

## **Black and White Women's Struggle during the Victorian Era Portrayed in The Various Flavors of Coffee Novel by Anthony Capella**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini berfokus pada perbedaan perjuangan perempuan yang harus dialami oleh perempuan kulit hitam dan putih pada era Victoria. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pengetahuan kepada pembaca untuk memahami dan mengapresiasi karya sastra, khususnya yang ditulis tentang perempuan. Metodologi penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan objek novel berjudul *Aneka Rasa Kopi* (2008) karangan Anthony Capella. Ini menganalisis paragraf, narasi, kutipan dan kalimat dari novel yang menunjukkan teori perjuangan perempuan dari tokoh utama perempuan untuk dapat menjawab pertanyaan penelitian. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana perempuan berjuang dalam lima sektor kehidupan, yaitu lapangan kerja, ketergantungan finansial, hak politik, pendidikan, eksploitasi seksual dan pernikahan.

**Kata kunci:** feminisme kulit hitam, era Victoria, perempuan kulit putih, perjuangan perempuan

### **ABSTRACT**

This research is expected to give readers the knowledge of understanding and appreciating literary works, especially those written about women. The methodology of this research is a descriptive qualitative method with a novel entitled *The Various Flavors of Coffee* (2008) written by Anthony Capella as the object. It analyzes the paragraphs, narrations, quotations and sentences from the novel that shows the theory of women struggle from the main female characters in order to be able to answer the research question. The results of this research shows how women struggled in five sectors in life, those are the working field, financial dependence, political rights, education, sexual exploitation and marriage.

**Keywords:** black feminism, feminism, victorian era, white women, women's struggle

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Victorian era was a period where Queen Victoria ruled United Kingdom during the 19th century. At that time, Britain was busy expanding its colonization to other countries, while Africa was characterized by the growth of legitimate export trade in agricultural produce, the widespread introduction of Christianity and the expansion of the illegal slave trade (Alanumu 1). The expansion of slave trades that happened in Africa includes women who had to work as laborers, servants, and became slaves. They landed in every country, from Argentina, Bolivia, Caribbean Island, Honduras and North America. In an article written by Temilola Alanumu entitled *Women in 19th Century West Africa*, the slaves were most likely to be women and caused them to become subjects to both physical and psychological culture.

Meanwhile, in London, women were subjected to their men's authority in many ways (Fletcher 108). They were believed to be inferior to men. Even though they could live normally as a person, went to schools to study, embraced their names which were given by their parents, got married and had children, but they also had to fight for gender equality and

their rights to vote, sue, own property, and they were not even the legal guardians of their children. Single and married women had to live with hardships and disadvantages, both financially and sexually.

There is a contrast of oppression faced by white and black women which caused them to struggle. Women's struggle is shown in many literary works, such as *The Various Flavours of Coffee* novel by Anthony Capella in 2008. This novel shows how in some parts of the world, women were treated differently and had to face different struggles. Two main female characters in the novel are a white woman and black woman. White woman named Emily lived in London and worked as a secretary, while black woman named Fikre lived in Africa worked as a slave for an Arabian man. Capella shows how being a woman was already hard at that time, but then it became harder when a woman is also black skinned. Topics about patriarchy and discrimination are dominant in the novel. Therefore, this research is concerned about the differences of struggles between white and black women during the Victorian Era.

The research question is how are the differences in women's struggles between the two main female characters represented in *The Various Flavors of Coffee*. The purpose of the study is to discover the differences of women's struggle that is shown through the two main female characters in *The Various Flavors of Coffee* novel. This research only focuses on two, out of four, female characters in the novel and limits the study by focusing on the topic about women's struggle.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the researcher would present the theoretical background, several research studies, synopsis of the novel, and the author's biography. All of those sections would be presented as follows.

### **1. Women's Struggle**

Beauvior Tong states that women are a person who lacks strength and the "figure of the other" women are defined negatively (264). Women become minor and displaced in society. According to Marsam, the word 'struggle' means a fight for the survival or independence of the state (181). Meanwhile, according to Kennedy in his book titled *The World of Struggle*, struggle is the routine conflicts that life takes shape. (7) Women's struggle is the practices and ways of thinking in achieving gender equality. Therefore, women's struggle means the unpleasant physical or psychological experiences that women go through.

