



**EMMA LOU'S PERSONALITY AS A YOUNG WOMAN WITH
DARK SKINNED MULATTO DESCENDANTS
IN THE BLACKER THE BERRY
BY WALLACE THURMAN**

A THESIS JOURNAL

**Submitted by:
BIFINTYA HAYYU AQNISASARI
NIM. A2B008106**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY
SEMARANG
2013**

EMMA LOU'S PERSONALITY AS A YOUNG WOMAN WITH DARK SKINNED MULATTO DESCENDANTS IN *THE BLACKER THE BERRY* BY WALLACE THURMAN

Thesis Advisor: Dra. Dewi Murni, MA.
**English Department, The Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University,
Semarang 50275**

Kepribadian adalah bagian dari jiwa yang membangun keberadaan manusia menjadi satu kesatuan, tidak terpecah belah dalam fungsi-fungsi. Perkembangan kepribadian seseorang yang baik dan buruk dapat dipengaruhi oleh keadaan dirinya sendiri atau karena faktor lingkungan. Hal tersebut dapat ditemukan dalam novel "The Blacker The Berry". Peneliti merasa tertarik untuk meneliti lebih dalam mengenai perkembangan kepribadian tokoh utama dalam novel tersebut yang merupakan gadis keturunan Mulato, seorang Afrika-Amerika yang berkulit sangat hitam. Untuk mendapatkan hasil analisis yang baik, peneliti menggunakan dua metode penelitian, yaitu metode penelitian dengan studi kepustakaan dan metode pendekatan secara struktural dan psikologi. Dalam novel tersebut terlihat bahwa terjadi perkembangan perubahan kepribadian tokoh utama secara negatif dan positif berdasarkan lima jenjang kebutuhan menurut Abraham Maslow, yaitu Physiological Needs, Safety Needs, Love and Belongingness Needs, Self-Esteem Needs dan Self-Actualization Needs.

Kata Kunci : "*The Blacker The Berry*" - kepribadian - lima jenjang kebutuhan menurut Abraham Maslow.

1. Introduction

Humans are the most perfect God's creation, because people have different characteristics, especially in terms of personality. Characteristics or personalities change and evolve differently in every human being. Changes and developments in the life of every human-being occur naturally. Development of human personality is a lifelong process that is heavily influenced by the environment. Humans as social beings have to interact with others. These interacting processes can lead to conflicts with others and with their own inner self.

Literary works often talk about human beings with all complex problems of their life, and therefore literary works and humans have an inseparable relationship. Literature is a reflection of human life in which there are attitude, behavior, thought, knowledge, and imagination of human beings. Wellek and Warren claim that *Literature represents life, and life is in a large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner subjective world of individual have also been the objects of literary imitation (1977:94).*

A novel is one of the most popular and most widely reading forms of literature in the world. In the novel *The Blacker The Berry*, Emma Lou is experiencing something that directly or indirectly affects her personality.

1. Methodology

Method of approach is the basic assumption which is made as a set bar in viewing an object (Semi, 1993:93). Structural approach is usually used as a method to review a novel, structural approach which analyzes the character, setting, and theme. The second method of approach is psychological approach. Sarwono (2009:3) describes that psychology is the science that studies human behavior in their relation with the environment. One common aspect of psychology that the writer takes is personality that uses hierarchy of needs by Maslow.

2. Literary Review

2.1 Intrinsic Elements

2.1.1 Character

In a novel a character is very important, because the center of the story is not just the events that exist in the novel. Characters, according to Abrams, are people who appear in a work of narrative, or drama which the reader interprets that has certain moral qualities and tendencies, such as what they express and what is done in action. "Characters are important in a fictional work because a character helps to develop the plot.

2.1.2 Setting

Setting, which is also called the basic foundation, is an understanding of places, relations of time and social environment which are involved in the events described (Abrams, 1981:175). Settings elements can be divided into three main elements, namely place, time and social.

2.1.2.1 Setting of Place

Setting of place is the location of event narrated in a work of fiction. Elements of place that is used may be the places with a certain name such as the name of the town, area, etc

2.1.2.2 Setting of Time

Setting of time relates to the question of when the events are narrated in a fictional work which the author imagines. Robert states that the depiction of time in the story is important because it can affect the character of a figure. "It is therefore important to note natural surroundings, living creature, time and seasons which may influence and interact with character, motivation and conduct. "(Robert, 2007: 259)

2.1.2.3 Social Setting

Social setting refers to things relating to the behavior of people in a place that is told in a work of fiction. Furthermore social background has a considerable influence on the disposition of a character. Mindset, lifestyle, life and behavior are certainly influenced by the surrounding social environment, family, school or community.

