

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, as well as the scope and limitations of the study. The background section of the research paper explains where the study urgency begins along with the reasons of why the writer is interested in the topic, and how the researcher develops research questions. The existence of research questions that help to guide the focus of this study process must also be answered by the data collected. While objectives of the study are meant to find answers to the research questions through the application of scientific procedures. The significance of the study is a written statement that explains why this study is needed. In addition, the scope and limitations of the study explains the range of study area that is going to be explored yet still the limitations of the study so that the study can be more specific and focused.

1.1 Background of the Study

The civilization of the African-American community in America begins and continues with a roller-coaster struggle in history. In the early ages of the American continent is formed, the link between the dominant and subordinate is never more clearly evidenced than when African-Americans are forced into slavery and brought to North America. Slaves have no rights or benefits, and their masters have complete control over them. Usually, minority groups only have little social power which results in less access to community resources than the minority groups that have greater power (Tarukallo et al., 2022). The Civil Rights Movement is highlighting on African-Americans that are depicted as the subordinate group at that time would no longer submit to white supremacy voluntarily. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 give a major impact on formalized racism in America. This act forbids discrimination on the grounds of race, color,

religion, sex, or national origin. However, during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era, with the purpose to maintain the White Supremacy in the South following the emancipation of slaves, the White governs starts to classify everyone thought to have a drop of "black blood" or any known African heritage as "Black". Since then, the words "Black" and "African-American" despite their difference, are both used to classify ethnic groups in the United States. The phrase "African-American" gained popularity as the most suitable and politically correct racial categorization in the late 1980s. Although it is meant to represent a shift from the historical perceptions of the "Black" race in America that have been often connected with racial injustices, it mostly replaces labels "Black," "Colored," and "Negro" to refer to anybody with a dark skin tone, regardless of where they were born. In its development, until now, the African-American community in America still encounters many significant obstacles in their lives. They are still facing racism, particularly in light of the fact that African-Americans are continue treated badly in terms of employment, insurance coverage, and incarceration, as well as in the areas of economy, health, and education.

As the impact of African-American struggles, many art and literature artists especially poets fight for justice for their own communities in approximately between 1920-1930s. They began to call out the voices of grievances and struggles from African-Americans through their literature, which then become known as the Harlem Renaissance era. In the Harlem Renaissance era or also known as New Negro Movement, many poets emphasize the theme of black identity, black community, race, equality, and slavery in their works. Because of their works, The Harlem Renaissance becomes the most influential blow movement in African-American literary history. Many African-American poets have contributed to producing phenomenal poems that represent social issues that have been experienced by the African-American community for years. For example, the poem *If We Must Die* written by Claude McKay in July 1919 in response to a mob attack that befall the African-American community by White Americans during the Red Summer, the white supremacist terrorism and racial

riots period. Another famous poet, James Weldon Johnson released a notable anthology *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922 that highlights the strength of black creative culture. His another anthology, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927), portrays slavery as being against both God's love and God's law, make remarks on the violence of racism. Besides these two poets, when we speak about the Harlem Renaissance, this era is more known and dominated by Langston Hughes poems which really represents the African-American community from various perspectives, both socio-historical conditions, economics, politics, and simple daily activities in society.

James Mercer Langston Hughes is a well-known poet of contemporary poems known for his worldwide works in Harlem Renaissance era. Hughes' prime poems book is published in 1926 with the title *The Weary Blues*. This book gets a lot of critics that some people complementing the entry of a significant new voice in poem but in the other side other people may rejecting Hughes' debut collection. Paul Laurence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg, and Walt Whitman are Hughes main influences, thus his works are famous for insightful depictions of black community's life in America during 1920s to the 1960s. Hughes poems also had a huge impact in forming artistic contributions on contemporary literature.

He writes poems and also known for his contribution on jazz and the impression it has on his writing, such as in his poems book *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1990) published by Vintage Classics. In this anthology of poems, Hughes refuses to differentiate between his individual story and African-American group as an entity make him different and special from other notable black poets of that time. In *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* there are 13 chapters with different themes that consist of several poems matches with the theme of each chapter. Hughes wished to tell his community's experiences in the way that implies their real daily life, culture, and condition, such as their enthusiasm for music, contentment, as well as their long-time suffering. Particularly in the chapter *Afro-American Fragments*, Hughes poem works have inspired and entertained black people especially African-Americans to represent their voices in the focus of depriving racism and stereotypes that become a big

social issue that befell them. This chapter consists 11 poems and 5 of them are poems that really famous to describe the struggle of the African-American community in surviving as an oppressed community and yearning for a better and fairer chance of living in American society. These 5 poems are *Afro-American Fragment*, *The Negro Speaks of River*, *Aunt Sue's Stories*, *Negro*, and *American Heartbreak*. Hughes comes up by using language, themes, behavior and ideas accustomed to anyone who has the capability basically to read. Until the time of his death, he spread his message humorously—though always seriously—to audiences throughout the country, having read his poetry to more people (possibly) than any other American poet (Gibson cited in Prentise Hall, 1973).