### **2. The Portrayal of White Women's Struggle in Victorian Era**

White women were able to work just like men but in different sectors. Such as, in the domestic spheres where they only work at home and do the domestic chores. If they work at public places, they would only work as servants, waitresses, and in the form of services. They did not have any financial independence and they rely on their father or husband. They also did not receive equal education with men. They were prepared as an 'Angel in the House' where they should accomplish knowledge about music, modern languages, sing, draw, and possess the manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address, and expressions. They were not allowed to study and intellectual pursuits women were considered as unfeminine.

### **3. The Portrayal of Black Women's Struggle in Victorian Era**

To be a black woman in the nineteenth century was to be plagued with the label of belonging to a stigmatized race and gender. (Jackson 1) Most of the black women at that time belonged to a slave master. They were forced to do hard field labor and endure sexual improprieties. Enslaved women were often becoming subjects to both physical and psychological torture. Rape was a form of institutionalized terrorism that was used to perpetuate power over "property" (Jackson 4). The aim of these rape and sexual abuse is to obtain the obedience of black women to the white imperialistic order. (Jackson 5) Besides that, slaves would be given a single name by their owners (Deburg 269).

Free black women would work as servants and be entangled in a servant-mistress relationship with white women in the nineteenth century. It shows how between the same gender, they differentiated humanity and do not share the same oppression due to their racial lines (Jackson 2). Harper stated the marginalization towards black women in her closing remarks at the 1873 AWSA convention, "white women needed the vote for education, meanwhile "black women needed the vote, not as a form of education, but as a form of protection".

### **4. Novel**

Novel is one of the written materials of literary work that plays an important role in giving a view of life artistically. According to Taylor, the novel is a long prose with a certain complexity that attempts to reflect and express the quality or value of human experiences (62) and it contains a series of events that happened through the life of the characters. In short, a novel is a fictional piece of long narrative which describes fictional characters and events that is typically presented as a bound book.

### **5. Character and Characterization**

Characters are the people in the narratives. Abrams said in his book titled *A Glossary of Literary Terms* that character is the representation of a person in a narrative or dramatic work of art, such as novel, drama, or film. (2) Characters are not always human, in fictional fantasies, it could also be animals, robots, trees, or other creatures, but the author provides them with human abilities and human psychological traits (Griffith 60). Unlike character, characterization is the characteristic that the author brings for the character. It is also a method that the author uses to develop a character according to what the author wants in order to be able to introduce the character to the audience to know more about the character's personality (56).

#### **Direct Definition**

In direct definition, the character's traits are mentioned by the author itself. (Rimmon-Kenan 61) The author describes their characters in a straightforward manner where the character's qualities are told directly to the readers.

#### **Indirect Presentation**

In indirect presentation, the traits of the characters are not mentioned by the author, but the traits are displayed and exemplified in various ways, leaving the readers to interpret the traits by themselves. (Rimmon-Kenan 61)

#### **1. Action**

Activities to progress the story of the characters are considered as various actions. The character's action is important in order to analyze their traits. A character's trait could be implied by non-routine actions or habitual ones, or both. One time actions tend to evoke

the dynamic aspect of the character, by contrast, the habitual ones tend to reveal the character's static aspect. (Rimmon-Kenan 63)

## **2. Environment**

The environment might be the character's physical surroundings or their human surroundings. Physical surroundings could be the city of the house where the character lives in. Meanwhile the human surrounding could be the people around him. (Rimmon-Kenan 68)

## **3. Speech**

The way a character speaks could inform their background and personality, like how educated they are, or where they are from. Speech from the characters in the story implies the characters' traits both from its content and through its form. (Rimmon-Kenan 65)

## **4. External Appearance**

The external appearance of a character can also reveal their traits. But external appearance does not include their physical appearance since it is not something that they could choose. It is more like their hair style, or their choice of clothing style. (Rimmon-Kenan 67)

There are several previous studies about women's struggle conducted by other researchers. The first is Sulistini (2008) with her thesis titled "Diantha's Struggles in Pursuing Women's Emancipation in Gilman's *What Diantha Did*". The objectives of this research are to analyze the problems that Diantha faces in pursuing women's emancipation in society. The findings of the research show the problems Diantha faces in pursuing women's emancipation. The struggles that Diantha performs to encounter the problems are strengthening herself, moving to other places that are conducive, bonding sisterhood by establishing women's clubs and educating women through the clubs, and building a company.

