house is located. Ellie said to Carnel that the road could dream but Nettie seems to hate this. She insists and believes the road cannot dream since it is not a living thing. Therefore, she mentions this discussion as a weird thing. The manner that she shows before her husband, Ellie, and her daughters indicating that she is trying to not believe on such story or trying to deny about the truth that she is part of Cherokee tribe.

From *Wisteria*, Jessie suddenly turns into a religious person who starts learning Bible and going to church every Sunday. From the above excerpt, it could be seen the reason why Jessie, in sudden, turns into a different person. It is described that there is a miracle involving in healing her flu.

Christian is not part of Cherokee culture but it is European culture. The European missionaries bring this religion and introduce it to them. Therefore, by converting their faith into Christian meaning they are imitating the whites. By converting this religion, they would not be called as heathen. Moreover, according to Poerter and Roemer, conversion to Christianity is one of the methods used by

the white people to conquer Native American. They start to use propaganda to destroy the natives by attacking their ideologies and traditional values (52).

The concept of mimicry is discussing about the decision taken by the characters from both short stories who take the path in mimicking the whites' culture and they want to make them as similar as them. To be recognized by other people is one of the triggers that cause them to do mimicry as it has already been explained in the previous excerpts. They wish other people recognize their existence; they wish they have equal treatment; and they wish other people would not regard them as inferior.

### **The Traditional Side**

The traditional side shows in how the characters from both short stories decide to maintain their Cherokee culture though they live in an environment under white culture society. The characters who decide to live in this culture are showing that they are differentiating from other. This traditional side would be divided into three parts; lifestyles, way of thinking, and manner.

<b>1. Maintaining the Tradition in Lifestyle</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
“It is what it is and what it is straight. Good old Indian hair,” Eli said and smiled at his wife while ruffling Carnel’s hair (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 154).	Carefully, she poured boiling water from a copper kettle into the tall round jars that sat like sentinels in dishpans of battered enamel (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 166).

Table 1 “Maintaining the Tradition in Lifestyle”

In *Damping Down the Road*, the character, Eli, wishes to keep his daughters’ hair long just like the natives’ hair. Realizing his identity as part of Cherokee tribe, he believes keeping the Cherokee culture is kind of a mission. Because of having two daughters, he has the responsibility to inherit the Cherokee culture to them. He wants them to recognize and maintain their culture.

From that excerpt, it could be stated that hair is also considered as a reminder of the past. Maintaining and keeping the hair long and straight could recall the traditional life of the Cherokee. Eli believes that keeping the hair long would help her daughters to not be misguided. The reason is because, which the writer

has already explained in the previous parts, having long hair means the pure thoughts that live on human’s mind will flow from the top to the bottom that lead and guide the human’s attitude in keeping the family and the nation in harmony.

Meanwhile, in *Wisteria* explains Eddie T. is being described as a woman who holds her Cherokee identity. According to the excerpt in the above table, she still uses traditional appliances for cooking though her daughter in law has bought her a new stove. She believes using the traditional appliances would make her able to cook better and would make her happy as well.

Eddie T. prefers to use the traditional appliances than the modern one is because she feels connected with the Cherokee culture. As part of Cherokee tribe, she believes the traditional objects could bring a joy atmosphere and enjoyment. Though using traditional appliances, she mostly burns the foods she cooked, she seems to enjoy it and she is glad to know that the burning smell would go around the farm. By doing this, she would feel like she is getting close to the nature who has given everything she need.

In this traditional side, the characters are showing themselves differentiating from other by showing respect toward

their traditional culture. Keeping the straight long hair and using traditional appliances are methods that are used by the characters to make her stay in touch with her culture and her Cherokee homeland. This could bring back the memory of the Cherokee life in the past. How they wish to get connected with their ancestors and spiritual beings that have been left behind in their homeland.

live in. From his statement in the above, it describes about the condition of the area of the house is not what they expected. Yet, he wishes his daughters to see the ‘other side’ of the house area as the good side of it. The ‘other side’ in this paragraph means that seeing something from different viewpoint.

Eli advises her daughters to do this because he wants to revive her daughters’ dream, which would lead them to gain new experience and adventure. Having a dream is important because this is a method for them to reach their happiness. Moreover, by seeing the ‘other side’ of the area of the house or even on something else, he wants to teach them a lesson about good and bad.

In *Wisteria*, Eddie T.’s viewpoint describes how she shows her respect toward the Creator by waving her hands to the sun, moon, and stars. Such concept usually held by the traditional Cherokee. Moreover, she believes that the spiritual being lives around the nature. Although she lives in the modern society, she still holds her traditional belief. The belief that makes her put her faith in believing that the existence of the Great Spirit could be seen and felt only by feeling the atmosphere of the nature.

As part of Cherokee tribe, she has a conviction that keeping their traditional

<b>2. Maintaining the Tradition in Way of Thinking</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
Before they moved there, Eli told his girls that, although living on a red dirt road might seem to have disadvantages, it had its good points, too. It all depended on how you chose to look at it as to which was which (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 155).	I myself have come upon her a number of times standing in the woods, waving her hands about and calling on the sun and moon and stars. Even the river one time. God only knows who or what else she calls on (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 168).

Table 2 “Maintaining the Tradition in Way of Thinking”

In *Damping Down the Road*, indicating how he explains to his daughters about the way they see the ‘other side’ of the area of the house they



culture is important. It is because she believes what she does is for showing a respect toward the Creator or the unseen is not a mistake. This is a representation of Cherokee religious belief instead. The way Eddie T. pray to the Great Spirit through sensing the atmosphere and the beautiful of the nature is similar with what the traditional Cherokee people did in the past.

The point from both characters, Eli and Eddie T., is they want to maintain their traditional culture in order to make their next generations could be proud of it. They regard the culture as an irreplaceable precious treasure. Though the rest of their family prefers to hold the whites way of thinking, Eli and Eddie T. are persistent to maintain the Cherokee culture with their traditional way of thinking.

<b>3.a. Maintaining the Tradition in Manner</b>	
<b>Damping Down the Road</b>	<b>Wisteria</b>
The day was hot and still, the silence broken only by the creaky, sawing sounds that the chains made and the dull gentle thud of wood against wood when the back of the swing hit the house. It was the kind of repetitious noise that annoyed	Eddie T. had taken the girl there many times and taught her where to look for roots and plants that were good for healing any number of common complaints from sore throat to fever (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008:

her mother, she knew, but to Carnel it was soothing. Its rhythm matched her dreaming mood (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 153).	169).
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Table 3.a. "Maintaining the Tradition in Manner"

The first excerpt taken from *Damping Down the Road* gives a description about how the atmosphere of the house turns from silence into sound. Carnel, the youngest daughter, could feel the hot of the weather and when there is a sound comes from the creaky sawing sound and the woods, in a sudden that sound could change the atmosphere. She enjoys listening to the sound as if it is music which has soothed her. The rhythm of the music has created a dream for her.

The way she listens to the sound and follows its rhythm is indicating Native American way in respecting the nature. The Cherokee people also produce music when they hold ceremonies. It is believed that music is a mediator to enable them live together in the spiritual world and to bring the spiritual power into the human world in order to help them in daily life (warpaths2peacepipes).

The first excerpt in *Wisteria* shows Eddie T. teaches her granddaughter,

Justine, the use of plants and roots for healing. She realizes being a Cherokee is her responsibility to introduce everything about Cherokee or Native American culture to her granddaughter. She wants her to recognize the Cherokee culture and hope one day Justine could transfer the knowledge to the next generation.

Eddie T. shares the knowledge of Cherokee culture to her granddaughter, Justine, is because she wants the culture would still remain in the society and Justine is the only hope to make her dream come true. Eddie T. is no longer young anymore thus she decides to inherit the Cherokee legacy to her granddaughter since she is the only hope she has. She chooses Justine to do this task is because Justine is part of Cherokee tribe and she does not want Justine to follow her mother’s, Jessie, path, who leaves behind the Cherokee culture by imitating the whites’ culture.

<p>in the porch swing, picking off dried and curling pieces of its faded, flaking paint, watching the clouds of red dust rise up off the road as cars passed on their way to town. Dreaming. Looking for secret meaning in the patterns the flakes formed on the grey concrete. Sometimes, a small breath of a breeze came up and blew the pattern away before she could read what was in them, but today the lack of wind allowed the flakes to arrange themselves the way they wanted (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 153).</p>	<p>have had one of them dance right there just last night. Oh, I leave things for ‘em. Little snacks of food mostly, sometimes tobacco and beads when I got ‘em, and wisteria flowers when they’re bloomin. They like them blossoms. My mam called them things offerings. Just to let them know that we ain’t forgot about ‘em. That we know they’re out there livin’ on (Riley in. Wong, Muller, and Magdaleno, 2008: 170).</p>
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Table 3.b “Maintaining the Tradition in Manner”

3.b. Maintaining the Tradition in Manner	
Damping Down the Road	Wisteria
<p>It seemed to Carnel that she had passed almost the entire summer rocking slowly back and forth</p>	<p>There are little people out back here, Justine, and sometimes they get together and hold a dance. They must</p>

The second excerpt taken from *Damping Down the Road* also depicts Carnel’s reaction toward the nature. She looks amazed with the beautiful nature she sees in summer. She enjoys the atmosphere of the summer by sitting in the porch swing accompanied by the breeze and she is playing with the dried pieces of paint on the porch swing. Moreover, the nature has brought her into another dream when the cars passed on the way which has caused the red dust rises up and covers the clouds.

She is dreaming about the homeland of the Cherokee people in the past time. She believes the Cherokees in the past might live in a place covered with red dirt. She imagines herself living in the Cherokee village, sitting in front of her house and looking at the clouds. As a Cherokee, she wants to figure out the puzzle that the flakes made. She is playing as if the flakes are a message from the spiritual being and she wishes to figure out what the flakes say.

In the second excerpt taken from *Wisteria*, Eddie T. tells Justine about a creature that appears in native story. She tells her that the Cherokee people believe on “little people” or it is called as Yunwi Tsundi. By telling her about this “little people,” Eddie T. wishes her granddaughter would show respect toward the creature and would not forget or ignore it as well. She wants to teach her how spiritual beings also live in nature and it needs their concern in order to create a balance and harmony.

The depiction of the traditional side explains how the characters are aware of their Cherokee identity and they prefer to keep, stay and live with their traditional custom. This could be considered as a form of resistance towards the whites’ culture because they believe by leaving

their Cherokee identity and imitate the whites’ culture would not make them proud of themselves and would not make them happy as well. Leaving their Cherokee culture means they leave their homeland; their ancestors, rituals, and their faith in the existence of spiritual beings.

### **The Cause of the Cherokee People Survive in Such Ways The Mimicry Side**

In *Damping Down the Road*, Nettie is being described as a mother with two daughters who has opposing thought with her husband, Eli. She is part of Cherokee tribe but she seems to hide or even to deny herself from the truth that she is Native American. She was still a young girl who loves gathering together with her family for listening the natives’ stories. This is a precious moment that she has been waiting for in the family. During her childhood, she is very happy for being part of Cherokee family. Being surrounded by the Cherokee culture and her family has made her difficult to leave them.

The punishment, for retelling natives’ night stories, she received from the Sisters at the school has made her to think that what she does to her friends is wrong. Native children are rarely to get punishment from their parents hence three

days detention in the basement is a hard thing to do for children in that age and this is considered as the first time she got. In addition to, such punishment is given to those who behave inappropriate according to them, the Sisters and the school regulation.

After she got home, her refusal on gathering together with her company and listening to the nightly storytelling is a picture about the impact of the punishment she got. Being locked in the dark basement has eventually scared her and made her into a decision to not make any contact relating to the natives. She does this because she does not wish to receive any more punishment at school and this choice is her decision to save her own life. Since then, she decides to become a new person, the person whom the Sisters wanted her to be, and to leave everything behind that has a relation with the natives.

In *Wisteria*, Jessie is being described as a mother, with a daughter, Justine, who has opposing thought with her mother in law, Eddie T. As it has already been discussed in the above, she is part of Cherokee family who in sudden becomes a new person. The change on Jessie's viewpoint shows in how she in sudden changes her view in looking at the natives in general and her mother in law in

particular. The impact of watching religious network broadcasting has made her to think about what she has done and what she has believed before is considered as a mistake.

The similarity between Nettie and Jessie, who prefers to take the mimicry side, is the incidents in the past have influenced them. Both of them suffer on something. The experience of being suffered has triggered them to leave their identity as a Cherokee. The difference is placed on the incident itself. Nettie's experience for being suffered physically and mentally has changed her into someone else while Jessie suffers from her ill has made her spiritually change into a religious person.

The reason for the characters could survive in the white culture society is because they have their goal, which is to survive by mimicking the whites' culture in the whites' culture society. Referring to Hull's Principles of Behavior, the writer could state that this goal could be achieved by reducing their desire which is their knowledge of the past. This knowledge of the past refers to the characters' past experience that see the whites' culture is the good one.

### **The Traditional Side**

In *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria*, Eli and Eddie T. are being described as the characters who prefer to keep and live in the tradition. Eli is the head of the family who has responsibility in leading and guiding his family to the right path. Meanwhile, Eddie T. is a mother and a grandmother who shows her love on her native tradition. They are aware that this is not easy for them to make their family stay and live in the tradition, especially for Nettie and Jessie, Ellie's wife and Eddie T.'s daughter in law who have decided to leave their native culture because of the incident in the past. Thus, one of methods Eli used in order to make them recognize their native identity is by buying a new house.

The area of the house has recalled the memory of Eli about the home of the Cherokee in the past. Eli uses this house as a tool to help him in maintaining the tradition within his family. Through this house, he wishes to bring his family back to the native tradition because he believes they still have native blood flows in their body. This means they cannot deny themselves as part of Cherokee tribe.

This could be stated as Eli's mission in bringing back the family into the native tradition because Eli knows the reason

why Nettie leaves her native culture and prefers to live like the whites' culture. What Eli has done for his family is a kind of resistance toward the whites' culture that dominates in the society. Eli is struggling in maintaining the native tradition by having an opposing idea with his wife, Nettie who has different viewpoint in seeing native culture, and by introducing native tradition to his youngest daughter, Carnel.

In *Wisteria*, Tom has the same experience with Nettie, they go to mission school to obtain education. He experiences a bad moment at school where his teachers say bad things about his people. This has caused him to be ashamed of himself and he feels being humiliated by the teachers. The word "regretted" indicates that he once leaves his tradition and prefers to follow the whites' culture. Then, he realizes what he has done in the past is a mistake.

This experience has made Eddie T. decides to always keep the tradition. The incident that has been experienced by Tom in the past has made her feel anxious and angry toward the government and the school system. She believes that the school teachers are bad people who have changed Tom's mind about his people and she accuses the white government is

responsible for this change. In the past, many native parents send their children to school are for obtaining education only so that they have the capability in reading and writing. They do not expect them to leave their tradition while studying at school. But when the children got home, they become somebody else who have left their tradition behind and have adopted the whites' culture instead.

The reason for the characters to survive in the white culture society is because they have their goal which is to survive by maintaining the Cherokee culture in the white culture society. Referring to Hull's Principles of Behavior, the writer could state that this goal could be achieved by reducing their desire which is their knowledge of the past. This knowledge of the past refers to the memory of the loss of Cherokee culture during white colonization, for example the whites took and claimed the Cherokee people's land and they force the Cherokee people to leave their culture.

## **Conclusion**

Patricia Riley's *Damping Down the Road* and *Wisteria* are depicting the lives of two Cherokee families who face different opposing ideas between the mimicry side and the traditional side.

Nettie and Jessie are being portrayed doing "mimicry" in their lifestyle, ideology, and manner which are imitating the whites' culture. Their past experience has triggered them to do "mimicry" because they believe by doing so their existence would be recognized by other people and they do not need to feel what their ancestors feel in the past.

Meanwhile, Eli and Eddie T. are being portrayed keeping and living in the traditional culture in their lifestyle, way of thinking, and manner. Their past experience has triggered them to maintain the Cherokee culture in the society. They believe by keeping the tradition is an important thing to do because this could help them to get close with their ancestors or to show their respect toward their homeland itself. What Eli and Eddie T. have done could be considered as decolonization because they decolonize their mind from the whites' culture by believing their Cherokee culture is good. This is a form of resistance that makes them able to survive living in the society where it is surrounded by the whites' culture.

Both mimicking to other and differentiating from other are chosen because they believe these paths are helping them in survival in the society

where the whites' culture is the dominance. Two different opposing ideas; leaving the Cherokee tradition behind and keeping the Cherokee tradition, are showing there is superiority and inferiority or it is called as "othering" and decolonization.

The mimicking to other would see itself as the correct or the civilized one which makes it superior meanwhile the differentiating from other would be looked as the savage or uncivilized which makes it inferior. While the differentiating from other sees their lives are part of tradition. These evidences have shown how colonization gives impact toward the colonized people.