2.1.3 Theme

Theme is the central idea of a story to develop the whole story. In Hugh Holman's opinion in *A Handbook of Literature* (1980:443), theme is the control or dominating idea in a literary work. In poetry, fiction, and drama, it is the abstract concept made through its representation in person, action, and image in the work.

2.2 Extrinsic Elements

2.2.1 Definition of Personality

In the book of *Psikologi Kepribadian* (2009:2), personality is part of the soul that builds human existence into one entity, not divided in functions. Understanding personality means to understand me, self, or understand the whole person. There are a variety of definitions given by experts on personality. However, all of them argue that personality is always influenced by the environment. Brouwer (1989: 7) says that "personality is a creation of the environment". Thus it can be seen that the circumstances in a person life will strongly influence the self and personality, depending on the person's association with the environment.

2.2.2 Development of Personality

In a life, a person will experience the development of personality and physical development through the increase in age. Personality develops step by step; the present stage of personality is influenced by the previous one.

Meanwhile, Sumadi Suryabrata (1982:2) defines 'development' as "a change; change toward more advanced and mature direction.

Critically, the change is usually called a "process".

2.2.3 Hierarchy of Needs by Maslow

In the book *Psikologi Kepribadian* (2009: 201), Maslow set a theory where the variation of human needs is considered in the form of hierarchy. Based on this, Maslow divides the human needs into five categories as follows:

2.2.3.1 Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are very strong. In the absolute state (hunger and thirst), sex, all the needs are left behind and human devote all of their ability to fulfill the physiological needs. Physiological needs could be used to satisfy a higher level needs (in Alwisol, 2009:204).

2.2.3.2 Safety Needs

What is meant by Maslow with the needs of security is something that needs to encourage individuals to obtain peace, certainty, and regularity of the state of the environment. According to Maslow, in a book *Theories of Personality*, Richard M. Ryckman states: "once the person's physiological needs are relatively well satisfied, however, a set of safety needs is presumed to emerge. This set includes needs for security, protection, structure, law, order, limits, and freedom from anxiety, and chaos" (1987:314)

2.2.3.3 Love and Belongingness Need

According to Maslow, "satisfaction of the needs for safety and security brings with it the emergence of the need for, and the reward value of, affiliation, love,

and a sense of belonging” (in Wingfield, 1979: 75). Maslow also emphasizes that the mature love refers to a healthy love relationship between two people or more, in which there is an attitude of mutual believe and mutual respect. The book *Psikologi Kepribadian* (Alwisol, 2009: 205) mentions that there are two kinds of love (adults) namely Deficiency or D-Love and Being or B-Love.

2.2.3.4 Self-Esteem Needs

When the needs for belongingness and love are relatively satisfied, someone is motivated to have self-esteem. According to Maslow in a book *Theories of Personality* :*“Esteem needs are the last of the basic urges to emerge. Maslow divided them into two sets: esteem based on respect for our own competence, independence, and accomplishment, and esteem based on evaluation from others. Esteem in this latter sense is the best seen in our striving for recognition from others, in attempts to secure status, fame, dominance, importance, and appreciation”* (Richard M. Ryckman, 1978:315)

2.2.3.5 Self-Actualization Needs

The need to express ourselves or self-actualization is the highest of human needs in Maslow's needs. This need will arise if the needs underneath have been properly fulfilled, according to Maslow: *“If our psychological needs are met, we become concerned with personal safety: if we achieve a sense of security, we are motivated to love, to be*

love, and to love ourselves. After achieving our need for self esteem, we ultimately seek self-actualization, the process of fulfilling one’s potential, of becoming the self one is capable becoming.” (Meyers, 1986: 425)

Self-actualization is the desire to gain self-fulfillment, to realize all potential, to become all he can do, and to be creative and free for achieving potential.

3. Analysis

3.1 Intrinsic Elements

4.1.1 Character

Emma Lou, the main character in this novel comes from mulatto family but she has different appearances from other people in her family and her society because her dark skin. Emma Lou is a dynamic character in the storyline of the novel *The Blacker The Berry*. Dynamic character is a character which experiences growth in line with any change in the events in the plot of story. Emma Lou is a girl who was born and raised in Boise. She is a girl with a very black skin that is not accepted by her environment. Her skin is too black, and she has a flat nose with thick lips like her father, although her hair is like her mother’s, thick and curly.