Secondly, Sudarni (2017) with her research titled "Struggle of Woman in The Novel *Sing Me to Sleep* by Angela Morrison (The Analysis of Feminism)". This research discussed the Struggle of women in the novel *Sing Me to Sleep* by Angela Morrison (2013). The writer used note-taking as an instrument of the research. The writer found that there are three kinds of struggles for women. The implication of this research is to give more information, description and comprehension about the struggle of women.

There is also Heni Rahayu (2018) with her thesis titled "An Analysis of Women's Struggle in Louisa May Alcott's Novel *Little Women*". This thesis discusses the discovery of the women's struggle of the main character in realizing her dream. Josephine thinks that the rules that restrict women's movement in life and in the process of realizing her dream. This research is using feminism theory and descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the thesis.

From the three previous findings above, the researcher finds the similarities and the differences. The similarity between the previous studies with this research is the aim to analyze women's struggle that is portrayed in the female characters of each novel. Meanwhile, the difference of this research from the previous findings is the object of the research.

## **C. METHOD**

According to Bryman, qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (380). Correlating to this statement, this research used a qualitative method because the data source of this research was a novel, which only used words as the data and did not use numbers as its data and formula.

This research related to a journal about gender roles and a thesis about black women history to acknowledge the kinds of women's struggles. Feminist literary criticism is used as the approach in this research. Barry stated that feminist studies treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experiences which can be measured and evaluated against reality (109). Besides, characterization theory is also used to find out the characteristics of the characters and the treatments from other elements in their environment, their background, their life experience, and their struggles to face the pressure.

### **Data and Data Source**

The data of this research were the dialogues and narrations from *The Various Flavors of Coffee* novel related to women's struggle in the form of words, phrases and sentences. The data source of this research was a novel titled *The Various Flavors of Coffee* written by Anthony Capella with 92 chapters and 468 pages. It was published in London by Little Brown Book Group in 2008

### **Data Collection**

There were several steps that the researcher did in order to collect the data of this research. First, the researcher chose a novel titled *The Various Flavors of Coffee* novel by Anthony Capella and read the novel several times to understand the whole story. Then, the researcher collect the data and underline the important sentences.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data. The researcher referred to Miles and Huberman's analysis technique which consists of three stages which are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will provide the research finding of the data that have been collected to answer the research question.

### **1. Findings**

In this subchapter, the researcher presents the answer of the research question which is how are the differences of white women's and black women's struggle portrayed in the *Various Flavors of Coffee* novel by Anthony Capella. This research only focuses on two female characters of the novel, which are Emily Pinker as a white woman and Fikre as the black woman. The struggle of women exists in six fields, those are the working field, financial dependance, political rights, education and marriage. The result is shown by the following data.

## A. Working Field

White women had the right to work but in different spheres with men. Men are able to work outside of the house in the public spheres because they are considered as intellectual creatures, therefore they are trusted to work in those fields rather than women. Meanwhile, women also had the chance to work but mostly in the domestic spheres, by being a daughter or a wife. If they had the chance to work outside of their homes, they would become waitresses, secretaries, or work in any other working fields that are related to service work.

### Data 3

‘How long have you been working for your father?’ I said at last. ‘Almost three years now.’

‘Three years!’ I said, shaking my head. ‘It is a longer sentence than the poor Oscar got!’

‘You don’t understand. **For me to be able to work is a luxury.**’ She gave me a sideways look. ‘**Whereas for you, I suppose, it is a novelty.**’ (48-49)

The first data that shows women’s struggle is shown through an indirect characterization of speech, which is from the statement of the character itself. When Robert asked Emily about how long she has been working for her father, Emily replied with ‘almost three years now’. Robert considered that as a very long time to work in a single place, but Emily tries to explain that finding a job is not easy for women. While men have the chance to work in many public spheres and get to pick and choose where they want to work, women do not have the same opportunity. Therefore, to be able to work as a secretary and be involved in a family business is a ‘luxury’ for her. She needs to maintain the job she has because she may not have any other options to work.