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## THE REGAINING TERRITORY OF THE OJIBWA TRIBE IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S *THE BIRCHBARK HOUSE* BOOK SERIES

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### Abstract

Native American people had been experienced in confronting the white people. One of their experiences in confronting the white people is written in the Louise Erdrich's literary works, an Ojibwa author. Native American authors have different point of view in telling about Native Americans because they and their ancestors have bitter experiences in dealing with the white people, especially the Ojibwa tribe's experiences living in the America where other Native American tribes cannot survive their tribes. This study focuses on the struggles of the Ojibwa people in getting their territory and the reasons why the Ojibwa people try so hard in keeping their territory.

This study uses post-nationalist American Studies paradigm which is supported by Historicism theory in the analysis. The method used is qualitative method related to literature study by using the five books of *The Birchbark House* book series as the primary data of this study. There are several conclusions based on the analysis of the data. The Ojibwa people are able to maintain their tribal presence in America against the white people. They can defend their tribe by using their intellectual, courage, and self-confidence. As for the reasons they prefer to choose their own way in getting territory because of several factors such as beliefs, relatives, and natural conditions of the land.

**Keywords:** Post-national, Indian Territory, Native American, Ojibwa

### Introduction

The arrival of the white people in the Native American land made the Native American people had to face many wars and battles to defend their territory. Many of them were lost and not a few from them won the battles and wars in defending their land. The white people forced them to leave their land and they had to cede their land. Some of the Native American people chose to move from their former homes and try to find the new ones. Indeed, the coming of the white people made their life

worse even worst. It could be said that they were the hosts of the land, but they were driven out from their own homes.

Based on these pathetic experiences, there are a lot of authors who try to portray and figure it out through literary works. The descendants of the Native American who had been put into boarding school and learned to read and write, try to tell the story of their ancestors experiences in facing the white people. Louise Erdrich is an Ojibwa writer of novels, poetry, and



children's books featuring Native American characters and settings. She is a part of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, one of the Anishinabe bands which is also known as Ojibwa, Ojibwe, or Ojibway (Beidler and Barton, 1999: 1). She is also the owner of Birchbark Books, a small independent bookstore in Minneapolis that focuses on Native American literature and the Native community in the Twin Cities. Like all Native American writers, Erdrich shares the assumption that history holds the key to understanding Native American life. According to Louis Owens in Lee Schweningen's book entitled *Listening to the Land*:

Native American writers are offering a way of looking at the world that is new to western culture. It is a holistic, ecological perspective, one that places essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all elements but superior to none and giving humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the world we inhabit (2008: 116).

It means that the Native American writers give different point of view rather than the European American authors who write about Native American literary works. It is because they do not experience the Native American experience itself as well as the Native American authors. Ojibwa writer,

Louise Erdrich, contends that the task of Native American authors writing about place is different from European American authors because Native American writers must tell the stories of contemporary survivors and in all this; there is always the land.

*The Birchbark House* book series by Louise Erdrich consists of five books entitled *The Birchbark House* (1999), *The Game of Silence* (2005), *The Porcupine Year* (2008), *Chickadee* (2012), and *Makoons* (2016). The story follows the life of Omakayas and her Ojibwa community beginning in 1847 near present-day Lake Superior. But, the life of the Ojibwa community changed because of the coming of the white people in their land. Their lives were getting worse because of the new comers. They lost many things. However, even in the worst condition, they had to defend and preserve their tribe. Because of their struggles, the Ojibwa tribe still exists until now in America.

The contact of the white people and Ojibwa tribe in their territory triggers the annexation between them in fighting for the territory. Since the white people brought the law from the Europe which had been established, they wanted to own the Native American's lands as well as they thought that this land is a free land. It

was different with the Native American's principle in treating and owning their land. In the five books that this study used, they tell about the journey of the Ojibwa tribe before the white people came to their land and when they came to their land. There were several changes in treating and owning their land and territory because of the arrival of the white people.

Besides the differences on the issue of land ownership, the Ojibwa tribe has an obligation to survive in the land of America for their descendants. Land as their territory means a lot for the Ojibwa. They live in the land and also fulfill their daily needs by the natural resources which exist in their land. Since their struggles in facing the coming of the white people in their territory, the Ojibwa tribe has been done many things in defending their territory. Moreover, the territory means a lot for the life of the Ojibwa tribe and their future generations. Based on this consideration, this study reveals how the Ojibwa tribe gets their land back and maintains their existence and elaborates the reasons which make the Ojibwa tribe gets their land back.

### **Methodology**

This study is under the Post-Nationalist American Studies paradigm

since this study questions the dominance of the United States. This paradigm provides an opportunity to view multicultural such as racial and ethnic groups in America that have been marginalized by the American Exceptionalism's point of view. "American Studies practitioners could no longer sustain the fiction that Americans "shared" a national character based on common experiences" (Rowe, 2000: 5). It means that the racial and ethnic groups which have different experience in living in America can be viewed as the part of America itself. Then, it gives chance for the marginalized people such as the Ojibwa people to show up their experience as the part of the America.

In the scope of American Studies, we can trace and analyze the phenomena which have been occurred in the American history timeline. History is a substantial aspect to be dealt with for the past. Likewise, the past events must be strongly correlated with the principal data for this study. According to Bennet and Royle who state that literary works can help us to understand the time in which they are set: realist texts in particular provide imaginative representations of specific historical moments, events or periods (2004: 113). It tends to assume that literary

texts provide undistorted 'reflections' of their time. *The Birchbark House* book series tells the series of events of the Ojibwa tribe in finding their new home in order to maintain their tribe until now. Then, they also assume that it is possible for our knowledge of both historical events and literary texts to be detached and objective, outside the forces of history (Bennet and Royle, 2004: 115). Thus, the literary works and historical narratives are related each other in making better understanding about historical events of people which are studied in this study is the Ojibwa people.

The primary data of this study is *The Birchbark House* book series which consists of five books entitled *The Birchbark House* (1999), *The Game of Silence* (2005), *The Porcupine Year* (2008), *Chickadee* (2012), and *Makoons* (2016). There are three reasons underlying the selection of those books as the primary data. The first reason is those books portray the struggle of the Ojibwa tribe in the land of America. Even though they are the indigenous people of the America, but the coming of the white people have made them moving from their own land and finding new homes. The second reason is *The Birchbark House* book series tell how the Ojibwa tribe struggles for their land in

America. It is very challenging since it is told in the kind of book series, not only in the one literary work. The last reason underlying the selection of those books is the fact that those books are written by the Ojibwa author, Louise Erdrich. Even though there are several authors who are the descendants of the Ojibwa tribe, but Louise Erdrich as the Ojibwa author has produced a lot of works which have garnered numerous awards.

Then, in analyzing the Ojibwa tribe's journey in America, it is suitable that looks on their historical background how and why they can maintain their tribe until now even though many forces forced them to leave their land. It is supported by Payne and Barbera:

Historicism is the theory and practices which privileges historical explanation on the grounds that ideas, values, and practices – indeed all things human – are discrete products of particular culture rather than transhistorical manifestations of essential, universal features of human identity and society (2010: 332).

That is clearly that the journey of the Ojibwa people in the America can be explained historically since their existence is the product of particular culture which does not exist immediately. They have maintained it in a long period to gain their land as their territory where they can

maintain their existence for their future generations.

### **Discussion**

In discussing the struggles of the Ojibwa tribe in getting new home and the reasons why they choose to move, it is related to their historical background which comes along with their way in confronting the white people. The Ojibwa tribe gets a lot of pressures from the white people to leave their land and force them to move westward, to the reservation. In this case, the Ojibwa tribe is also told that they do not obey the white people to move westward to the reservation. They know that reservation is not a good place for them and their descendants. They prefer to look for new place to live and to maintain their traditions and cultures.

### **The Struggles**

Native American people are considered as savage and uncivilized in the white people's point of view. This is because the Native American people do not have the same educational system as the whites have. They do not have school buildings and school uniforms.

They believed that one of the greatest barriers to assimilation was the Indians' attachment to tribal life. By separating Native American

children from their kinspeople and sending them to boarding schools, preferably located far from their homes and communities, it was hoped that assimilation would be finally achieved (Hirschfelder, 2000: 129).

It shows that the white people want to kill their aboriginal cultures in the name of civilizing them. They think that the Ojibwa people who never had education system like them are not kind of intellectual people. However, they have their own way to educate their children and their grandchildren. They use oral traditions.

Then, when the white people come to their land and set up school, Ojibwa children are forced to enter the school. The purpose of the white people is to abolish their aboriginal traditions and cultures. They put their cultural values in the school curriculum. In fact, they also teach Christian values in the school. However, because the Ojibwa children are intellectual people, when they return from the school, they do not really practice what is taught in the school, especially in the cultural and religious sections which are not fit to theirs. They only practice how to read and write in English. It is important for them to understand what the white people wrote in treaties that they have to sign.

The Ojibwe relied on memory. They repeated stories, songs, the words to promises and treaties. Everyone memorized all that was important. Although people scratched elaborate signs on birchbark and rolled them into scrolls, they relied on memory to go with the marks. Memory was Ojibwe writing. Things were not forgotten that way. Something about the black marks had gone wrong, Omakayas knew that. The black marks promised one thing, but the chimookomanag wanted to break that promise (Erdrich, *The Game of Silence*, 2005: 20).

In the quotation above, it shows that the Ojibwa people have a good memory. When they are able to read what is written in the treaty, they realize that the white people revoke their own promises which they make by themselves in the treaty.

The Ojibwa people decide to send their children to the white people's school to learn English. It will make them easier to understand everything that is written in the treaties and make them easily communicate with the white people. If they do not understand English, they will trap and plunge into the confusion in understanding the treaties. The Ojibwa people "must learn to read, and to write the white man's language. If they do not do this, everything will be stolen from them" (Erdrich, *Chickadee*, 2012: 101). This is true because the treaties they have to sign

are written in English, thus if they do not know the content of the treaties, they will lose everything they have.

Ojibwa people never destroy nature and everything that is in the nature. Instead, they take great care of the nature in which they live in. They live in the land and can live by making use of everything in the nature. Thus, if they do not take care of that nature, just as they ruin their own lives. The things like these that never come to the white people's mind. They destroy the natural ecosystem to fulfill their living needs. They cut down trees in the forest to make settlements. The animals that live in the forest become homeless and become extinct.

Since they believe that their land as Mother Earth, they treat their land as well as they treat their mother. Mother gives everything what her children needed vice versa her children will give respect towards their mother. This connection which makes the Ojibwa people take very good care to their land and the nature in it. Without regarding age, gender, and position in the daily life, the whole society of the Ojibwa tribe participate in maintaining nature and the land which they occupy. According to Keraf, the Ojibwa people's behavior in treating land and nature is a form of their concern for nature

because they do not distinguish the position of human being and non-human being and it is called ecocentrism. Ecocentrism focuses on the whole that exists on earth, whether living or not. Thus, they are very conserving the nature and its contents as a form of their moral responsibility to nature since humans and nature depend on each other. Humans need nature for their survival, thus that when they take care of the nature well, they will gain goodness from the nature itself (2010: 48).

Although living in the nature does not always run well, the Ojibwa people never try to destroy the nature itself. As written in the quotation below:

“If something on the trail goes wrong, a tree falls across, a pole breaks, then we fix it. We depend on those who went before us to do the same. Once, I explained this to Nokomis. Know what she said?”

“What?”

“She said that was how the world should work. We should fix what we break in this world for the ones who come next, our children” (Erdrich, *Chickadee*, 2012: 180).

The Ojibwa predecessors do the same thing as well as the Ojibwa people now. They keep the nature very well for their future generations. It will be taught from generation to generation inherently. Thus, even now they will keep the nature where

they live in. Even, when any part of the nature is broken, they will fix it. They will plant trees to preserve the nature and save their future generations. It means that the Ojibwa people do really care for their future life and their future generations.

In the other side, the white people bring the laws from Europe including law about land ownership. When the Ojibwa tribe does not have a written rule that states this land is theirs, the white people assume that this land is free and they can own it. They also assume that nature and its contents can be utilized as much as possible for their needs as a form of moral responsibility towards human being rather than to the nature itself (Keraf, 2010: 47). This point of view does not make the Ojibwa people cede their land easily to the white people. They fight in many wars until finally the white people offer diplomacy to them by signing contracts and treaties which state that they hand over their land, they will get foods and goods from the white people. It is just promise that the white people never fulfill it.

Moreover, the white people attempt to damage the Ojibwa people's mind and moral. They introduce alcohol into their life:

“We hasten our own destruction sometimes,” said Deydey. “The

traders offer their 'milk,' which is that crazy stuff. Alcohol. Ishkodewaaboo. The liquid that burns."

"I have seen men kill the ones they love," said Quill, shaking his head. "There are some who cannot resist it. I, too, have drunk it. But now I stay clear. Too many bad things happen." "That is our enemy too, that trader's 'milk,'" said Deydey (Erdrich, *Makoons*, 2016: 88).

The Ojibwa people are aware that alcohol is also their enemy which makes them unconsciously do everything what the white people ask for. Thus, knowing that alcohol is dangerous drinking, the Ojibwa people with their intelligence avoid it.

They are not only wise in avoiding alcohol, but the Ojibwa people also have good resistance towards diseases which are brought by the white people such as fever and smallpox. Yet, it can be denied that they also lost several parts of their relatives because of those diseases. The ones who can survive through tough times are those who are brave and strong people. It proves that they are strong nation in the America. Though, they know that they white people are the great threat and enemy in their whole lives, but they will face it like a man. As the quotation below:

"But the biggest threat is the people who gobble the land. They are coming. They are white people," said Deydey.

"It is the treaty makers," said Quill, "those who do not keep their promises. I hear Little Shell speaking of the Great White Father – our president. He doesn't trust that one. We have seen what happened in Mne Sota. We have seen what happened to the Dakota" (Erdrich, *Makoons*, 2016: 87).

It shows that their peaceful lives are disrupted by the coming of the white people and they do the same to the other tribes. Many innocent people have to live in suffer of hunger and homeless. Dakota is their neighbor and they know each other since when they involve war parties long time ago. Thus, everything that happens to them, the Ojibwa people will hear the news immediately. Moreover, after both of them deal with peaceful agreement, they trade each other. Then, no wonder that the Ojibwa people know the condition of the Dakota people when they are attacked by the white people, their land is seized and many of their people suffer from hunger and homeless.

Living in the difficulties, the Ojibwa people must be able to survive. They were born as a great warrior. They have a strong confidence which gives them a great spirit. As in the quotation below:

Remembered Grandma's advice: "Take their ways if you need them," she said, "but don't forget your own. You are Anishinabe. Your mother

and your grandmother are wolf clan people. Don't forget. Also, you sweat-bath yourself clean everyday, even jump in the freezing lake, a thing that the chimookomanug do not do. My girl, don't become like them" (Erdrich, *The Birchbark House*, 1999: 110).

Their parents teach them how to live in this world well. Though the white people consider they are savage and uncivilized, but they are actually kind of civilized people. Even, they keep the cleanliness for themselves. Since they are so close to the nature and their clothes are also made of the animal furs which they get from the nature make them look shabby and dirty in the white people's mind. These two different arguments trigger quarrels between the white people and the Ojibwa people. However, the Ojibwa tribe never gives up immediately since the white people came to their land. They try hard to maintain their tribe, including the people and the culture. Then, by using their intelligence, courage, and self-confidence, the Ojibwa tribe is defined as one of the largest and most powerful tribes in North America (Waldman, 2006: 64). It is explained that they still exist until now in North America.

### **The Reasons**

In finding new home, the Ojibwa people do not immediately move to other place. They also have a number of considerations, such as beliefs, relatives, and the condition of the land where they will live in. These things are crucial for them since they have to survive their lives, their cultures, and their future generations. They used to live in their own way of life will maintain their traditions for their children and their grandchildren.

### **Belief**

According to Densmore, it is a belief of the Ojibwa that by possessing some representations of a dream subject, someone could at any time secure by its protection, guidance, and assistance (1979: 79). By having this belief, they become confident and sure in living and enjoying their lives. When they get dream, they believe that that dream brings guidance for them to face their lives. The spirits are from their ancestors who died and spirits of the animals that they considered as sacred animals. They believe that the spirits live with them and stay in their land before the white people came to their land. They serve to protect and guide the Ojibwa people in living their lives. Whenever the Ojibwa people get into trouble, the spirits



that they believe in will come to help them. The way the spirits help the Ojibwa people can pass by dream or come to them directly through any kind of medium such as animals. However, not all of the Ojibwa people can get this kind of vision. There only certain people who can get this kind of vision, it can be said the chosen people.