“Emma Lou has been fortunate enough to have hair like her mother’s, a thick, curly black mass of hair, rich and easily controlled, but she had also been unfortunate enough to have a face as

black as her father's, and a nose which, while not exactly flat, was as distinctly negroid as her too thick lips"(Thurman, 1929: 31)

Maria Lightfoot, The first static character is Maria Lightfoot. She is an antagonist character who remains in the position to desert Emma throughout the story. Maria is Emma's grandmother, her father is a male master and her mother is a female slaver. *"Emma Lou's Maternal grandparents, Samuel and Maria Lightfoot, were both Mollato products of slave-day promiscuity between male masters and female chattel."* (Thurman, 1929:25)

Jane, Jane is her mother, she is the daughter of Maria Lightfoot. Jane is a descendant of Mollato, and she has thick, curly black hair which is still easily controlled : *"Emma Lou had been fortunate enough to have hair like her mother's, a thick, curly black mass of hair, rich and easily controlled."*(Thurman, 1929:31)

Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe is not like Emma's grandmother, Emma's mother or others who question the skin color of Emma. He is the only member of the family who is not concerned about Emma's black skin : *"Uncle Joe, who was also the only person in the family to whom she really felt akin, because he alone never seemed to regret, to bemoan, or to ridicule her blackness of skin."* (Thurman, 1929:25)

Hazel Mazon, She is the first African-American Emma Lou meets in college of the University of Southern California. Hazel comes from Texas, Prairie Valley, Texas. However, Emma limits her friendship with Hazel because she thinks Hazel comes from a low social family status (pure black skin Negro). Even she calls her Barbarian : *"for Emma Lou classified Hazel as a barbarian who had most certainly not come from a family of best people."*(Thurman, 1929:42)

Alva, Alva is a light-skinned man of Mollato descendant. He is one of Emma Lou's love interests. Alva is like his father, small in stature with broad shoulders, narrow hips, and his face is oval, more oriental than Negroid

"Alva's mother had been an American Mollato, his father a Filipino. Alva himself was small in stature as his father had been, small and well developed with broad shoulders, narrow hips, and firm, well-modeled limbs. His face was oval-shaped and his features more oriental than Negroid. His skin was neither yellow nor brown but something in between, something warm, arresting, and mellow with the faintest suggestion of parchment tinge beneath, lending it individuality. His eyes were small, deep, and slanting. His forehead high, hair sparse and finely textured."(Thurman, 1929:103)

Campbell Kitchen, He is a famous American writer and retired from public life. He is an artist and intellectual. He is very congenial and kind. Emma likes him very much because he gives lessons to her. He is the leader of “Explore Harlem; Know the Negro.” He always give spirit to Negro He also written a book concerning Negro life in Harlem.

“Campbell Kitchen, like many other white artists and intellectualls, had become interested in Harlem. The Negro and all things negroid had become a fad, and Harlem had become a shrine to which feverish pilgrimages were in order. Campbell Kitchen, along with Carl Van Vechten, was one of the leading spirits in this “Explore Harlem; Know the Negro” crusade. He, unlike many others, was quite sincere in his desire to exploit those things in Negro life which he presumed would eventually win for the Negro a more comfortable position in America life.”(Thurman, 1929:186)

Gwendolyn Johnson, Gwendolyn is Emma Lou is friend from Y.W.C.A. After their first meeting, they become good friends and go everywhere together. She has a light brown skinned girl. *“She even had a pal, Gwendolyn Johnson, a likable, light-brown-skinned girl who had the room to hers.”(1929:196)*

3.2 Setting

3.2.1 Setting of Place and Social Setting

Boise, Boise is the setting of place when Emma is still a teenager. She grows up in Boise and finishes up high school in the city. Here is the place where her maternal grandparents live after fleeing from Kansas. *“So Samuel and Maria went into the fast farness of a little known Rocky mountain territory and settled in Boise.”(1929:27)*

Emma’s neighbors in Boise discriminates Emma since she is black. Some wonder why it can be a girl like Emma and say to her mother where she has adopted a child like Emma. *“What an extraordinarily black child! Where did you adopt it?” or else, “Such lovely unniggerish-looking child.” Some had even been facetious and made suggestions like, “Try some lye, Jane, it may eat it out. She can’t look any worse.” (Thurman, 1929:32).* That makes Emma always feel like an alien member of the family and of the family’s social circle.