Aside from that, this novel shows how different places could result in different struggles for women. This is where the theory of indirect characterization of the environment is important to be used as a tool to analyze this research. Setting of place is important because it gives descriptive details to point out the differences of women’s struggle during the Victorian era portrayed in this novel. White women in London were able to have a few rights, such as working as secretary and receive a particular education, just like Emily in the data above. Meanwhile, white women in Africa did not have any rights and could only work as slaves and completely depend on their masters.

### Data 18

**‘She was Russian by birth, a nice enough thing, barely more than a child. She was wearing a *gomlek*, a coat of glittering, jewelencrusted silk, left open at the throat; silk trousers, soft bootlets.**

We looked and we were impressed. No one touched her of course. There was a certificate of virginity from a midwife, to reassure anyone who was anxious’. (181)

The data above shows that white women also needed to work as slaves. Unlike white women in London, they do not have any political rights. They could only depend on their masters if they are sold, or their mid-wife when they are single and do not own any masters.

Even though white women in Africa also work as slaves, they are treated differently than black women slaves.

Through characterization of external appearance, it is explained that the Russian girl wears a *gomlek*, which is a coat of glittering, jewel-encrusted silk, silk trousers and soft bootlets for the slave trade. In this case, it can be seen that women as slaves in the trade show up as elegant and classy women because they wear luxurious outfits that properly cover their body and skin. The trade does not expose women and their physical appearance. Instead, the slave trade focuses on the qualities that women had and how they are shown as innocent and pure.

## **B. Financial Independence**

Black women did not have financial independence because they worked as slaves. Even if they had money, they had nowhere to go nor did they have any chance to buy things. When white women were fully dependent on their fathers or husbands, black women also received some amount of money or gifts as a form of payment for being obedient toward their masters.

‘Yet most of the girls seemed childishly happy. **Clearly they had never been dressed in such finery before**’ (182)

The narration above is form of a direct definition which describes how women looked happy in the middle of a slave trade because they were forced to look their best to perform. They were ‘dressed in such finery’ in order to be in their best appearance to be chosen and be bought as a slave. In the middle of their unfortunate destiny, which is to become slaves, they were happy because they got the chance to wear fine clothes that were given by their masters because they are unable to buy it themselves.

## **C. Political Rights**

Women are considered as a subordinate gender than men during that time. There are several things that men could do but women are not allowed to do the same thing. A conversation between Emily and Robert below is one example.

### **Data 23**

‘If my father notices the smell on us,’ she said suddenly, ‘you must say that it was only you, not me, who was smoking.’

‘He doesn’t approve?’

Her eyes held mine as she took another pull. ‘He doesn’t know.’ Small barks and puffs of smoke eddied around each word.

**‘A woman is entitled to her secrets.’**

**‘I’ve always hated that expression- it makes it sound as if we’re entitled to nothing else. You’ll be saying we’re the weaker sex next.’**

**‘You don’t think so?’**

‘Oh, Robert. You really are quite hopelessly old-fashioned, aren’t you?’ (51)

The dialogue above is a conversation between Emily and Robert when they smoke after lunch time. Emily warned Robert that he should not tell her father about her smoking, not because her father does not approve, but because he does not know. It means that as a

white woman, Emily is fully aware of her status with the limited rights where women are not expected to smoke. Smoking is considered as a habit that only refers to men because it shows masculinity, dominant in social situations over women and it rejects association with feminine qualities. Emily knows what she wants to do and tries to achieve freedom by doing what she wants, but she realizes how powerful the female weakness is and she could only disregard it. Emily is aware that a smoking woman is a social taboo, therefore, instead of telling her father, she decides to smoke in private without her father knowing.

## **D. Education**

According to the Ideology of Separate Spheres described by Huges, women have to be prepared for their role as an 'Angel in the House'. As a wife, they should only focus on the feminine traits such as possessing a good manner and should not have any enthusiasm toward intellectual pursuits since it is considered as unfeminine by attempting to usurp men's 'natural' intellectual superiority.