It is supported by Norrgard:

In Ojibwa culture, individuals had deeply personal and spiritual relationships with specific animals that would assist and provide them with guidance throughout their lives. These alliances came through dreams and encounters with animals as well as having a name or being part of a patrilineal clan associated with a particular animal (2014: 45).

Besides, in the Ojibwa society, there is a Midewiwin (Grand Medicine Society). They are people who are given more ability to cure illness and also get the vision of the spirits. They highly appreciate to the existence of the spirits in their lives because they get many things from the spirits, such as they are given a vision that living in the west is not as well as their lives in the northeast. "West is where the spirits of the dead walk. If the whites keep chasing us west, we'll end up in the land of the spirits" (Erdrich, *The Birchbark House*, 1999: 79). It makes the Ojibwa people believe that the west is not

good place for them. In the quotation, it is stated that west is the place of the dead walk spirits. The dead walk here means the other tribal people who have already lived in the west, in the reservation, and they are like dead people who can walk. It is because their lives suffer from hunger and desperate for losing their homeland and their family members. For eating, they have to wait for the white people give them food supplies since they can no longer hunt in the area where the animals are so limited. Living by depending on the white people is not good at all since they only give uncertainty things in the life of the Native American people, such as they do not know when they are free from hunger and so on. This consideration causes the Ojibwa people not to rely on their lives for the white people because they cannot be trusted in keeping their promises.

### **Relatives**

In the social life, the Ojibwa people live communally with their relatives. They often hold gathering camps like a sugar camp with their fellows and relatives. However, the arrival of the white people made them scattered because they escape in the chaotic situation when the white people attacked their land and burned their

homes, their wigwams. They run away in wherever they can as long as they do not meet the white people anymore. Thus, some of them run westward and some of them go to the north. They cannot move to the east since the white people came from the east and they occupied the land in the east. Many of the Ojibwa people who know the life in the reservation is not as good as the promise of the white people do not move westward. Instead, they move northward. "People were packing up to move on, to live on the mainland with relatives, for the end of the winter was harsh" (Erdrich, *The Game of Silence*, 2005: 201).

Living with the relatives can make the Ojibwa people easier to communicate because they speak the same language. Since there are so many Native American tribes in America that have their own aboriginal languages, it means that each of tribe will speak different languages. They will get into trouble in communicating with each other if they live with the other tribes which speak different languages. Then, living with their relatives can facilitate them in communicating each other.

Besides, every Native American tribe has their own traditional cultures. They will be easier in maintaining and

performing their traditional cultures, such as sacred rituals and ceremonies with the people who also do the same things as well them which is meant that their relatives, the people who come from the same ancestors. Moreover, they often perform such kind of rituals and ceremonies to ask for the spirits' helps. It does not work if the Ojibwa people want to do the sacred rituals with the others who come from the other tribes with different beliefs. They prefer to live with their relatives since they can preserve their traditions.

The rituals and sacred ceremonies are the part of their cultures. They have to defend the heritages from their ancestors. The existence of the people have the same culture and do the traditions are important in maintaining and preserving the existence of the tribe itself. It is because they themselves who do those kinds of traditions although the other Native American people also do rituals and ceremonies, but they have their own ways in performing their traditions. Moreover, they believe in different spirits. They cannot worship the spirits that they do not believe in if they have to live with the other people who worship different spirits. In the new place, although the place is not much different from their homeland, they

need to adapt to their new environment. As in the quotation below:

The Algonkians migrated to the Great Lakes region around AD 1200, where they gradually split into groups: Ottawa, Cree, Potawatomi, Menomini, and Ojibwe. According to Stanley Murray, sometime around 1600 the Ojibwe group began moving westward and split again into groups occupying areas around Lake Superior (Jacobs, 2004: 24).

In the quotation above, it is explained that the Algonquian people are separated into several groups. Even though they come from the same origin, but they live in several places in the same region. Migration makes the Ojibwa people separated into several bands. In *The Birchbark House* book series mainly talk about The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewas. However, they prefer call themselves as Anishinabe or Ojibwa which is their aboriginal name rather than Chippewa which is given by the U.S. government.

### **Condition of the Nature**

Furthermore, in the journey of finding new home, the Ojibwa people consider about the land that they live in. It has power towards them since it has energy to strengthen them in living their lives. According Leland Bell in Smith's

book entitled *The Island of the Anishinaabeg*, "The energy exists within the land – the North American continent. It exists within human culture – the Ojibwa's origins, history, present and destiny. It exists within the Ojibwa's spiritual teachings which sustain him/her on the earth" (1995: 191). They are very appreciative towards their land, they respect their land and even their land is so sacred and significant for their lives.

In preserving their land, the Ojibwa does not necessarily use all the resources in the nature. They only use natural resources which they need since they are not greedy in using the natural resources. They think about their descendants who will occupy their land. Knowledge about treating the nature is obtained without going through the education that is already well-established. They recognize the relationship between human beings with nonhuman beings like earth, water, air, animals, and plants. Based on this knowledge, they know that they have to be respectful towards the other parts of the nature which live harmony among them. They get such kind of knowledge by oral tradition. Their ancestors taught their descendants from the storytelling. They are taught how the earth was formed, how to

treat the nature, and so on. As Churchill stated that:

Human beings are free – indeed, encouraged – to develop our innate capabilities, but only in ways that do not infringe upon other elements – called “relations,” in the fullest dialectical sense of the word – of nature. Any activity going beyond this is considered as “imbalance,” a transgression, and is strictly prohibited (2002: 17).

They preserve their soil, thus if there is an activity which can damage the preservation of the land and the nature, it is considered as an offense. They do not take anything too much from the nature, only take what they need.

The land and natural condition in the north has several similarities with their homeland because they belong to the subarctic area. They will be easily to adapt in the land where they will start their new life. They also meet the Métis who are the descendants of the Ojibwa and French. They learn how to hunt in the new place by using cart from the Métis which they never used before in their homeland. However, since the Ojibwa people are kind of intelligence people, they can quickly adapt to hunt using new technique. They begin their new life and they will preserve their cultures of their ancestral heritage for their people, for their future generations.

## Conclusion

In the five books of *The Birchbark House* book series, it shows that the Ojibwa tribe can defend their tribe because they fight against the white people who came to their land. Even though they cannot defend their homeland, they have their own territory in the end that they manage by themselves. In getting their own territory again, they have to use genius steps, such as they send their children to the mission school in order to learning English.

The Ojibwa people hope that their future generations can speak and write in English. Then, they will not be fooled by the white people as well what they had done to their ancestors. Besides, the Ojibwa tribe bravely fights the white people who want to own their land until they offer the Ojibwa people diplomacy by signing treaties. They are not afraid in dealing with the white people who have more sophisticated weapons than theirs. Instead, the white people are afraid of the Ojibwa people that make them offering diplomacy to the Ojibwa people and promising them many things.

They lost their homeland because the white people trap them to sign the treaties. Then, they choose to move northward. Their journey to the north is based on

several reasons, such as because of their beliefs, their relatives, and also the natural condition in the north. The Ojibwa people believe in spirits. They believe that the spirits live in the same nature and land with them to preserve the nature. The arrival of the white people destroy the nature as well as where the spirits live in. The Ojibwa people believe that the spirits instruct them not to go westward. Then, they follow the instruction to go to the north. By having strong belief in Great Spirit which they called *Gizhe Manido*, they can maintain the existence of their tribe until now. This is because they believe that the Great Spirit always leads them to live their life, even it is the most essential thing which makes them move northward.

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## FROM SUSPENDED TO EMERGENT WOMAN, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CRITICISM OF ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the rise of the woman from a downtrodden woman to an emergent subject through an assimilated subjugated woman in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It is based on the African American literary approach and Mary Helen Washington's theory of black woman character types in African American literature. It aims at identifying the woman character types in the novel and discussing the woman's ascension from her patriarchal suspension into her emergence as an independent woman. Anchored on the hypothetical contention that the woman arises from suspension to emergence through assimilation phases, it was found out that during her gradual ascension and independence quest the woman subverts the oppressive patriarchy and its abusive masculinity and transforms it into a man equitably collaborating with her. Janie the protagonist born subservient to patriarchy like her grandmother Nannie fights to liberate herself through love and marriage. While the first marriage with Logan maintains her under patriarchal oppression, the second spousal union with Jody is a simulation of liberation that refrains her from public life and expression. Through gradual revolt against patriarchy, Janie reaches her desired woman selfhood in the third marriage with Tea Cake.

**Keywords:** Suspended, assimilated, emergent, African American literary approach

### Introduction

Zora Neale Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* captures a gradual transformation of the woman social position. The change in the status of the woman follows a long struggle for selfhood and independence through love and marriage. Janie the protagonist, emerges on the public scene after many years of oppression by the patriarchal culture. The publication of the novel followed the apogee of Harlem Renaissance literature that flourished in the 1920s. It occurred in the 1930s during the depression period. Like other writings

of Hurston, among others *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1942), *Mules and Men* (1935), *Tell My Horse* (1938), *Every Tongue Got to Confess* (2001), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* embodies black American folklore imagery. This folklore symbolism reflects the submissive position of the woman in the black American community and family. But Janie revolts against this cultural status quo. She confronts the violent patriarchy and masculinity and emerges as a full subject.

In what follows, I approach my argument by first defining 'suspended woman', 'assimilated woman', 'emergent

woman', and African American Literary Approach. These concepts will be presented through the description of Tyson's African American criticism and Mary Helen Washington's historical theory and black woman character types. This introductory section includes also the research objectives and the literature review. It is followed by the research methods, discussion, and conclusion sections.

Mary Helen Washington defines a suspended woman as a black woman character type who is "totally victimized by society and by men" (Myles, 2009, p. 176). According to Kimberly Nichele Brown, such kind of woman "leads a life of violence so extreme that her story often ends in death". Contrary to the bad condition of the suspended woman, the assimilated woman is a black female character type who despite some life betterment is "disconnected from her community" and cannot, therefore, live her selfhood (2010, p. 240). On the other hand, full subjecthood is achieved by the emergent woman. Working on Mary Helen Washington, Myles refers to the emergent woman as a black woman character whose "consciousness allows her to have some control over her life". Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* represents

all these woman character types through marriages and love whereby, Janie the protagonist pursues a liberation journey that leads her to freedom.

In her description of African American criticism in *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (2006), Lois Tyson contends that African American literary approach is a theoretical framework which is concerned with the relationship between black identity, social construction, representation, poetics, culture, psychology, politics, etc. and African American literature. She mentions that African American criticism is both subject matter and theoretical framework (p. 395). According to her, African American criticism emerged in the 1960s. The origin of the African American criticism coincided with the Black Arts Movement which flourished in the 1960s to address the issue of the social role of the black writer. The movement was championed by black writers, among others Hoyt W. Fuller, Larry Neal, Gwendolin Brooks, Amiri Baraka, Don L. Lee, and Henderson (Leitch, 1988, p. 335). These writers and critics were engaged to debunk racism by providing a positive image of black Americans and to work out solutions to improve the social conditions of the black community. Contrary to the



Marxist critics, who sought to interpret how literature represented the political, social and economic conditions of classes, the African American critics looked at the relationship between literature and the socio-political and political conditions of black Americans. They analyzed the history of African American literary tradition from Middle Passage to Black Power Movement through Underground Railroad, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movements in a bid to pointing out how African American literary tradition reflects the socio-political and economic realities of African Americans. This means that in its history, African American criticism has dealt with African American literature in order to account for the experiences of the black people in the United States. Put otherwise, African American critics look at the representation of racial oppression, classism, and sexism in black American literary works. Their aim is to correct the stereotypes of African Americans, the misrepresentation or omission of African Americans in history, culture, and politics. Apart from these thematic elements of black American literature, black critics converge on the existence of two prominent stylistic features in black American literary tradition, namely orality

and folklore motifs. This folkloric poetics is referred to as signifying. It makes African American literature unique and derives from African American folklore, storytelling and oral history and tradition. Thus writers such as Toni Morrison in the *Bluest Eye* (1970), Sonia Sanchez's poetry and Nikki Giovanni's poetry, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), etc. are rich in orality which rejects the distorted construction of black Americans by the White American mainstream literature by emphasizing the cultural values of Blacks. Works written by white people are also studied by African American critics. Toni Morrison referred to the construction of the black American by white writers and artists as Africanism. According to her, the white artists have represented African American blackness as the savage, the uncultured, and rebellious. Therefore, the task of the African American critic is to examine all Africanism forms constructed by white writers in order to show how the racial prejudices and stereotypes have characterized American discourses in view to keep the blacks on the bottom of the social ladder.

Mary Helen Washington's historical approach (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1992, p. 212) by distinguishing the cycle of woman

struggle for liberation, that is, the “suspended woman”, the “assimilated woman”, the “emergent woman” denounces the oppression of African American women. She holds that African American women have been excluded and or marginalized by both whites and black males. Therefore, the black American woman writer deals with her aspirations, conflicts, and relationship to man and children and creativity. Due to the double oppression by the white world including white women and the black patriarchy, African American women engaged in literary criticism to tackle gender issues without using the caption feminism. The issues treated by the African American female writers include the victimization of black women in the workplace and home, oppression of racism, sexism, and classism, passing for white, lesbianism, etc. In terms of characters, Mary Helen Washington asserts that African American women writings represent the woman through three realistic female character types, viz. the “suspended woman” or victim of men and the society as whole, the “assimilated woman” or physically liberated but psychologically victimized by the sorrowful past and white social institutions, and the “emergent woman” or self-empowered woman. Mary Helen

Washington maintains that such types of women are depicted in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976). Of the emergent woman, Tyson mentions that the “emergent woman” is the character type “who is coming to an awareness of her own psychological and political oppression and becoming capable of creating a new life and new choices for herself, usually through a harsh experience of initiation that makes her ready to change” (Tyson, 2006, p. 390). In addition to those three character types, African American women writers also portrait the “liberated woman” who has broken the racial and patriarchal oppression yoke. Such types of characters are represented in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), and Toni Morrison's *Song of Salomon* (1977).

Based on Mary Helen Washington's concept of female character types as described in her article “Teaching Black-Eyed Susans: An Approach to the Study of Black Women Writers”, published in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, African American criticism is pertinent to the study of black woman's quest for subjecthood in

Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In fact, the novel reflects the struggle of the African-American woman in a society dominated by male patriarchy and white capitalism. The characters are former slaves or slave descendants who struggle to improve their conditions in a society controlled politically and economically by white people. In addition, the women suffer domestic oppression inflicted upon them by the black patriarchy and struggle to resist it. Therefore, African American literary approach to the study of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is concerned with identifying the oppressed woman character type and examining how she rises to emergent woman character type by breaking down the heteronormativity of the black patriarchy. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the protagonist Janie plays all the female character types. In fact, the start of the story, she is a "suspended woman" and she surrenders to her grandmother and marries Logan, but she empowers herself by leaving her oppressive husband. While in the second marriage with Jody, Janie becomes an assimilated woman, in the last marriage with Tea Cake, she becomes an "emergent woman".

This paper examines Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

with the aim of identifying the black woman character types in the novel. In additions, it is concerned with examining how the woman who is oppressed and maintained in subjugation by patriarchal practices arises through love and marriage until she becomes independent subject controlling her life and collaborating with the man.

### **Methodology**

This study uses an interpretive qualitative method based on library documentation. Speaking of qualitative methods, Jane Stokes defines qualitative research as "a range of research paradigms that are primarily concerned with meaning and interpretation" which are typically used in literary analysis and hermeneutics and which are "concerned with the critical evaluation of texts" (2003, p. 2). The qualitative method fits in the analysis of the self-empowerment of the woman in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The research relies on two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* written by Zora Neale Hurston and firstly published in 1937 and republished in 2000 by Harper and Row, New York. While the primary data, that is the novel *Their Eyes*

*Were Watching God* is literary text which the research is about, the secondary data include the other texts which are relevant to the project and which support the analysis of the novel (Fabb, 2005, p. 39). These secondary texts consist of “other literary texts, diaries or letters, works of biography or history, or works of criticism and literary theory” which connect the novel under study to other research works pertinent to the issue of man selfhood and subjecthood quest among African Americans. The analysis of the data follows a descriptive and interpretive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 11). In the analysis, the researcher anchors the interpretation of the data on African American literary approach and the historical theory developed by Mary Helen Washington. The researcher interrogates the texts in view to investigating how the woman empowers herself from suspended woman to emergent woman through the assimilated woman. Therefore, in accordance with the argument developed through the topic, textual evidence from the novel and the secondary data are quoted or paraphrased and used appropriately to support the argumentation. The quoted passages are explained in order to maintain the

consistency and pertinence of arguments and drawing conclusions.