Los Angeles, Uncle Joe is the one who has suggested that Emma continue her study there because in his opinion a big and modern city like Los Angeles has no concern about the color of skin like Boise.

“People in large cities,” he had said, “are broad. They do not have time to think of petty things. The people in Boise are fifty years behind the times, but you will find that Los Angeles is one of the world’s greatest

and most modern cities, and you will be happy there.”(1929:35)

She only stands studying in Los Angeles for a short time because she thinks that Los Angeles is exactly the same as Boise. There is much problem with her dark skin.

Harlem, Emma goes to Harlem after all her experience in Boise and Los Angeles. She wants to try to live there. In there Emma tries to escape intra-racial color prejudice in Boise and Los Angeles. The important places in Harlem in this novel are Lafayette Theatre and Seventh Avenue. Lafayette Theatre is the place where Alva brings her to a midnight show. *“Alva was to take Emma Lou to midnight show at Lafayette Theatre.” (1929:169).* And Seventh Avenue is the place where Emma often walks down and feels depressed facing her problem. There she is often insulted by some men in the street because of her dark skin.

3.2.2 Setting of Time

The events of the novel *The Blacker The Berry* take place in the 1920s. The author tells about all the events of the main character to happen in the 1920s, from the time when Emma is teenager in Idaho, attends the University of Southern California, until she has a job in Harlem.

“That poor child had been so indoctrinated by her family, her schools, and her friends that she was sure, for a long while at least, she was of little value, that she was to be pitied,

that she could never succeed because her skin was dark. And for most of the story, she believed it. Few who might have been called her own kind disavowed what seemed commonly held beliefs: not her mother, not her teachers in Idaho or in college in California, not the new people she would meet in the Harlem of the 1920s”(Thurman, 1929:11)

3.3 Theme

Theme is an important aspect in a story because it is the central idea of the story. Themes have other words as the central idea and central purpose. A recurring theme in the novel *The Blacker The Berry* is the skin color issue. Emma's mother and grandmother are supposed to be the closest persons to her who cannot accept her because Emma has very dark skin. Her mother says that if Emma were a boy, there would not be a problem, but in fact Emma is a woman. *“Her grandmother had assured her that she would never find a husband worth a dime, and her mother had said again and again, “Oh, if you had only been a boy!”(Thurman, 1929:34)*

4.2 Extrinsic Elements

4.2.1 Physiological Needs

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the basic physiological need is to fulfill basic needs, like hunger and thirst. But , the fulfillment of physiological needs are not an early stage problem

faced by Emma. Emma is not included a child who comes from poor families. Eating and drinking and all the basic requirements are met. Even when she is away from the family, she is able to fulfill her own needs.

4.2.2 Safety Needs

Safety is something much needed by Emma. She never feels safe in her family and in her social surroundings because of her skin color. Emma is always an alien member in her family, even when their neighbors in Boise humiliate her dark skin, her mother or her grandmother would not give her protection.

Job needs is included in safety needs and Emma do not find her desired jobs. Black girl has very little opportunity in life to get a job she wishes. A lighter skinned girl with good education will get a more prestigious job than a black skinned girl. To sum up, she never gets good response, and if she is ever offered a job, it is low level labour which she does not want to do.

Agency: "Ummm. What other kind of work would ya take?"

Emma : "Anything congenial."

Agency: "Waal, what is that, diswashing, day work, nurse girl?"

Didn't this damn woman know what congenial meant? And why should a Jewish woman be in charge of a Negro employment agency in Harlem?" (Thurman, 1929:78)

4.2.3 Love and Belongingness Needs

Alienation and rejection are a contrast to the need for love and belongingness. Meanwhile, this requirement is important throughout life. As experienced by Emma, she often meets rejection and alienation because her skin color is too dark. Not many people want to welcome her condition. Her Family always isolate Emma, leave her alone, do not treat her like a son. *"She wasn't the only person who regretted her darkness either. It was an acquired family characteristic, this moaning and grieving over the color of her skin."* (Thurman, 1929:21).

When she is really in love with a man named Alva, she is not aware that Alva manipulates her love to fulfill his economic needs. She gives her love but never gets a sincere response from Alva.