Being the part of African-American community, Hughes creates his works of poems that express the current post-modern conditions of his group that implement their diasporic features and experiences a lot. Diaspora refers to the people of the dispersion and African-American community is one of them. In the case of African-American community in America, Cohen (2008) through his theory of global diasporas, identifies African-American as the victim diaspora type. Without exception, the 5 famous poems; *Afro-American Fragment*, *The Negro Speaks of River*, *Aunt Sue's Stories*, *Negro*, and *American Heartbreak* written by Hughes as an African-American community away from their original homeland also have several aspects according to his close relationship as a diaspora.

According to William Safran (1991) in this century, the concept of diaspora is expanded to include other ethnic groups that have spread to places other than their original home. In his writing, *Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return* (1991), Safran explains that the majority of diasporic community find themselves restricted, expanded, mix-matched their new and old homeland, their new and old lives and identities. Diaspora study is all about what is taken with one, of what is left behind and of what is changed. Because of those reasons, diaspora literature can actually make its reader to understand and comprehend about why or how some people choose to migrate to another country either voluntarily or due to other reasons, and how they able to get used living in such

condition. Diaspora is one of the paths towards social and personal revelation, acceptance, insight and identification.

Become the well-known diaspora theory, making the definition from William Safran (1991) used in several previous studies. There are some studies already conducted in the term of Diaspora initiated by William Safran (1991). The first one is *Representation of Nostalgic Memories for Home in African Diasporic Poetry: Critical Analysis of Selected Poems of Mahtem Shiferraw* written by Stanley Elias in 2018. In this study Elias uses the theory of Safran (1991) to analyze nostalgic representation of home and how do such nostalgic memories contribute to define the identity of the poet in Mahtem Shiferraw selected poems. The second one is *Diaspora Struggles in The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* by Mohja Kahf written by Devri Chotibul Umam in 2020. In this study Umam uses the theory of Safran to analyze Muslim diaspora struggles and the diaspora characteristic that is represented in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl In The Tangerine Scarf*. Furthermore, these two previous studies with William Safran's theory have inspired this study to use the same theory but in different data and that are 5 selected poems; *Afro-American Fragment*, *The Negro Speaks of River*, *Aunt Sue's Stories*, *Negro*, and *American Heartbreak* from the poems collection book *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1990) to reveal the diaspora aspect in those poems under the theme of African-American struggles.

1.2 Research Questions

Diaspora analysis in poem has a longstanding development in literature studies, but the study of African-American as the victimized diaspora in contemporary poem genres fills a scientific gap. There are many studies that have been carried out on the well-known poems of Langston Hughes but this present study tries to convey a new gap on it. This current study is trying to answer these following questions:

1. What are diaspora aspects represented in the five selected poems that are consisted in the *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*?

2. How do the aspects of biographical and social background of the poet influence the five selected poems that are consisted in the *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems, this current study analysis is to cover:

1. This study is aimed to find diaspora aspects that are contained the five selected poems consisted in the *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*.
2. This study is intended to uncover and to describe the aspects of biographical and social background of the poet that influence the making behind five selected poems that are consisted in the *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Diaspora has become a popular discussion among literature academic field ever more since the development of never-ending social movement from one country, region, or continent to another for a diverse of reasons: cultural, financial, political, and social. Many authors and poets perpetuate this real-based condition into their literature works. Thus, this present study is expected to unload the diasporic features of victimized African-American community represented in the Langston Hughes' poems. This study is done to create an awareness and knowledge to people not just on those who show an interest for contemporary literature but also what happened in society's condition behind it as the real depiction. The information contained in this study can be a lesson about diasporic community studies in contemporary literature specifically in poem that can be used as a new knowledge, insight, and inspiration, especially for English Literature as well as Social and Cultural Sciences Faculty students at Trunojoyo University, Madura and other social academics fellow. There are actually a lot of previous studies that already focused on contemporary literature.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this study the scope and limitation are focusing on analytic study, interpretation, and explanation to the main data under the assessment of the diaspora aspects theory by William Safran (1991) on African-American represented in the selected poems *Afro-American Fragment*, *The Negro Speaks of River*, *Aunt Sue's Stories*, *Negro*, and *American Heartbreak* in the “Afro-American Fragments” chapter by Langston Hughes in his phenomenal book *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Furthermore, the writer makes this study specific because it uses a literary rather than linguistic approach since Hughes has the background as a contemporary poet as well.