Many researchers, among others, Jordan (1988), Lamothe (1999), Abbas (2011), Marota (2013), and Kadhim (2014) have conducted research on Zora Neale Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Despite their different aims, approaches, and arguments, their works stress the issue of woman self-identity quest in the African American community. Firstly, with different aims, Abbas, Marota, and Jordan respectively in “The Concept of Love and Marriage in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (2011), “So this Was a Marriage! Intersections of Natural Imagery and the Semiotics of Space in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (2013), and “Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (1988) approached the novel from the feminist approach and focused on the romantic aspects of the novel and the issues of marriage and love and argued for the oppression of the woman and her later triumph by recovering her liberty. Secondly, May Kadhim Al-Khazraji in his article titled “The Power of Silence in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (2014), through a feminist criticism,

argued for the dichotomy of silence and voice in the quest for woman self-identity in Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Last, contrary to the preceding feminist studies the novel, Lamothe in her article, "Vodou Imagery, African American Tradition and Cultural Transformation in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (1999), did a folkloristic examination of the novel and argued for the author's use of Haitian Vodou folkloric imagery in a bid to depicting cultural transformation in the woman. All these studies done on the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* essentially focused on the woman and her quest for self-identity and independence. To the best of my knowledge, no research anchored on African American criticism has been done to explore the rising of the woman through the three-phase cycle of Mary Helen Washington in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

### **Discussion**

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* revolves around Janie Mae Crawford's breaking up of traditional gender roles for self-realization through love and marriages with different men. In her fight for selfhood, Janie revolts against the oppressive patriarchy that raped her

mother and grandmother and enslaves women in general. Through three successive marriages, she rebels against her husbands and eventually emerges as a full subject collaborating with her spouse in the new African American community. These marriages correspond to Janie's three stages in her revolt to break up of traditional gender roles including enforcing woman's freedom of choice, breaking silence and claim for woman's freedom of expression, and fighting for collaboration and equal rights between spouses.

### **Breaking the Chains of the Suspended Woman**

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie the protagonist fights for freedom of choice. Before and during his first marriage Janie struggles to get her choices accepted by the society. She manifests her subjecthood quest early when she starts to feel sexual desires at age sixteen and kisses Johnny Taylor, a young man under a pear tree (p. 14). This incident prompts Nanny, her grandmother to marry her to a rich, old, and widower Logan Killicks. This imposition to marry an old man is a symbolic rape of Janie. In fact, to be forced to marry an old widower is to be ravished by the cruel patriarchy that raped

her mother and grandmother. The marriage represents the perpetuation of the oppressive patriarchal customs that consider woman as the other and second sex.

Janie's life with Logan is characterized by her fight to get her female choices and desires recognized by her society. While Logan goes out to buy a mule that she will use, she conspires divorce by counteracting the oppressive patriarchy with a triangle relationship in simulating marriage with Killick while adoring in secret Joe Starks (p. 35). Her reaction goes contrary to the Black American patriarchy which, as Bell Hooks highlights in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004) is a cultural system based on the norm that males are inherently dominating and superior to females (p.106). In courting Joe Stark secretly, Janie rebels against the male power of Logan. This attitude of Janie suggests a symbolic emasculation of Logan by depriving him the power to control her. Actually, a potent man is, as David Gilmore points out in *Manhood the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (1990), "Man-the Impregnator-Protector-Provider" (p. 223). But Janie rends effeminate Logan as she reacts harshly to his demands to perform what the first wife

was doing including washing him, chopping firewood, cooking, etc. Upon these demands, she openly disobeys him and constrains him to chop the tree himself. Janie dares,

*Ah'm just as stiff as you is stout. If you can stand not to chop and tote wood Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner. 'Scuse mah freezolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah' don't mean to chop de first chip [...] Aw you know Ah'm gwine chop de wood fuh yuh. Even if you is stingy as you can be wid me. Yo' Grandma and me myself done spoilt yuh now, and Ah reckon Ah have tuh keep on wid it (p. 31).*

In defying Logan's authority, Janie is challenging the social expectations and norms of African American community. It is an overt assault on masculinity and patriarchy. Actually, in patriarchy-based societies like Florida, "the woman had to be a chaste, modest, submissive, loyal and a happy housewife, who lovingly supported her husband and nurtured her children, with no aspirations or desire to focus on anything other than her home" (Lockhart, 2015 p. 8). The reaction of Logan to the aggression of his wife is not violent since he considers Janie "spoilt and rotten". This domestic revolt of Janie is also illustrated by her rejection of Logan in bed. she never allows the old man to fully perform sexually in order to enjoy

consummation. Talking to her grandmother, she regrets,

*Ah don't keer who made it, Ah don't like de job. His belly is too big too, now, and his toe-nails look like mule foots. And 'tain't nothin' in the way of him washin'his feet every evenin' before he comes to bed. 'Tain't nothin'tuh hinder him 'cause Ah places de water for him. Ah'd rather be shot wid tacks than tuh turn over in de bed and stir up de air whilst he is in dere. He don't even never mention nothin' pretty (p. 28).*

Janie's insurgency turns her marriage with Logan into a 'January-May marriage' where the hard worker old Logan always busy to increase harvest is unsexed through an 'erotic triangle' (Godfrey, 2009, p. 7). In this triangulation, Logan is an old papp who ignores that Janie the beautiful dominatrix is in love with a seducing man Joe Stark. This fight for free choice in love and marriage is dramatized by the narrator. While Logan proudly goes out to purchase a mule in order to make Janie work and cure the spoil and rottenness in her life, Janie awaits the right time to seduce the passer-by Joe Stark (p. 35). Finally, her eloping with Jody without informing Logan (p. 39) is a completion of her freedom to choose her sexual and marriage partner. Janie's revolt demarcates from the attitudes of other women like her grandmother who still surrender themselves to the oppressive

patriarchy. She dares do the undoable by undermining Logan through social and sexual defiance and erotic triangulation.

### **The Assimilated Woman and the Breach of Silence**

The alienation of Janie pushes her to break her silence and claims for her transgressed rights. Her second marriage opens with many promises by Jody to liberate her from the conditions of the sign in which African-American women in Florida live. Using the Saussurian concept, African-American women were made signifiers to signify domestic work, motherhood, maternity, second sex, etc. Thus Joe Starks vows to emancipate Janie from the 'marriage market' negotiated between Nanny and Logan Killicks (Godfrey, 2009, p. 8). In his romantic rhetoric, Joe cajoles Janie to yield to him for a resplendent life, for 'a pretty doll-baby' like her is made to enjoy opulence rather than laboring too much to survive. Jody enchants Janie,

*You behind a plow! You ain't got no mo' business wid uh plow than uh hog is got wid uh holiday! You ain't got no business cuttin' up no seed p'taters neither. A pretty doll-baby lak you are made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo'self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you (p. 34).*

Joe Starks's cajoling words is a coincidence to Janie's determination to seek a man who loves her and who does not treat her like a material property. The caressing words ensure the independence of Janie through her love and marriage with Joe Starks. Getting a man of her choice is her achievement in the process of liberating herself. Contrary to the first marriage, this relationship is an evolution in her fight since Joe is nearly thirty years old and about ten years older than Janie (p. 33). Thus though Joe does not represent the "sun-up and pollen and blooming trees" Janie dreams of, he assures change and transformation of life with his mention of 'horizon' (p. 35). However, this authorial negation of romantic compatibility between Janie and Jody insinuates the patriarchal status quo which has subjugated Janie and other African American women.

Janie proceeds her revolt, later when she realizes that all the promises were ensnaring hymns. Actually, Joe succeeds in his dreams: he becomes the Mayor of Eatonville and all the people revere him (p. 59). He shifts from a lover to be a ruthless capitalist husband who employs Janie as a clerk in the store. In Marxist terms, as McGowan argues, in *The Twentieth-Century American Fiction Handbook*

(2011), like in the first marriage, the structure of property defines Janie's relations to Joe (p. 89). The fact that Joe "would hustle Janie off inside the store to sell something" (p. 63) and "he gits on her ever now and then when she makes little mistakes round de store" (p. 59) is an indication that Joe is a dictator who subordinates and silences Janie instead treating her as his wife with equal rights. When Joe notices that Walter, a regular store attendant, is attracted by Janie's hair, he becomes jealous and commands her "to tie up her hair." This indicates that Janie's existence in the store is only "for him to look at" (p. 65) as Joe confirms it by declaring that working in the store is her 'privileges' (p. 64). According to Barbara Christian, by enforcing patriarchal normativity over Janie, Joe makes her "his showpiece, his property" (1985, p. 58). In spite of his effort to undermine Janie's selfhood, Joe cannot win over her revolting self-empowerment.

Janie is aroused to the harsh attack on masculinity when her husband slaps her in public. Then as the narrator confirms "something felt off the shelf inside her" and the boasting character of Joe "tumbled down and shattered" (p. 85). To Janie, the harsh exploitation by Joe revives in her mind the enslavement experience of her



grandmother and the sexual violence of her mother because her life is not “different from what it was” (p. 90). From now on Janie can stand for herself during a conversation with other men and can attack their sexist views about women. She declares, “it is so easy to make yo'self out God Almighty when you ain't got nothin' tuh strain against but women and chickens” (p. 89). Later, exasperated by the abuse of Joe, she publically rebukes Joe to be impotent.

*Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no'mo' but den Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks my age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's uh whole lot more'n you kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'tain't nothin' to it but yo'big voice. Humph! Talkin' 'bout me lookin' old! When you pull down yo'britches, you look lak de change uh life (p. 94).*

This public offense of Joe deprives him of his power as the vigorous male in Florida who, as Coker confirms, is the greatest man they have ever seen in Eatonville (p. 45). Janie becomes a female villain, in the sense of Ann Gjecks Vick, who dares aggress her husband in public. In fact, Janie's declaration is an attack on his masculinity. She has ridiculed his phallus publically. Where phallic victory is characterized by ejaculation or power to

impregnate a woman, as Schubart confirms (2004, p. 189), Joes has not demonstrated potency in bed. Thus Janie offends him by 'attacking eyes and genitals' (2004, p. 196). Both sex and public male face are threatened in denouncing him in public and symbolically removing his testes. Likewise, by her reply to the dying Joe, “yuh got tuh die, and yuh can't live”, Hurston ensures woman victory over the forces of male violence (p. 102). In search of her redemption, Janie pursues the combat until she trampled down the oppressive masculinity and silences her husband, the “poor Joe!” (p. 103). Incapable to redress the emerging woman, he has to surrender with the last blunt whispering “Git outa heah!” (p. 103). Joe Starks's silence corresponds with the affirmation of Janie's voice which has been oppressed for many years. She unconsciously avenges her grandmother, mother, and herself from the patriarchal heteronormativity that has set them in bondage. With the death of Joe, the woman is enthroned to become a dentate matron who turns stereotypical gender roles upside down and subverts the patriarchy and male aggression.

### **The Emergent Woman and the Transformation of Patriarchy**

The end of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* leads us to the emergence of the woman as a full subject. The African American woman has labored to liberate herself not only from the gender binary opposition but also from the racial binary opposition which characterizes the modern American society. Janie becomes independent from gender imbalance oppression, yet she is still oppressed within the mainstream American society and culture which views her as an inferior race. Janie's fight for subjecthood ends up with an intergenerational marriage of Janie and Tea Cake. The author reverses January-May marriage of Janie to Logan to point out the 'downfall of man' (Fiedler, 1960, p. 63). Tea Cake, a cheerful young man around twenty years old with no property is seduced by the rich Janie in her forties. From a 'homosocial relationship' of Joe and Janie, the author leads us to a sugaring relationship of Janie with Tea Cake (Godfrey, 2009, p. 8). In this relationship, Tea Cake is a sugar baby pampered by his sugar mama Janie. Their courting opens in Janie's store. Following Gilmore's traditional concept of man as provider, this attitude of Tea Cake ensures the collapsing of the violent man, he stills

exists in *nominis umbra* or shadow of a name. Therefore, the author presents Cake with mere ludic eloquence, a harmless child-like lover without pennies (p. 122). Unable to resist the sex envy expressed especially by Janie's hairstyle, Tea succumbs the ills of hypergamy among others inferiority complex which is indicated through his statement, "you doubted me 'bout money" (p. 145).

Following the idea of Morley, Janie's self-fulfillment ends in the novel with the collapse of the old patriarchy. Running after a rich widow is an indication of submission and the fact that consummation takes place in Joe's bed insinuates the death of the father replaced by a boy innocently kissing and caressing a hot momma (p. 126). Janie, like a matriarch, avenges her mother and grandmother by desexing a young man, Tea revenging therefore on the patriarchs Logan and Joe. In her conversation with Phoebe, Janie shows that Tea enables her to vivify her oppressed sexuality. She "jus lak uh chicken. Chicken drink water, but he don't pee-pee" (p. 135). Tea is her sexual pleasure, a "new wine in the old vessel" as the author calls it (p. 141). Likewise, Janie rejects her rich suitors' proposals, 'poor, pee-de-bed' who are not endowed with the power to sex but

with nocturnal enuresis and overactive bladder (p. 109). She instead chooses Tea who can easily perform well and grants her full sexuality and subjectivity.

Janie's victory transforms patriarchy and restores her independence. The author excludes domestic hardship, pregnancy, birth and child raising, etc. from the last marriage but emphasizes a romance of hunting, fishing, watching movies, and dancing (p. 110). This shows that Janie's marriage to Tea Cake transforms the oppressive patriarchy and 'male aggressor' into equal spouse (Fiedler, 1960, p. 63). In this romantic relationship, the man represented by Tea becomes a 'sexless savior' for the care an 'eternal Mama' (Fiedler, 1960, p. 64). Like *The Blithedale Romance* by Hawthorne, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* there is a 'secret revenge against' the withered father who repents for all the abuses perpetrated. When Janie catches Tea Cake with another woman, Nunkie, she coldly asks him, "whut's de matter heah?" (p. 161). Upon this menacing interrogation, Tea, like a child, apologizes, "She grabbed mah workin' tickets outa mah shirt pocket an Ah run tuh git 'em back" (p. 161). On the other hand, the author mocks the inferiority complex of Tea who, being able to whip Janie reassures him in possession

(p. 172). The later part of the novel is centered on the image of the Great Mother (Fiedler, 1960, p. 12). Hurston crushes the dummy protective tendency of masculinity through Tea who tries to rescue Janie from a raged dog to his sorrow (p. 194). The narrator creates suspense with Janie's advice to Tea to call a doctor to examine the bite. But Tea ignores that dog bites are dangerous and he brags "Ain't got de damn doctor tuh study 'bout" (p. 195). Consequently, Tea Cake ends like the seducer in *Lucy Temple* who sinks upon the shoulder of his wife (Fiedler, 1960, p. 65). She is not a pretty 'baby' as the innocent Tea thinks. She is rather an independent woman. Likewise, the author ironically depicts Tea as master of gun shooting as he teaches Janie, but later we are surprised to see Janie with a rifle terminating the traditional masculinity represented by Tea who awkwardly tries to brandish a small pistol (p. 216). Here, the author is accounting for the strong woman in a quest to reforming the man who initially was abusing her.

The transformation of patriarchy is necessary for the African American community in order to produce a modernist man collaborating with the woman in the revolution of the racial American society. In the novel, Janie and

Tea Cake collaborate and both have their eyes watching God rather than lifting up their eyes to the lamp post set by the city vigorous male (p. 171). That is why Janie who is adored by Tea condescends to the proletarian class, working in the fields, sharing with their black fellows. Her independence is still limited by racial segregation which denigrates black people. Showing the racial imports of the story, the narrator mentions,

*A huge ditch was dug across the white cemetery and a big ditch was opened across the black grave yard. Plenty quick-lim on hand to throw over the bodies as soon as they were received. They had been already unburied too long. The men were making every effort to get them covered up as quickly as possible. But the guards stopped them. They had received orders to be carried out. "Hey, dere, y'all! Don't dump dem bodies in de hole lak dat! Examine every last one of 'em and find out if they's white or black" (p. 200).*

This racial differentiation in addition to sexism and gender boundaries highlights the construction of the other in the early African American community. Even after death, Blacks and Whites are not equal. Like other African American society-committed writers, Hurston follows Harlem Renaissance ideals to critique the social and political white institutions that

oppress the black minority and other minorities. Hurston through Tea Cake ridicules the White who legitimizes racism and racialism through "Jim Crow laws" (p. 201). This indicates that black American writers not only denounce the old tradition of patriarchy; they also attack the white normativity which maintains them in oppression. Thus after her victory over patriarchy, the African American woman has to fight on the side of the black man against the racial institutions.