"As yet she had been unable to become angry with him, Alva never argued or protested unduly. Although Emma Lou didn't realize it, he used more subtle methods. His means of remaining master of all situations were both tactful and sophisticated; for example, Emma Lou never realized just how she had first begun giving him money." (Thurman, 1929:157)

4.2.4 Self-Esteem Needs

There are two types of self-esteem, that is self-respect, esteem based on respect for our own competence, independence and accomplishment, and esteem based on evaluation from others or recognition from others about our status, dominance, prestige, respectability, acceptance and

appreciation. In the novel *The Blacker the Berry*, Emma feels that her self esteem is down when everyone does not receive her because of her dark skin.

The judgement of her family and society that black is not good and the symbol of bad luck makes her feel really lonely and at last it makes her self esteem ultimately. She can not respect her own self and she is not recognized by others for any of her good things. People that she meets do not treat her in a good way.

“The people she naturally felt at home with had, somehow or other, managed to keep her at a distance. It was no fun going to social affairs and being neglected throughout the entire evening. There was no need in forcing one’s self into a certain milieu only to be frozen out. Hence, she had stayed to herself, had had very few friends, and had become more and more resentful of her blackness of skin.” (Thurman, 1929:189)

She always tries to increase her status, having prestige in front of others and tries to be accepted by society. While she is in the university, she tries to approach her friends who are light skinned.

“She was still eager to become acquainted with the colored members of the student body, and this encounter with the crass and vulgar Hazel Mason had only made her the more eager. She resented being approached by any one so flagrantly inferior.” (Thurman, 1929:42)

Emma is a girl that does not have self confidence because of her color consciousness. Grace’s activity when she is working in Brown and Angus Company crosses her mind. She remembers how Grace feels confident after using her make up. She thinks that she can be confident if her dark complexion is reduced. She finds that she must get a brighter face to make her feel confident.

“She could feel the shine on her nose and it made her self-conscious. She remembered how the “Grace” in the office of Angus and Brown had so carefully powdered her skin before confronting her employer, and, she remembered this, she looked up, and sure enough, here she was in front of the building she had sought so eagerly earlier that morning. Emma Lou drew closer to the building. She must get that shine off her nose. It was bad enough to be black, too black, without having a shiny face to boot.” (Thurman, 1929:98)

4.2.5 Self-Actualization Need

The need for self-actualization is the last discussion on the theory of Maslow. According to Maslow, self-actualization is an individual desire to be in accordance with the potential and desire of individuals to perfect themselves through disclosure of all potential, to become all they can do, to be creative and free for achieving potential.

After experiencing many things in her life journey as a person who is not widely accepted by the

surrounding environment, finally Emma begins to think that she should be able to accept herself in any kind of condition. She promises to herself not to move to other places again just to find a place where people can accept her and her condition. She realizes that she is not the only black woman who lives in this world. *“For the first time in her life she felt that she must definitely come to some conclusion about her life and govern herself accordingly. After all, she wasn’t the only black girl alive.”* (Thurman, 1929:216)

“But having arrived at this-what did it solve or promise for the future? After all, it was not the abstractions of her case which at the present moment most needed elucidation. She could strive for a change of mental attitudes later. What she needed to do now was to accept her black skin as being real and unchangeable, to realize that certain things were, had been, and would be, and with this in mind begin life anew, always fighting, not so much for acceptance by other people, but for acceptance of herself by herself.” (Thurman, 1929:217)

4. Conclusion

In this chapter the writer will give conclusion from the previous chapters. *The Blacker The Berry* is a novel that tells about color complexion of a Mullato young girl that has very dark skin. She is so indoctrinated by her family, her schools, her friends, also by her environment.

Emma is a girl who can not accept herself because her skin is too black. Near the end she understands that black is not a big problem, because there are still many others who have black skin like her.

Emma’s personality development is influenced by several factors, namely the family and the environment. Both of these factors have the same cause, namely color complexion. Emma skin that has very dark makes it difficult to be accepted by society, and even her own family. Her relatives who are light-skinned Mullato descendant feel that their descendants have ended when they know Emma is born as a girl with very dark skin.

If seen by Abraham Maslow's theory of needs, the development of Emma's personality is influenced by the lack of basic needs as human beings. Those needs are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, self-esteem needs and self actualization needs. Although the physiological needs are not difficult to be fulfilled by Emma, the other four needs are very important in the development of the personality of Emma.

After all the requirements have been fulfilled, she can live in peace without any pressure from herself because of her dark skin. Finally Emma can accept herself, fight for herself, and does not care about acceptance by other people.

<http://www.biography.com/people/wallace-henry-thurman>.
Sabtu, 21 Juli 2012

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