### Conclusion

Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, reflects the rise of the African American woman. The story is a representation of a revolt of the woman against the oppressive patriarchy and its old practices which denigrate her. The protagonist, Janie defies the patriarchal beliefs and norms that oppress her. Valued with family property items, she is constrained to the domestic chores, dominated by man in all life spheres, and considered as "de light uh his home" and not more precious than a store and land (2000, p. 49). She is silenced, denied any expression right, judged as stupid (2000, p. 84), and slapped to death by the boasting masculinity (2000, p. 85). This violence pushes her to rebel against the oppressive

patriarchal practices. Gradually, she grows in rights from the suspended woman to the emergent through the assimilated woman. Through sexual and social status assault, she avenges herself, her mother, and her grandmother in particular and all women in general who have succumbed the sexual and social trauma perpetrated by men. Through three marriages, she forges her identity until she emerges as a full subject. She defies man in bed and in public until she fully emancipates herself and finds her voice to express overtly her femininity. In the course of her self-liberation, she defeats her first husband through sexual defiance, disobedience, and marital betrayal. The second husband is thwarted in public to be impotent while his wealth is used by the woman to court another suitor. After this long journey of struggle, the woman becomes independent and secures all her hitherto denied femininity. She reforms patriarchy into a spouse who easily collaborates with her to cope with life in the African American community which is dependent on the white domination.

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**AUGUSTINE TOLTON'S STRUGGLE AS A BLACK CATHOLIC AGAINST  
DISCRIMINATION AS PORTRAYED IN *FROM SLAVE TO PRIEST* BY CAROLINE  
HEMESATH AND *THEY CALLED HIM FATHER GUS* BY ROY BAUER**

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**Abstract**

This thesis aims to analyze how Black Catholics overcome the discrimination against their life in American society during the nineteenth century and also to explore what are the impacts of Black Catholics struggle portrayed in the biographies entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*.

The interdisciplinary approach applied in this thesis are including literature, sociology, and the concept of time and macro to micro by McDowell are used to enhance the analysis of Black Catholics' struggle against the discrimination that they got in American society during the nineteenth century.

The findings of the thesis show that Black Catholics did some actions to overcome the discrimination against their life in American society. The actions done by Black Catholics are the sign that they work hard struggling against the discrimination from whites, Catholic Church, and Black Protestants. Also, since this thesis highlights the impact of Black Catholics' struggle, it indicates that the struggle of Black Catholics, represented mostly by the struggle of Father Augustine Tolton, give the positive impacts such as maintaining the good relation among black and white Catholics, inspired Black Catholics to keep struggle for their faith and inspired the establishment of Black Catholics' organizations.

**Keywords:** Black Catholics, Father Augustine Tolton, Struggle, Impacts

**Introduction**

The existence of Black Catholics in United States can be seen from the early history of Whites settlements and also since the beginning of slavery era. As a black people and also as Catholic believers, those Black Catholics faced the hard life. Besides of becoming slaves, they also had to face the discrimination not only by the Whites but also among Black itself, especially from Black Protestants. The discrimination from Black Protestants

could exist due to the fact of the different practice and hierarchies among Christian believers.<sup>1</sup>

Raboteau in his essay entitled *Black Catholics and Afro-American Religious History: Autobiographical Reflections* mentioned that the apparent discrepancy between being Black and being Catholic is based upon the fact that very few African-American have been Catholic. So, Black Catholics are the minority within the

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett, J.B. *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans*. Pricetown University Press, p.203.

minority. For the Black Catholics, they found the discrimination, or they faced the religious prejudice from their fellow Blacks, the majority of whom were Protestants and racial discrimination from their fellow Catholics, the majority of whom were white (1986: 119).

In short, Black Catholics faced the hard life since they had to face three layers of discrimination as Catholic believers, first from Whites in general, from Black Protestants for more specific and also from the Catholic Church itself. The hard life that they face led them to fight against the discrimination and their position of being discriminated.

As has been noted that the existence of Black Catholics can be seen from the slavery era. There were also some priests that came from slave family also. They were James Augustine Healy (1830-1900), Patrick Francis Healy, S.J. (1834-1910), and Alexander Sherwood Healy (1836-1874). They were the Healy Brothers from mother Mary Eliza, a slave and her owner Michael Morris Healy, the Irish immigrant and landowner. The father sent those three children to the North, where they did not consider themselves as black. Even the Healy brothers became the priests from the beginning era, but many people did not recognize them as the first Black Catholic

priest due the fact that they were not purely came from the Black family in which the father was Irish.<sup>2</sup>

There was a Black Catholic man from a slave family called Augustine Tolton (also some called him as Augustus Tolton) that successfully became the first Black Priest in the United States. The family had a background of becoming slaves. Both of his parents were slaves in Missouri and they were Catholic. During the Civil War, his family escaped from being slaves and went to the Mississippi River to Illinois. They settled in Quincy, where there was a community of escaped slaves and a black Catholic church, St. Joseph's. In the latter years, Augustus Tolton wanted to become a priest, so he tried to enter the American seminary. But because of the racial discrimination, there was no American seminary would accept a black candidate. So he decided to go to Rome and he entered the priest education there. In 1886, he went back to the United States and he was assigned to St. Joseph's in Quincy. After he went back to the United States and became a priest, he still

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<sup>2</sup> Craughwell, T.J. *History of African-American Catholics*. OSV Newsweekly. January 25, 2012. Web. June 20, 2015. <<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/ByIssue/Article/>>



faced so many difficulties related to the racial discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

This study is going to investigate the struggle of Black Catholics as portrayed by the figure of Father Augustus Tolton. His figure as the first Black Priest in the United States can be the example of how Black Catholics tried to fight against the racial discrimination that they should face and how they should change their life for becoming better people as Catholic believers. Hemesath mentioned that Father Augustus Tolton was considered as a beacon of hope to Black Catholics in the nineteenth century who was trying to find a home in the American Church (2006: 9). Even previously it has been mentioned that Healy Brothers had precedingly become priests, but the background of their family cannot be considered as same as Father Augustus Tolton. Healy Brothers were mulatto since their father was a plantation owner. Here, Father Augustus Tolton came from both slave parents and he was purely Black Catholic. Due to that fact, many people considered Father Augustus Tolton as the first Black Catholic priest in the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> Craughwell, T.J. *History of African-American Catholics*. OSV Newsweekly. January 25, 2012. Web. June 20, 2015.  
<<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/ByIssue/Article/>>

The primary data of this research use two biographies of Father Augustus Tolton to explore how he struggles for achieving equality and also how they preserving his faith. The first biography that is used entitled *From Slave to Priest- the Inspirational Story of Father Augustine Tolton* by Caroline Hemesath, S.S.F. and the second biography is from Father Roy Bauer entitled *They Called Him Father Gus*. Even the emphasize in this research is the figure of Father Augustus Tolton as the representation of the Black Catholics struggle, in those two biographies, there are some Black Catholics that can be seen in the struggle. That is why the minor figures excluding Father Augustus Tolton can be used to find out about how their struggles as Black Catholics.

Furthermore, this research concerns on the struggle of Black Catholics since the topic of struggle can have the complex meaning to be investigated. If we try to explore the struggle, the study requires finding out the background for the struggle and also the impacts of the struggle itself. That is why taking the struggle of Black Catholics here can give the complex and in-depth analysis for the analysis of the study of Black Catholics that is portrayed in *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*.

There are two objectives of the study, first is to elucidate how Black Catholics overcame the discrimination against them, their life in American society during the nineteenth century. Second objective is to explore what are the impacts of Black Catholics struggle as portrayed in *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*.

### **Methodology**

This research belongs to qualitative research as it is mainly a literature study that relies mostly on library research. The researcher interprets the data in subjective manner using this mode of interpretation by using the micro and macro analysis and reconciliation of time perspective by McDowell to analyze and answer the proposed research question.

In accordance with the theoretical framework, the data used in this research are analyzed by using the approach of reconciliation of time and micro macro analysis by McDowell through the theory of racial discrimination to answer the proposed research questions. The main objects of this research are the biographies of Father Augustine Tolton entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus* is going to be treated as the main materials to find out the struggle of

Father Augustine Tolton and Black Catholics in general in facing the racial discrimination. Here are some steps in analyzing the data for the research:

Some sentences, quotes, lines, paragraphs, or parts from both of the biographies will be used as the data to be analyzed related to the proposed research questions. There are three main parts that are going to be investigated in this research.

The first investigation is related to the first research problem about how Black Catholics overcame the discrimination against them. In order to answer this research question, the analysis is going to be divided into two parts, first is going to explore about the reasons of the struggle itself. In order to explore the background of the struggle in which has the close relation with racial discrimination, the data that show about racial discrimination got by Black Catholics and also Father Augustine Tolton in specific including the statements, lines, and parts from both of the biographies are going to be used. Then, the theory of racial discrimination is used to analyze the racial discrimination. In this case, the secondary data about the racial discrimination that have the relation with Black Catholics are going to support the analysis.

Furthermore, for analyzing how Black Catholics have to struggle, the researcher is going to find some actions done by Black Catholics and Father Augustine Tolton in specific from the biographies. The theory about the minority-group responses to prejudice and discrimination is going to be used to analyze the actions. Of course, the secondary data about acts shown by Black Catholics are going to be used to support the analysis.

The second research problem about what the impacts of the Black Catholics struggle are, the data about the impacts of Father Augustine Tolton's actions to struggle and also the other Black Catholics in both biographies are going to be investigated. Several sentences, lines, quotes, statements, or parts from the biographies that have the relation about it are going to be used for analyzing the data. Moreover, the supporting data about the impacts of the struggle from the secondary data are very needed in order to find out the significance of the struggle done by Father Tolton whether his actions inspired other Black Catholics for doing the same struggle for achieving the equality or not. In this case, the theory about the effect of prejudice and discrimination by Yinger is going to be used to analyze the data.

## **Discussion**

Black Catholics in the United States had to face the hardship for their living during the nineteenth century like what's described in the previous chapter. The struggle of Black Catholics in facing the problems related to the racial discrimination is discussed further in this chapter, especially related to the condition that happened in the biographies of Father Augustine Tolton entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*.

In both biographies; *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*, slavery existed due to the fact that the backgrounds of Father Augustine Tolton were from slave families. Both parents of Augustine Tolton were slaves. When they were still slaves, they did not get a good condition of living. Because the parents of Augustine Tolton were slaves, they had no control and power in their own life. Their masters were the one who had the control of the life and any kinds of things of the slave's life. Bauer mentioned:

When the wealthy John Manning died, his widow married Stephen Burch. Manning's youngest daughter, Susan, married Stephen Elliot in 1849. Susan's step-father, of course, wanted to give a fine wedding present to Susan. He decided to give her some slaves. From his Negroes, he selected a half dozen of varying ages and abilities.

...Among the slaves in Susan’s dowry was the sixteen-year-old Martha Jane Chisley. Not included, however, were Martha Jane’s parents and brother whom she loved dearly. A short time later, the newlyweds loaded their possessions in carts took their slaves and headed westward. The teenage slave girl, Martha Jane, would never see her parents again (1990: 1).

When Martha Jane, the mother of Augustine Tolton was still young, she had to be separated with her family and she would never be able to see them anymore. Due to the fact that Martha Jane was a slave to Manning’s family, she had no control for determining how her life would be. Her master had the full authority for determining how the slave’s life will be, including for the life of Martha Jane for separating her with her family to be given to the Susan Manning who married Stephen Elliot.

Slavery itself can be considered in the high level of discrimination. Seen from the levels of discrimination (Parillo, 1985: 80), slavery can be included in the fourth level out of five levels of discrimination, called as physical abuse. The Blacks who became the slaves had to work hard and do all of the things that the masters asked. The lives of the slaves were dedicated only for working for the masters.

Slavery can be categorized as institutional discrimination based on the division proposed by Fred L. Pincus. “Institutional discrimination refers to the policies of majority institutions, and the behavior of individuals who implement these policies and control these institutions, that are intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority group. Institutional discrimination has the major goal to keep minority groups in a subordinate position within society” (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1994: 83). The slavery itself is used by the Whites in order to keep the Blacks to have the subordinate position in the society. Slavery is the system used by Whites in general in order to control the Blacks so that they cannot have the better position in the society.

Besides getting the racial discrimination from the White people in general, Black Catholics also face the hardships as the result of the discrimination within the Catholic Church itself. Mostly, the racial discrimination faced by Black Catholics in both biographies entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus* is mostly about the discrimination faced by Father Augustine Tolton. The problems faced by Father Augustine Tolton here are mostly

about the rejection of the seminaries in the United States to accept him as the candidate of priesthood.

In both biographies, it is stated that Augustine Tolton had the willingness of being a priest. In order to be a priest was not easy, Augustine had to enter the school for the priesthood candidate. The school for the priesthood candidate is called as Seminary. In the United States, there were some seminaries from some congregations. When Augustine was willing to become a priesthood candidate, there was no seminary in the United States which accepted Augustine as the priesthood candidate in their seminaries. Like Bauer mentioned:

In 1870, Augustine applied to be a postulant in the Franciscans, but his request was turned down. Then Father McGirr wrote the diocesan bishop about the devout, talented, and aspiring young man. The bishop advised father to “find a seminary which will accept a Negro candidate. ...the diocese will assume expenses.” The directive of Bishop Baltes was of no value, since Father McGirr had already written every seminary in the country and the responses all started with words like “we are not ready for a Negro student (1990: 7).

This condition can show how there is no seminary in the United States which is ready to accept the Black candidate for the

priesthood. The condition happened due to the fact that previously there is no Black who is interested to become a priesthood candidate. In addition, the position of Blacks in American society especially in Catholic Church was not good enough. They were still considered as inferior class toward the White parishes. So, when there was a Black young man wanted to enroll for the priesthood candidate, the seminaries in the United States were ready to accept it. The fact that there are no seminaries in the United States which accepted a Black Candidate for the priesthood can be happened due to some problems. The general cause here is commonly based on the reality that racial discrimination toward Blacks from Whites in this period of time was still strong.

Furthermore, the actions done by the seminaries in the United States in which they decided to reject Augustine Tolton as a priesthood candidate in their seminaries can be considered as exclusion action. Exclusion is in the third level of discrimination according to the division of levels of discrimination by Parillo. Exclusion can be like the separation from certain jobs, housing, education, or social organizations” (Parillo, 1985: 78). The actions done by seminaries in the United States which reject Augustine Tolton to be

the priesthood candidate in their seminaries really shows how they try to have the separation with the Blacks even for the priesthood education.

The actions of rejecting Augustine Tolton in all of the seminaries in the United States can belong to institutional discrimination. Pincus mentioned that “this kind of discrimination refers to the policies from the majority institutions and also the behavior from the majority group which applied the policies in order to keep the minority group in the subordinate position in the society” (1994: 83). Here the case is really clear that there were no seminaries in the United States which accepted Augustine Tolton and in fact there was no black priest in the United States.

Besides of getting the discrimination from Whites and Catholic Church, Black Catholics also faced the discrimination from Black Protestants too. During this time in the nineteenth century, the condition of Catholics and Protestants was not in the good condition. Even Catholics and Protestants share the same Christianity principal; there are many kinds of differences among the Christians. Besides, since Protestants become the majority in the United States and Catholics become the minority among the Protestants, they

do not have the stronger position compared to the Protestants in American society.

The development of Black Catholics parishes where Augustine Tolton belonged made the other non-Catholics became envious and they wanted to lure away the Catholicism of the Black Catholics. Hemesath mentioned:

The day school, to be exact opened on February 11, 1878, with twenty-one pupils, and, in the course of the year, the number reached sixty. No wonder that the Protestants took sharp notice of the new enterprise designed to propagate the Catholic faith. On April 22, 1878, seven children of Saint Joseph's School were baptized. This occasioned a protest meeting on the part of Methodists and Baptists against the Catholics, and they adopted the unanimous resolution to send all their children to the public school. They employed every means possible to hinder the children from going to Catholic school (2006: 99).

The development of Catholic Church to maintain the parishes by having the Parish school made the Black Protestant community to be afraid that there would be many other people who will convert to Catholicism. Even when Augustine Tolton had been ordained as a priest, there was some inhibiting of factors that he had especially from the other community of Black Protestants. Hemesath mentioned:

Father Tolton's work as a pastor was constantly impeded by the activities of churchmen representing non-Catholic denominations. They made their services so attractive to the blacks, the old and the young, that many of these were led away from the Catholic Church (2006: 173).

Here, the Black Protestants tried hard to do some ways to preserve the members of their community so their members would not convert to Catholicism and also they had the purpose to make the other Blacks to be attracted becoming the members of their denominations community.

The actions done by the Black Protestants to Black Catholics could be caused by competition. Like what proposed by Parillo, competition is one of the causes of discrimination and prejudice. In competition, people tend to be more hostile toward others when they feel their security is threatened. There are great amounts of evidence show that negative stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination increase strongly when the condition of a competition for a limited number of jobs increases (Parillo, 1985: 73-74). Here, the Black Protestants felt that their security in which the good condition of their parishes was threatened with the existence of Black Catholics. Moreover, the development of Black Catholics made them to be afraid that the numbers of Black Protestants

decrease. That was why they tried hard to do some ways in order to maintain the numbers of their members and also if it was possible to increase the numbers of their members by luring the numbers of Black Catholics to lure away from their faith.

Despite of getting the racial discrimination from White people in general, from Catholic Church and also from the Black Protestants that make the Black Catholics face the hardships, in order to get the better living they have to struggle. Of course there are some actions done by Black Catholics in order to struggle as the reaction of the racial discrimination that they face.

Like stated earlier, Whites discriminated the Blacks in common. Here, the Black Catholics also received the discrimination from Whites in general also. As the actions against White discrimination, there were some actions done by the Black Catholics. For the first case, slavery, there were some actions done by Black Catholics in order to struggle. Here, the actions for struggling from slavery were done by the family of Augustine Tolton. Bauer mentioned:

Fully aware of the dangers involved with escape, Martha Jane decided to try to escape with her children. Runaways were often caught

because slave owners had organized groups, with orders to hunt, shoot and even kill, any Negro not in chains after nightfall. ...Whatever the circumstances, Martha Jane was able to get her three children out of the slave quarters and head for Quincy, Illinois (1990: 4).

Escaping from slavery was considered as the right choice to choose since the condition in the plantation was not good for the directness of Mrs. Tolton and his children living. During the period of Civil War era, there were many numbers of slaves who escaped from their masters. The escaped slaves called as fugitive slaves. "Fugitive slaves" or "runaways slaves" refers to the slaves who left their master and traveled without authorization. They generally tried to reach states or territories where slavery was banned.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, after the fugitive slaves escaped from their masters, they had to get the job for their own living. On reaching Union lines, runaways might find employment—as laborers, cooks, teamsters, washerwomen, or nurses.<sup>5</sup> In

this case, the Toltons who could be considered as fugitive slaves, after their escaping process, they looked for a job also for struggling in their living. Specifically, the condition also became the same for the Toltons since after they arrived in Quincy; they had to earn money by working in the cigarette factory.

Overall, Black Catholics here were actively showing their actions against the racial discrimination from Whites domination. They actively wanted to do something to break the discrimination from Whites in general. As the main root problem of the discrimination was the slavery. The Black Catholics in this case represented by Tolton did the defiance actions in order to break the slavery that they got. Defiance is one of the forms used as the minority-group responses to prejudice and discrimination. Parillo mentioned that if "a minority group is sufficiently cohesive and conscious of its growing economic or political power; its members may act openly to challenge and eliminate discrimination practices. Sometimes the defiance appears as spontaneous, although it is usually the outgrowth of long-standing conditions" (1985: 88). In this case, the Black Catholics represented by the Tolton tried

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<sup>4</sup> Renford, Reese (2011). "Canada; The Promised Land for Slaves". *Western Journal of Black Studies* 35 (3): 208-217

<sup>5</sup> Rasmussen, William. *How Did Slaves Escape?* Virginia Historical Society's Blog. Oct 10, 2010. Web. 19 March 2016. <<https://vahistorical.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/how-did-slaves-escape/>>



to escape from the slavery as the action that challenge and eliminate the slavery.

Despite the fact that Black Catholics also faced the discrimination not only from Whites in general, from the Catholic Church itself they had to face the discrimination. The hardship faced by Black Catholics as the results of the discrimination from Catholic Church led them to do some actions for struggling. In both biographies, *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*, the struggle itself can be seen clearly from the struggle of Augustine Tolton on how he could achieve his dream to be a priest.

In general, there were some actions done by Augustine Tolton when he showed his willingness to be a priest. Even in fact, there was no seminary in the United States which accepted him as the priesthood candidate, some helps from the Irish and German priests really made him to be ready for preparing himself for the priesthood candidate. Bauer mentioned:

When no seminary or religious order in the country would accept him because of his race, the priests in Quincy decided to tutor Gus locally. The city was blessed with well-educated priests, both diocesan and Franciscans (1990: 7).

Generally, there were some helps from both diocesan and Franciscan priests

for tutoring and preparing Augustine Tolton for the priesthood education. The tutoring from some priests can be seen like mentioned by Hemesath:

The new pastor of Saint Boniface parish made immediate and earnest efforts to fulfill the last request of his predecessor- to help Augustine Tolton on his way to the priesthood. ...Soon Father Ostrop was planning a series for the young man (2006: 63).

Besides for helping Augustine Tolton with some tutoring, Father McGirr who had accepted him in the parish school when he was rejected in some schools also helped him financially. Hemesath mentioned:

Meanwhile, Father McGirr redoubled his interest in the candidate for the priesthood. One of the first ways in which he helped Augustine financially was by employing him as part-time custodian of Saint Peter's parish. ..For the six winters, Augustine had charge of the church, school, and rectory heating plants. Besides that he did as much as the parish chores as his time away from work allowed (2006: 61).

Moreover, the help from the diocesan or Franciscan priests were not only stopped on the local tutoring only but the priests also helped him for getting the formal education for preparing him in priesthood. Those are the examples of the

helps given by the diocesan or Franciscans priests to help Augustine Tolton in preparing for the priesthood education due to the fact that there was no seminary in the United States that accepted him. Mostly, those priests were Irish or Germany. If seen from the history, Irish for particular had the good relations with Blacks. Irish can be considered as the white minority among other Whites in American society.

The good relations among Irish and Blacks in the United States can be seen clearly from their first existence in this country. Both Irish and Blacks shared the similar condition for their living in the United States. Both Irish and Africans were taken across the Atlantic – Africans as slaves and Irish as indentured servants, not quite slaves but with similar conditions and both treated as less than human.<sup>6</sup> The Irish who immigrated to America in the 18th and 19th centuries were fleeing caste oppression and a system of landlordism that made the material conditions of the Irish peasant comparable to those of an American slave. They commonly found

themselves thrown together with free Negroes. Blacks and the Irish fought each other and the police, socialized and occasionally intermarried, and developed a common culture of the lowly. They also both suffered the scorn of those better situated.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, his strong hard work, dedication for struggling in reaching his dream for the priesthood could give the good result for his priesthood candidate. Finally, he could be accepted in Propaganda College in Rome even he could reach it with the help of other priests also despite of his hard work. The hard work and the dedication for struggling done by Augustine Tolton for the priesthood were not easy. Sometimes, he also felt so frustrated and loss of his self-confidence when there was no seminary which was willing to accept him. Hemesath mentioned:

He imagined himself at the altar offering Mass and speaking before the congregation about the “goodness of the Lord”. He reveled in this ecstasy for a while, and then his mind suddenly plunged back into a world of reality. He was black-an outcast- a runaway slave – a tobacco

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<sup>6</sup> Mulraney, Frances. *Black Irish Identities: The complex relationship between Irish and African Americans*. Irish Central. 24 Sept. 2015. Web. 20 March. 2016.  
<<http://www.irishcentral.com/roots/genealogy/Black-Irish-Identities-The-complex-relationship-between-Irish-and-African-Americans.html>>

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<sup>7</sup> Ignatiev, Noel. *The Divide Between Blacks and the Irish*. The Root. 17 March. 2010. Web. 20 March. 2016.  
<[http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2010/03/st\\_patricks\\_day\\_the\\_divide\\_between\\_blacks\\_and\\_the\\_irish.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2010/03/st_patricks_day_the_divide_between_blacks_and_the_irish.html)>

factory hand – the breadwinner for a poverty-stricken family (2006: 55).

This kind of mind is the negative self-image as the consequence from minority group toward discrimination and prejudice. A person's self-image includes race, religion, and nationality, thus individuals may feel ashamed and inferior if they are aware that any of these attributes are held in low esteem within the society. As the effects, the minority group members begin to perceive themselves as negatively as the dominant group originally perceived them (Parillo, 1985: 91). In this case, since Augustine Tolton got the rejection in all seminaries in the United States due to his race caused him to have the negative self-image toward himself.

Like what has been discussed in the previous part that Black Catholics in both biographies entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus* did not only face the discrimination from the Whites in general and also the Catholic Church. From the fellow blacks, especially from the Black Protestants, they also had to face the discrimination. The problems that led to the discrimination from the Black Protestants to the Black Catholics were because of the worry of them for the development of Black Catholics. There were some protest actions done by Black

Protestants to Black Catholics including for doing some ways for luring the Catholicism.

Facing this kind of condition did not make Father Augustine Tolton as the priest in the Black parish when he was still in St. Joseph parish in Quincy tried to do some ways for protesting back the actions done by Black Protestants. Hemesath mentioned:

Father Tolton, who understood the zeal as well as the tenets of non-Catholics, resolved to maintain amicable and respectful relations with all members of other religious persuasions. He respected their convictions and carefully refrained from downgrading their forms of religious worships (2006: 181).

What was done by Father Augustine Tolton here can be considered as the wise way for maintaining the condition among fellow Black Christians in his society. As the Catholic leader in Quincy, it was very important for him to maintain the good relation with the other religious leader, including the Protestant denomination in the place close to his parish in Quincy. Even when the Protestant denominations did some protest actions for the development of Black Catholic parishes, what was done by Father Augustine Tolton could be categorized as the safest way.

It is avoidance toward the further conflict among fellow Black Christian. The actions done by Father Augustine Tolton can be considered as avoidance as the minority-group responses to discrimination done by Black Protestants. Avoidance can be said as a way for dealing with discrimination, a way to leave one's problems behind (Parillo, 1985: 86). Keeping and maintaining the respects done by Father Augustine Tolton is the avoidance of the discrimination done by Black Protestants so that the problem will not go further to be more complicated.

Furthermore, the actions done by Black Catholics as the way to struggle against the racial discrimination gives significant impacts for the existence of Black Catholics in the United States. Here the impacts of the struggles can be clearly seen from the actions done by Father Augustine Tolton as the representation of Black Catholics who struggle for getting the right for being a priest.

### **The Good Relation among White and Black Catholics**

The ordination of Father Augustine Tolton gave the significant impact for the condition of Black Catholics, especially for the Black Catholics in his parish, in Quincy. His struggle to reach his dream of

being a priest gave a good impact since he could become a priest. When he became a priest in St. Joseph Church in Quincy, there were some changes for the condition of Black Catholics. Hemesath mentioned:

Further evidence of amicable race relations is found in the existence and growth of Saint Joseph's Altar Society. The organization of forty-eight members had been founded before the coming of Father Tolton. Eventually the membership increased and consisted of eighty black and white women. During its regular meeting the society worked effectively toward the material upkeep of the parish. Through group interest and cooperation substantial sums were raised to help maintain the church and school (2006: 171).

This condition can show that there were an increasing number of the members of Saint Joseph's Altar Society. Altar Society is a group of people who serve for preparing the altar for the mass. They have the duty for cleaning and preparing any kinds of requirements for the mass. The members here majority are women.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the existence of white women in this Black Church could become the indication that the whites and the blacks were able to work together for serving the mass or

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<sup>8</sup> Langlois, Ed. *Parish Altar Societies Provide Quiet, Prayerful Service to God*. Catholic Sentinel. 1 Jan 1999. Web. 19 May 2016.  
<[www.catholicsentinel.org/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=35&ArticleID=3832](http://www.catholicsentinel.org/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=35&ArticleID=3832)>

working together for the growth of the parish itself.

In general, the struggles of Father Augustine Tolton after he was ordained as a priest give the good impact or positive impact toward the condition of Black Catholics community. The good impact of the Black Catholics community in St. Joseph's Church or the parish where Father Tolton was assigned to lead had the good relations among whites and black Catholics as the result of actions done by Father Tolton to handle his parish. The blacks Catholics can gather with the whites and it means that they can accept the whites in their black society also. These kinds of condition reflect the positive impact from the struggle of Father Tolton. If related to the impact of prejudice and racial discrimination according to Simpson and Yinger, one of the impacts is self-confidence and group identification has increased among Negroes. There have been some forces to encourage them to take pride in their racial identity (1965: 149). The situation is closely related since Father Augustine Tolton as the black priest in the black Church had the confidence to accept the white Catholics in his parish and their attendance in his black Church encouraged him to lead the black Church.

### **Inspiring Black Catholics to Keep Struggling for Their Faith**

The death of Father Augustine Tolton itself also gave the big impact to the condition of the Church service. When the church services were reduced not like when Father Augustine Tolton was still alive, the Black Catholics in St. Monica's church of course got the difficulty for attending the mass and doing the religious practice. Even the condition was difficult for them after the death of Father Augustine Tolton, the spirit of Father Tolton still alive with them. The struggle of Father Augustine Tolton when he was still alive and ministered this parish made the Black Catholics in this parish keep the spirit was with them. Like what mentioned by Hemesath:

Two years after the death of Father Tolton, members of Saint Monica's parish called a meeting to discuss the state of affairs and to formulate plans for action. First, they decided upon delegation to speak for them to the archbishop...In view of these conjectures members of the meeting suggested that they try to get a priest from the Josephite Society in Baltimore (2006: 226).

The initiation of Black Catholics in Saint Monica's Church to have a meeting discussing about the further condition of their parish could show how they had the willingness for keeping their own church.

They wanted to preserve the existence of their own community and their own Black Catholics’ church and conducting the meeting for the discussion here is one of the real acts concerning about their church.

### **The Establishment of Black Catholics Organizations**

The spirit of Father Augustine Tolton’s struggle not merely inspired the Black Catholics parish in Saint Monica’s church. There are some organizations established as the result for the inspiration of Father Augustine Tolton. Hemesath mentioned:

There are other reminders that ‘the spirit’ of Father Tolton is marching.” Organizations dating from his day are living monuments to his leadership and influence. One of these is Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association (L.B.C.A), directed today [1973] by Mrs. Mamie Saunders. ... Two years after the death of Father Tolton, the Women’s Catholic Order of Foresters (W.C.O.F) was established with Mrs. Cora Spriggs as leader. This fraternal society is still active today, and blazoned on its banner is: Augustine Tolton No. 391 (2006: 233).

The establishment of some organizations in Saint Monica’s parish after the death of Father Augustine Tolton such as Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association and also Women’s Catholic

Order of Foresters is the sign that the Black Catholics in this parish again make the initiation for making their community to be stronger. Like mentioned in the quotation that they still have the spirit of Father Augustine Tolton and it means that they are inspired by the actions struggle from Father Tolton for their parish. The actions for struggling are the starting point to acquire group identification.

### **The Raising Conflict from Black Protestants**

Like mentioned in the previous discussion, there was a problem with Black Protestants while Father Tolton became the priest in Black parish. Hemesath mentioned:

The wide publicity and munificent praise which heralded the coming of Father Tolton added fuel to the wrath of certain Protestant church leaders. They redoubled their efforts not only to save their own church members from “Romanism”, but they also made many efforts to lure Catholics from the fold (2006: 182).

Father Tolton actions as a priest in his Black parish can give the good impact for the people of his parish but it can also make the other people like here Black Protestants not so happy. It made certain Protestant church leaders became worried for the development of their own church.

Here, they were afraid that they would find the decreased number of their church members. Somehow, luring Catholicism and made the sermons became more attractive were done by them to attract more Catholics people to their church denomination.

### **The Jealousy from White Priest**

Like what mentioned in the previous discussion that Father Weiss was jealous to Father Tolton due to the fact that many of his parish were attracted to attend Father Tolton mass. Bauer mentioned:

But the worst hurt came when a new pastor was assigned to St. Boniface Church, who was also appointed as the dean or leader of the Quincy area Catholic clergy. Father Michael Weiss arrived in Quincy in November of 1887. ...He was unhappy about his parish maintaining the church building for the Negro parish, and he was especially unhappy because many of his parishioners frequently attended services at St. Joseph Church (1990: 25).

The condition shown by Bauer above clearly show how a white priest was not happy with the existence of Father Tolton in the parish close to his own parish. Even they share the same job as a priest, the white priest here did not see him as the same priest with him. The fact that many of his parishioners liked to attend the

service at St. Joseph Church where Father Tolton was ministered made Father Weiss was unhappy. Here he showed the jealousy and feeling of unhappy. Those kind of feelings can be the sign that he still looked down at Father Tolton as a black priest and he did not want to be competed with the black priest.

### **Conclusion**

From analyzing the biographies entitled *From Slave to Priest* and *They Called Him Father Gus*, the researcher concludes that the actions taken the Black Catholics take were varied based on who they were struggling against from. The researcher divides the actions for struggling in three context, namely from Whites dominancy, from Catholic Church, and from the Black Protestants. From the Whites dominancy, actions like escaping from slavery then starting a new life by getting a new job and enrolling the children to school were the ways done by Black Catholics. Next, from the Catholic Church, the actions like being active in the local tutoring for the priesthood education were also done by Father Tolton as a Black Catholic. Furthermore, the actions to overcome the discrimination against Black Catholics can be seen from the Black Protestants context also. The actions like

maintaining amicable and respectful relations with all members of other religious groups could be considered as the democratic way.

Hence, the struggles done by Black Catholics gave the big impacts not only for the condition of Black Catholics but Catholics in general. Some impacts of the struggle are, first, the existence of Father Tolton as a priest gave the positive impacts for his Black Catholics community since there were many white people who had the willingness to attend his mass. The existence of whites in his parish bridges a good relation among blacks and whites Catholics. Besides, after the death of Father Tolton, the black parish of his church was inspired to keep struggle for their faith. Third, after the death of Father Tolton, there were some establishments of Black Catholics' organizations like Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association and also Women's Catholic Order of Foresters. In addition, there are also some negative impacts as the result of Father Tolton's struggle. With his role as a priest in Black parish, here are some problem appear as the impact of the struggle like the raising conflict from Black Protestants. Then, the other negative impact was about the jealousy from white priest to Father Tolton.

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## **RACIAL PASSING PRACTICED BY MULATTOES: A NEW HISTORICIST READING OF NELLA LARSEN’S *PASSING* AND JESSIE FAUSET’S *PLUM BUN***

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### **Abstract**

Racial passing practice is the act of passing or disguising as white by mulattoes, and it became a phenomenon during Harlem Renaissance. Harlem Renaissance is an era when African American culture related to arts, literature, and music were greatly celebrated. This era can also be said as the most glamorous and happiest moment for African Americans since the antebellum era. Using two of the prominent racial passing narratives during Harlem Renaissance: *Passing* by Nella Larsen and *Plum Bun* by Jessie Fauset, this research aims to find the depiction of racial passing practice in the two narratives in order to get deeper understanding of the issue. This research is under American Studies paradigm of Post-nationalist to take into account the minorities’ perspective in understanding America. The minorities’ perspective in this context is from African American’s mixed raced descents (mulattoes). As the focus of this research is historical phenomenon, this research also applies New Historicism as an approach. Based on the analysis, racial passing practice was a reaction from white’s domination through Jim Crow laws, and African Americans considered racial passing practice as a form of both “fooling the white folks” and a betrayal to their “true people”.

**Keywords:** Racial Passing, Mulattoes, Harlem Renaissance, Jim Crow, New Historicism

### **Introduction**

Jessie Fauset’s *Plum Bun* and Nella Larsen’s *Passing* had long been considered as two of Harlem Renaissance prominent racial passing narratives. The authors were mulatto women who lived during Harlem Renaissance and stayed in Harlem. Both literary works also depict the vibes of the era and racial passing phenomenon clearly. *Passing* tells about a light skinned mulatto woman named Clare Kendry who moves to Chicago and passes as white. She marries a white man, and have a rather fulfil life among the “white folks”. She

never tells her husband and others about her African ancestry until her tragic death. *Plum Bun* tells about a light skinned mulatto woman named Angela Murray who moves to New York. In order to have better job opportunities and be happy, she passes as white. She never tells her white boyfriend and her white friends about her racial status until she “comes home” to her African family.

Most critical analysis on both works have focused on the struggle of African American in getting the acknowledgment from the whites by using their African

Culture and Arts. Many also use feminist perspective either in seeing the limit of identity as an African woman in society or seeing gender and sexuality of the main characters. However, best on the researcher's knowledge, at the time of which this researched is conducted, there is no critical analysis which explore both works using new historicism as an approach yet, to inspect the issue regarding the power relation in society during the era.

Harlem Renaissance is the moment of extraordinary flowering in African-American culture. The Harlem Renaissance spanned from the 1920s until 1930s. Harlem, in New York City, was the principal location or the center of activity associated with the Renaissance (Brown, 2006: 218). This era is said as the flowering of the African American culture because they started to recognize the richness of their African culture and then explored it.

Hakim (2003) explains that during the era, more people in America had more money than ever before, and "hardly anyone seems to worry that some people are being left out of the prosperity boom" (p.264). Most people lived well, particularly in Harlem as the center of the era where all activities occurred. Based on

that prosperity condition, this era then, can be said as the most glamorous and happiest moment for African Americans since the antebellum era.

Harlem Renaissance was not only about having the best moment in the prosperity boom, but was also an important moment and turning point to show the pride in being African American, as according to Hutchinson (2007), also "...the need to disengage from and overcome an old Negro stereotypes" (p.3). During this era, African Americans showed their existence and pride by using their black culture and arts. It was as a way to overcome the negative stereotypes towards them that had been adhered to them for decades.

Unfortunately, aside of being the most glamorous, happiest, and the time in taking pride in their African heritage, Harlem Renaissance was also famous with racial passing practices where many mulattoes decided to pass as whites. Mulatto is a mixed blood (white and black) individual. According to Reuter (1928), the term mulatto includes individual whose parents is black and the other one is white. It is also includes individual whose parents, or both, is of mixed blood (p.1). Mulattoes are born from one of those parents. As their descendants, they usually

have lighter skin than any of the pure Negroes. If both parents were also mulattoes, usually the children's skins would be even lighter.

Belluscio (2006) explains that racial passing involves crossing the boundary that separates usually between the dominant and marginal culture, racial, and/or ethnic groups in which done by the member of either group (p.1). In the context of this research, this practice is about the act of crossing the racial boundaries to be in the dominant race, as seen in the way mulattoes were passing or disguising themselves as whites.

Seeing from the historical perspective, Du Bois (1986) argues that "...the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (p.359). It is because there was a massive migrants of African Americans who moved from the South to the North, beginning in 1890 until 1914. During this period, roughly 500,000 African Americans left their southern homeland (Wintz and Finkelman, 2004: 438). Following the Great Migration, the racial passing practice increased. Historians Thomas and Dorothy Hoobler (2003) record that between 1910 and 1930, more than 1.5 million African Americans moved to the Northern and Western cities (p.139). The migrants were mostly blacks

from the south, as Allyson Hobbs (2014) further emphasizes, it was "blacks with "no connections" and they brought nothing but themselves..." (p.118) to start a new life as whites.

This great migration gives chance for those migrants who happened to be light skinned mulattoes to take the opportunity and pass as whites. They then live in "the other side" and blurred the "color line" or the racial boundaries in society, in which never happened significantly before. Belluscio (2006) argues that "passing has traditionally treated as an exclusively African American phenomenon" (p.1). The sum of this "passers" during the great migration and following through the Harlem Renaissance makes this practice as one of African American phenomena in which would be interesting to study.

### **Methodology**

This research is under American Studies, a discipline which focuses on the study of America from many aspects such as social, cultural, historical, political, economy, literature, popular culture, and many others. Carlos Rowe (2010) mentions that many scholars of American Studies should lead the way in developing new methods of inquiry to be able to see

America in a broader context and to better suited to global condition (p.1). Regarding the Global condition, scholars of American Studies is demanded to create new ways to see America. Nowadays, understanding America is not only from the perspective of European descents or whites (myth and ideals) anymore, but also from the perspective of minority groups. Post-national American Studies is a result of this thinking because it takes into account the minority groups' perspective.

According to Rowe (2002), post-nationalist values the work, from both recent and historical, of "scholars whose concept of the nation and of citizenship has questioned dominant American myths". Post-nationalist also treated racial and ethnic issues as problem specific to the multicultural America (pp. 3; 9). Therefore, this research is under post-nationalist paradigm in American Studies because it deals with the issue in the minority group, in this context is African Americans which includes their mixed-race descendants (mulattoes). The issue is about racial passing practice phenomenon during Harlem Renaissance from the mulattoes' perspective. Accordingly, in *Plum Bun*, Jessie Fauset uses first person point of view from a light skinned mulatto woman who "pass". On the other hand, in

*Passing*, Nella Larsen uses first person point of view from light skinned mulatto who observe the "passing". Both works combined give deeper understanding of this practice during the era.

As the object matter is a historical phenomenon, this research uses new historicism as an approach to gain both the historical and the author's perspective of racial passing practice during Harlem Renaissance. Furthermore, new historicism is not only about using historical context to understand literary works, but also inspecting the power relation within the society, as Mojdegani (2016) describes, using Michael Foucault's work as a starting point, new historicism aims at interpreting literary works as an expression of or reaction to the power relation in the surrounding society. In other words, new historicist seeks to find examples of power within the text, and "power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized seek to gain" (p.14).

New historicism is also about looking at "how the text represents power and comparing that to social power at the time a text was written" (Vizan, 2017: 202-203). In that process, historical records are needed greatly. Therefore, as racial passing practice which depicted in the two

narratives is a historical phenomenon, the analysis will relate to the actual events of mulattoes who passed as whites during the era. Lastly, as racial passing is also a reaction of whites' power in controlling African Americans through Jim Crow Laws, the analysis will relate to Michael Foucault's power relation theory.

## Discussion

### The Classification of Mulatto

A Harvard Antropologist, Caroline Bond Day published her master thesis entitled *A Study of Some Negro-White Families* in 1932. She classifies mulatto into three groups: 1. a recessive type, leaning towards the Negro ancestral line; 2. an intermediate type; and 3. a dominant type emphasizing the European characters (Hobbs, 2014: 144-145).

The first group "a recessive type" belong to mulattoes with darker skin. Day describes them as "...leaning towards the Negro ancestral line" because the African traits are more dominant. The second group "the intermediate type" can be said to have both the same amount of blacks and whites' traits. The mulattoes who belong to this type could have brown or tan skin. Both African American and European American traits can be seen clearly. And lastly, "the dominant type"

emphasizing the European characters, refers to mulattoes who have the chance in doing the practice of racial passing because of their light skinned.



Fig. 1. Illustration of three types of mulatto. The dominant type (left), the recessive type (middle), the intermediate type (right).

<https://cdn.brainpop.com/artsandmusic/musicalgenres/harlemrenaissance/screenshot1.png>

In *Plum Bun*, from the way Angela describes her sister's bronzed skinned and great wavy black hair indicates that her sister, Virginia, belong to the intermediate type. Virginia have both black and white characteristics, and the black characteristics still can be seen clearly for people who see her will still be able to recognize her African heritage. On the other hand, Angela belong to the dominant type emphasizing the European characters because of her light skin or "creamy complexion and her soft cloudy, chestnut hair chestnut hair,..." (Fauset, 1929: 14). Other people who see her will thought of her as white, and cannot recognize her

African heritage right away which proves beneficial in her passing. In *Passing*, Clare Kendry also belongs in the dominant type. She is described as “an attractive looking woman, ...with those dark, almost black, eyes and that wide mouth like a scarlet flower against the ivory of her skin” (Larsen, 1929: 15-16). Aside from her dark eyes which indicate her “black” appearance, Clare Kendry also has ivory skin and blond hair, “Clare fair and golden, like a sunlit day” (Larsen, 1929: 137) which indicate her “white” appearance. However, using only her ivory skin and her outstanding blond hair, Clare successfully pass as white.

Mulattoes who undergone racial passing, of course, had to have lighter skin than the other common African Americans. Their skins are light enough which make other people find it difficult to detect their African heritage in just a glance. Based on the three types of mulatto as mentioned, the only mulattoes who are able to pass are “the dominant type” emphasizing European characters. It is because mulattoes who belong in this type really resemble the whites. They usually have light skin, and other physical traits in which they got from their European ancestors are more prominent. Their dominant European traits made it easy for

them to pretend and be whites. Therefore, in this research, the researcher will only focus on these light skinned mulattoes (Angela Murray and Clare Kendry) who undergone “passing” as depicted in the two narratives.

### **Mulattoes’ Status in Nineteenth Century until Early Twentieth Century America**

According to Reuter (1928), the term mulatto includes individuals whose parents is Negro and the other is white. It is also includes individuals whose one of the parents, or both, is of mixed blood (p.1). As the descendants from those parents, mulattoes usually have fairer skin than any of the pure Negroes. If both parents were also mulattoes, usually the children’s skins would be even lighter. Moreover, the family then is known as biracial family.



Fig. 2. Example of Biracial Family.  
European American and African American  
Parents. Vanessa William (bottom left) family  
portrait. Vanessa has light skin and blue eyes, the  
first African American who win Miss America  
Pageant in 1984.

<http://www.arogundade.com/is-vanessa-l-williams-black-white-biracial-mixed-her-ethnicity-nationality-ancestry-heritage-blue-eyes.html>

On March 4<sup>th</sup> 1815, in his letter to Francis C. Gray, Thomas Jefferson proposed mathematical equations to answer the question, "What constitutes a mulatto by our law?" He proposed that having 1/4 (quadroon)  $\rightarrow h/2 + B/2 = a/4 + A/4 + B/2$  of Negro blood is a mulatto. Meanwhile, having 1/8 (octoroon)  $\rightarrow C - q/2 + C/2 = a/8 + B/4 + C/2$  of Negro blood or even less than that, is no longer a mulatto, but is considered as white because the dominant white blood washes away the African's blood (Jefferson, 2015: p.1; Hobbs, 2014: 10).

Seeing the equations, even inspecting it carefully, is quite confusing to understand. The equations made it hard for common people to fathom which made it more difficult to be applied in daily life. How can people detect right away if someone they just met have either 1/4 or 1/8 Negro blood? or were they even a mulatto or not? The answer is very impossible. The purpose of the equation might be to facilitate the judge in defining the whiteness of a person, to make their job easier. It helps a lot in categorizing a person as legally white or not back in the day. Having only 1/8 of Negro blood

makes the person no longer a mulatto, which means the person can live legally as white. Meanwhile, having 1/4 of Negro blood defines the person as a mulatto, which means the person is black.

The application on this equation in daily life turned out to be impossible, because in order to get the result from this equation, of course, the family tree would need to be traced back too. Therefore, the process of this equation to find its result will take too much time. According to Nobles (2000), the categories of "quadroon" and "octoroon" did not survive beyond the 1890 census, and "mulatto" had a brief hiatus in 1900 (p.68).

It is interesting that after years, whites found it difficult to keep up with their own equation in categorizing the mulattoes, and the equation was left eventually. Given the difficulty in defining where they belong, these mulattos even had been considered as the tragic mulatto. Davis (1955) says that tragic mulatto refers to mulattoes who suffer because of difficulties arising from their biracial background (p.195). Thus, mulattoes were called as tragic individuals because they did not belong and were not really accepted by both blacks and whites.

Prof Dugas in his article, *The American Colton Plator* 1860 gives a



comparison of physical qualities of pure Negro and mulattoes. He argues that mulattoes are generally much shorter lived than pure Negroes or unmixed blood. He says that “it is so because God made it so; and that he made it so because it was not pleasing to him that the fruits of such an unnatural and unholy commerce should remain long on the earth” (Frazier, 1933: 12). It can be seen that the existence of mulattoes during nineteenth century was undesirable. The negative stereotypes towards blacks were already bad, and apparently, the negative stereotypes towards mulattoes were worse than that.

In the following years, people found the equation from Thomas Jefferson about  $1/4$  or  $1/8$  Negro blood to define a Negro, more difficult to be applied. According to Saperstein & Gullickson (2013), “this perceived lack of reliability in the counts, along with the eventual widespread adoption of the one-drop rule prompted the Census Bureau to remove the category of “mulatto” after the 1920 count” (p.4). Along that time, whites simplify their difficulty in defining these mulatto by adopting a new rule, the one-drop rule.

The term mulatto was not included in the census anymore, as seen in the 1920 count. Apparently, even for whites, the equation proved to be difficult and was not

efficient. Based on the one-drop rule, there were no longer mulatto, as any person who had even one single drop of African blood was considered black. Since then, the one-drop-rule make categorizing became easier. According to Wald (2000), the one-drop rule is a fundamental law which stated that “a drop” or even a preponderance of “white blood” does not make that person “white” (p.12). It emphasizes that even a person who has dominant white blood than black blood did not make that person become white. On the contrary, even one single black blood in a person makes that person completely black. Therefore, no more equations needed.

The rule then became important as it had been used in the US for decades. The rule allowed government to categorize only whites and blacks, with nothing in between, which means they did not regard mulattoes at all. If then, a mulatto who had only  $1/8$  Negro blood and less can be considered as white and be legally white, this one-drop rule defined every mulatto as blacks because of their African blood. The term mulatto is still used, however, there were no longer white mulattoes or black mulattoes, only mulattoes as Negro, regardless of the white traits and white blood they have. Therefore, it can be seen

that this rule exist not for the sake of equality between blacks and whites, but for the sake of whites who want to maintain their dominant and superiority over blacks.



Fig. 3. The Jhonstons Family Portrait. Light Skinned Mulatto Family during the twentieth century. The whole family passed as whites.

<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/passing-is-the-caste-system-real-or-fiction-among-tamils/>

During Harlem Renaissance, regardless of this rule, many mulattoes still took risk by doing racial passing practices. As long as no one found out, light skinned mulattoes took as much as advantages from their appearance. The Jhonstons family as seen in the historical portrait above, was one of the real examples of racial passing practice. Having the dominant European traits, the whole family passed as whites to have better life. In *Passing* and *Plum Bun*, the one-drop-rule also affected light skinned mulattoes, Angela and Clare, in choosing their life path as whites.

### **Whites' Domination over Blacks through Jim Crow Laws**

As Mojdegani (2016) states, using Michael Foucault's work as a starting point, new historicism aims at interpreting literary works as an expression of or reaction to the power relation in the surrounding society. In other words, new historicist seeks to find examples of power within the text, and "power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized seek to gain" (p.14). Furthermore, new historicism is also about looking at "how the text represents power and comparing that to social power at the time a text was written" (Vizan, 2017: 202-203) by using historical records.

During Harlem Renaissance, despite the glamor, the happy vibes, and the pride of being African Americans, racial passing still happened. It was because racial discrimination towards blacks still lurking throughout the nation, as seen in the existence of Jim Crow laws. The laws segregated whites and blacks in daily life. Although blacks and whites lived side by side, blacks were placed in the not so comfortable places with many limitations in many aspects in life such as: occupations, social, economy, education, and many others. From these laws, it can

be seen that whites maintain their power and superiority over blacks.

The segregation between blacks and whites existed in America for quite a long time. According to Axelrod (2002), racial segregation of Jim Crow effected roughly from the 1880s through the 1960s (p.156), which means, Harlem Renaissance during the early twentieth century also experienced this segregation life and got the impact from it. Seeing as segregation still existed in all states in America at that time, “passing” as whites was a promising path. Accordingly, this segregation then can also be said as the main cause of racial passing practice which done by many light skinned mulattoes during the era.

In *Plum Bun*, every Saturday, the white Angela usually go with her white mother, and the brown Virginia with her black father. Angela and her mother usually go downtown to white-only places to enjoy its services indoor. It is so easy because of their light skinned. On the contrary, the only pleasant place for Virginia and her father, Junius, which they could really enjoy were outdoors doing outdoor activities or sports. Whereas, if they went downtown, there were only few choices of place that gave access to people with dark skin like them. Since their early age, the brown Virginia and the white

Angela learn the difference of their skin color, what it means, and what it entails. Unconsciously, the brown Virginia started to follow her father’s step which is taking pride of being Negro. Indeed, they only have that choice because of their physical appearance. Meanwhile, the white Angela follows her mother’s step which is enjoying the advantages of having light skin in every chance.

While Fauset in *Plum Bun* introduces the segregation life in Philadelphia, Larsen in *Passing* introduces the segregation life in Chicago. Early in the narrative, Larsen introduces the segregation life in an interesting way. She starts her story by describing her character Irene Redfield, who went out of her town on Harlem to Chicago. Irene was shopping in when she decided to take some rest in the middle of that sizzling day. Her taxi-driver then drove her to Drayton, one of the finest ‘white-only’ café in Chicago. As a mulatto, and having light skin herself, she calmly enters the café and have the waitress serviced her a tea. Later she thought, “It was not that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even of having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place, even in the polite and tactful way in which the Drayton would

probably do it, that disturbed her” (Larsen, 1929: 19).

Irene decision to use her light skin to pass as a white woman to enjoy her afternoon tea in the most respectable place was unplanned. Supported by her white appearance, she did that effortlessly. However, Irene still cautious that people in the café would know about her African's blood, would know of her passing, and that she will be ejected from the place. From this narrative, it can be seen that in segregation society, the best of public privileges were served only to the whites. The whites as the dominant groups have access to the nicest, finest, and respectable places of all. Meanwhile, the black as the marginal groups have to be satisfied enough for whatever they were given by the whites. Just as depicted in *Plum Bun* and *Passing*, whether it was in Philadelphia or it was in Chicago, the segregation was the same. During this era, the segregation really separated the whites and blacks activities in daily life. The separation was really more beneficial to the whites than to the blacks. Whites maintain their power and superiority over black through this segregation of Jim Crow.

### **White for Freedom**

This segregation arose the idea that white was the color of freedom. As depicted in the two narratives, being white means easier life, prosperity and respect (Larsen, 1929: 37; Fauset, 1929: 82). Accordingly, in the segregation society, being whites as the dominant group of race means having freedom and was better than being blacks as the inferior group of race with many limitations. It is because whites as the dominant groups have access to the nicest, the finest, and respectable places of all. Meanwhile, blacks as the marginal groups have to be satisfied enough for whatever they were given by the whites.

In *Passing*, Clare Kendry declares to Irene in the early narrative that it was easier to be white than to be blacks. “You’d be surprised, Rene, how much easier that is with white people than with us.” (Larsen, 1929: 37). According to Clare, it was so much easier to live among white people and be white rather than to live among blacks with all the racial discrimination towards them, “... or maybe because they [whites] are secure and so don’t have to bother. I’ve never quite decided” (Larsen, 1929: 38), she said. The way Clare Kendry describes her easy life as a white woman during her “passing” depicts that to be white as the

dominant and marginal ones in the segregation society means that you were more secure, free and could get whatever you need easily. On the other hand, being black as the inferior ones in the segregation society means the opposite.

As depicted in the two narratives, the passers, Angela Murray and Clare Kendry think that white people were free to choose their own path and free to use all the best privileges that the government offered, which means life would be easier and fulfillment in life can be reached. Meanwhile, being blacks means there were no freedom as life would be harder to live in with the limitation from Jim Crow laws. Thus, it means no fulfillment in life, because African Americans as the inferior ones during the segregation and through Harlem Renaissance lives under the white's control.

Being African Americans who lived during the segregation was unpleasant experiences. Kennedy (1999) explains that Jim Crow is social and economic segregation (p.19). It is not just keeping the barrier between whites and blacks in daily life, for instance, separated access on public services, this segregation also creates difficulties for African Americans to be better individuals economically

because they often deprived of the best job opportunities.

In *Plum Bun*, to her sister Virginia, Angela shares her experiences of often being regarded as a white woman because of her light skin. "But as long as they didn't know it didn't matter" (Fauset, 1929: 78). People treat her nicely and with respect, yet when they know about her African's blood, people starts to treat her differently. Her instructors Mr. and Mrs. Shields in the academy where Angela took her course in painting often praised her works by saying that she would be a great artist someday, and they also offered her many recommendations to choose. However, when they know that Angela was actually a "colored" girl, they retreated themselves from her and kept their distance. It can be seen that during the segregation, having African blood or just being African Americans decrease the opportunity to be a successful individual. Despite Angela's skill and talents in painting, she was deprived of the opportunity of success after her African blood is known.

During this segregation, whites were given better job opportunities than blacks. The choices of job opportunities for blacks were limited by Jim Crow Laws. Thus, for blacks to be a successful individual were

difficult to achieve. In *Plum Bun*, Angela says, "...all the things which she most wanted were wrapped up with white people. All the good things were theirs" (Fauset, 1929: 74). The depiction of difficulty regarding black occupations in which depicted in *Plum Bun* is very similar to the real life. From the narrative, it can be said that many racial passing narratives which created during this era were a reaction from writers to the whites' domination over blacks through Jim Crow Laws.

In *Plum Bun*, when Angela went to the theater with her black friend Matthew, the security guard restrained Matthew from entering the theater and not Angela. Angela was save because the security cannot see her African blood through her light skin. If the security knew that Angela was also "colored", he would definitely restrain her from entering the theater. Accordingly, in the segregation society, it was not the matter of individuals' quality that made them special, it was the matter of belonging in the dominant race or not.

It is very often for light skinned mulattoes to be mistaken as white in daily life, just like Angela, and experience the disappointment. Ironically, as long as people thought they were white, they would be treated nicely, yet when their

African heritage was known, they were treated differently. "...it isn't being colored that makes the difference, it's letting it be known", Angela said (Fauset, 1929: 78). As a result, for those light skinned mulattoes, hiding the African heritage is a better option for them who desired to be treated better and to be free to choose better opportunities. Based on this view, it is not surprising that during the segregation and following through Harlem Renaissance, many light skinned mulattoes hide their African heritage to pass as whites not only temporarily, but also permanently. They moved out of their hometown, hide their past, and live in a new world full of promises of being white.

Using the famous saying from Alyson Hobbs (2014) "What you don't know won't hurt you", she further explains that in a segregation society, "as long as race was invisible or unknown, it did not matter" (p.11). When white people did not aware of the African's blood in the mulattoes, they treated them like they treated other whites. They treated them nicely and with respect. Only when they were aware of the African's blood that the barrier started to go up and the color line redrawn. Thus why in *Plum Bun*, during her passing and staying in New York, Angela often wonders what would

happened to her if people around her knew about her. “If she were to say to this next woman for instance, I’m colored, would she refuse to sit by her or make complaint to the usher? ... I wonder what he’d say if he really knew?” (Fauset, 1929: 92;102). She was afraid that the color line would be redrawn, and that she would be divested of her achievements once her African blood is known.

In December 1926, *Opportunity* magazine published a semi autobiographical story by Caroline Bond Day. The story was about Sarah, a Negro woman of mixed blood, who enjoys limitless courtesies while wearing a pink hat. The hat is said to be plain and made of straw, but it metamorphosed into her “enchanted cloak,” it re-creates Sarah’s life into more possibilities and adventure as a white woman. Because of the hat, her life changes. “A gentleman offered her a seat on the train, a young man helped her off of a railway car and retrieved her lost gloves, and a salesgirl addressed her as “Mrs.”, a respectful title reserved for white women only”. All of that happened because Sarah allows the hat to conceal her curly Negro hair (Hobbs, 2014: 124). From this issue, it can be seen that by acting and dressing the part of being white, mulattoes can get more possibilities and

opportunities in life. By wearing the pink hat and act like a white woman, Sarah’s life became better.

Sarah realization that she could use her light skin for better opportunities in life mirrors Angela in *Plum Bun*. Angela often stressed to Virginia and her black friends in the neighborhood, that every individual deserved to be happy, and it was no use to deny something that would create happiness, “doesn’t anyone think that we have a right to be happy simply, naturally?” (Fauset, 1929: 54). Even during her passing, Angela was proud of herself that she let her appearance helped her in getting the happiness she deserved. She realizes that her appearance is the key to her happiness, “here I am having everything that a girl ought to have just because I had sense enough to suit my actions to my appearance (Fauset, 1929: 124).

When Angela shared to her sister that she intended to go away and pass as white, she said, “...after all I am both white and Negro and look white. Why shouldn’t I declare for the one that will bring me the greatest happiness, prosperity and respect?” (Fauset, 1929: 82). Seeing that her happiness would only come by using her light skin, Angela saw it as no need to reject the opportunity anymore.

Angela reckons that "...all the things which she most wanted were wrapped up with white people. All the good things were theirs" (Fauset, 1929: 74). Therefore, she went to New York to pass as white and started a new life as a white woman. She believes that being white would bring her "...the greatest happiness, prosperity and respect". She welcomes the freedom to be able to choose her own path, and also welcomes the unlimited opportunities by being white.

### **Fauset and Larsen's Views about Racial Passing Practice**

Greenblatt (1989) in his essay, entitled "Towards a Poetic of Culture" proposes that the new historicism will view the work of art itself as "the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators" and practices of society (p.12). It can be concluded that the work of art, was socially and historically determined by the "practices of society". In the context of literary works, there was a negotiation between the author and the society where the author had lived and stayed. That negotiation gave birth to the literary works of the era. Therefore, it can be said that literary works can be used in understanding a particular issue in history

using the author's perspective, and vice versa.

Greenblatt (1989) shows the possibility of understanding history not only from historians, but also from the author's perspectives in literary works (p.12). It is because both are interconnected. Tyson (2006) further argues that historical analysis is unavoidably subjective (p.289). It further supports that understanding history need more perspectives, and cannot only focusing on the historians' perspective. In the context of literary works, the author's perspective could add more understanding on particular issue in history.

Regarding the author's perspective, both authors view the racial passing practice for those who pass temporarily as depicted by Angela and her mother in *Plum Bun* and by Irene in *Passing* as an entertainment or a joke. The act of "fooling the white folks" was very common during the era. Light skinned mulattoes found it was fun to fool the whites by using their appearances. It is interesting to know that what Irene Redfield did in *Passing* also happened in Larsen's real life. In her letter to Carl Van Vechten in 1932, Larsen described her real-life experience. In the company of her friend Grace Nail Johnson, James Welden



Johnson's light-skinned wife, and without her own identifiably black husband, Larsen and her friend easily passed as white. They "walked to the best restaurant in a rather conservative town called Murfreesboro and demanded lunch and got it, plus all the service in the world and an invitation to return" Larsen wrote (Hobbs, 2014: 175).

The "stunt" that Nella Larsen and Grace Nail Johnson pulled off in a restaurant called Murfreesboro mirrors Irene Redfield's "passing" in the white-only café called Drayton in Larsen's narrative. Irene disdains the practice of "passing" as depicted in the way she dislike Clare's passing. She also states that she was not ashamed of being a Negro. However, away from her neighborhood on Harlem and unaccompanied by her black husband and son, she took the elevator up to the Drayton's roof, which she describes as "...like being wafted upward on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quite, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below" (Larsen, 1929: 13) and passing as a white woman.

The description of the condition of Irene mirrors the condition of Larsen and her friend in real life. Both Larsen and her character in *Passing*, Irene Redfield, disdain the act of "passing". However,

when the opportunity present itself, Larsen and Irene did not hesitate in using their light skin to their advantage. Larsen finds it quite entertaining and satisfying that she and her friend succeed in, as Langston Hughes would say as "fooling the white folks". By doing that, it shows that the racial boundaries, the color line, which was created by Jim Crow laws were useless for light skinned mulattoes like them.

The act of fooling the white folks was famous among the mulattoes because it is actually depicted in many racial passing narratives during Harlem Renaissance, and *Passing* and *Plum Bun* were just two of them. Langston Hughes (1950) illuminates it in his essay entitled "Fooling Our White Folks", he argues that, "as long as white folks remain foolish, prejudiced and racially selfish, they deserved to be fooled. No better for them!" (p.41). It can be understood that regarding racial discrimination towards blacks, as seen in Jim Crow laws, Hughes saw it as a selfish act of the whites, and for that whites deserved to be fooled. Furthermore, the act of fooling the white folks is also depicted in *Plum Bun*. The success of Angela and her mother in enjoying themselves every Saturday in the "white-

only” places also mirrors the way Larsen and her friend succeed in their “stunt”.

The act of “fooling the white folks” by the mulattoes could also be seen as challenging the racial boundaries or color line from Jim Crow laws. The temporary passing done by Nella Larsen and Grace Johnson, Irene Redfields as depicted in *Passing*, and also by Angela and her mother as depicted in *Plum Bun* suggest that the segregation of Jim Crow is the main cause of racial passing practice. If there were no segregation at that time, which means there were no racial boundaries between the whites and the blacks, the mulattoes during this era did not have to pretend to be white.

In the ending of both narratives, both authors also view the practice of racial passing as a betrayal. It is depicted by Angela in *Plum Bun* and by Clare in *Passing*. In both narratives, the words “my people” is often emphasized to further support the writers’ preference, which they prefer their protagonist who undergone passing started to take pride in being a Negro and “come home” to their people. Moreover, the way Larsen and Fauset depict Harlem in both narratives also invites their readers during the era, especially African Americans out there, whether they are passer or not, to come to

Harlem and feel its vibes and its pride. Both authors might also hope that the readers can see the possibility of living happily, and proudly as African Americans in Harlem.



Fig. 7. African American lived in Prosperity in Harlem

Howes, K. King. *Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Christine Slovey. Boston: UXL Publishing, 2001. Print.

## Conclusion

As depicted in *Passing* and *Plum Bun*, whites maintain their power and superiority over black through this segregation of Jim Crow. The way Jim Crow laws drew the racial boundaries between whites as the dominant group and blacks as the inferior group placed blacks in a disadvantage position. Therefore, the racial passing practice can be said as a reaction of blacks to the laws. Furthermore, the existence of one-drop rule during Harlem Renaissance further arose the need in mulattoes to pass. Many light skinned mulattoes who passed during

the era saw that there was no need in denying the prospect of having freedom and having better life from the use of their light skin anymore.

In both narratives, Larsen and Fauset view the practice of racial passing both as fooling the white folks (a joke) and as a betrayal. For those who pass temporarily like Angela with her mother in *Plum Bun* and Irene in *Passing*, both authors view it just as an entertainment or a joke for the fools (white folks). Somehow, it was fine to do that. However, for those who pass permanently as did by Angela in *Plum Bun* and Clare in *Passing*, both authors view it as an act of betrayal to “their true people”. Somehow, it was a wrong thing to do. In both narratives, the words “my people” are often emphasized to further support the authors’ preference. It is clearly seen that both authors prefer their protagonist who undergone passing started to take pride in being a Negro and “come home” to their true people.

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1. Articles have not been published or accepted for publication, or are being considered for publication elsewhere. In addition to the manuscript, a written statement should be attached which clarifies that the article is original and does not contain any elements of plagiarism.
2. Types of article suitable for publication include the following; research report (laboratory, field, archives), conceptual ideas, studies, theory applications.
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