### **Data 28**

**It was exhausting, this constant fighting with Arthur. Not that they were fighting exactly, that was not the right word. It was more that they were chafing, struggling against the harness each had slipped on with their wedding, as if the marriage were a coach and they were two horses, unaccustomed to the task, pulling in different directions.** She had tried so hard, initially, to be the wife he wanted her to be. She was meant, she knew, to manage him by hints and suggestions, by showing him what made her happy rather than by nagging or needing. **But the truth was that she liked a good argument, always. Arguments between friends, it seemed to her, were simply the quickest way for two intelligent people to exchange strongly held opinions. But to Arthur, an argumentative wife was a challenge to his authority. He, it transpired, desired order, silence, acquiescence.** (323-324)

Emily figures out that she is considered as an unattractive young woman because she does not possess the role of a 'good' wife to her husband. She keeps having the constant fighting with Arthur as his husband because she is a woman who desires a discussion with her partner. Emily is an educated woman who has the same level of intellectually with her husband, but Arthur expects her to be a submissive wife where she is supposed to remain silent instead of stating her arguments. Women during that time are supposed to receive a different kind of education than men, which are to be able to sing, draw, and maintain their manner of walking, the tone of her voice and expressions. The education for women forces them to be feminine and beautiful instead of to be smart. She considered their marriage unsuccessful because of the rule that she does not follow. White women struggle to be themselves because they are being ruled by society on how they should act as a wife. Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, black women are demanded to receive a different kind of education. They need to prepare themselves as slaves.



## **Data 17**

**A slave sale in Constantinople; a curious friend who insisted on attending; Bey dragged along against his better judgment to watch.**

‘Please understand, Robert: this was not some squalid, dusty bazaar, where plantation laborers are bought and sold by the gross. **This was a sale of the most valuable specimens – girls who had been selected in infancy for their beauty, and nurtured in the harem of a prestigious dealer;** who had been taught mathematics, music, languages and chess. Some were from the lands to the east – Georgia, Circassia and Hungary – prized for their fair coloring, while others were from the dealer’s own family.’ (180)

There were various kinds of slaves during the Victorian Era. Many slaves worked as domestics, but others worked as blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, bakers, or other tradespeople. From the indirect presentation of the environment, the data above shows a slave sale that happened in Constantinople, which did not provide slaves as laborers but personal slaves for their master. Women as slaves received different kinds of education for different purposes. Selected women are taught and trained in certain skills, such as mathematics, music, languages, and chess in order to be able to entertain their master and make it easier for their master to communicate with them. The more educated a slave is, the more valuable they become and the higher their price would be.

## **E. Marriage**

In this section, the researcher will discuss the struggle of women in their marriage. In a marriage, as a wife, white women need to always be submissive toward their husband.

### **Data 29**

She was expected to be at Arthur’s side for every social visit, every tea party, every debate—never to speak, but simply to applaud him indulgently, a visual embodiment of the Approval of Woman. (324)

Arthur is an activist and the narration above is showing how he always asks Emily to go with him to accompany their husband to attend social and political visits as his wife. Emily is not expected to speak or state her opinion in the visit. Her presence is a sign of the ‘*Approval of Women*’ even though women actually do not have any voice at all.

Women are expected to always be submissive and obedient the whole time. If there are women who are showing their ‘femininity’ by stating their opinions or trying to have discussions, their husband would be uncomfortable with that. Women will start to have to go through therapy to treat their personality in order to make them obedient and awaken their feminine energy.

## 2. Discussion

During the Victorian era, women were defined as a person who lacked strength and became minor and displaced in society. Exploitation and oppression appear in the economic sphere, social, cultural, and moral values of women. Social structure called patriarchy divides tasks between men and women where there is a greater value to men's work than women's work. (Hughes 6) Besides, another kind of struggle that women receive is against white supremacy, especially for black women. There is opposition as women and black, women and minorities, women and colonized people. (Mukherjee 170) The analysis of the findings above shows how black women and white women struggled to live during the Victorian Era. Based on Hughes' article about Women and Separate Spheres and Jackson's thesis about African women's history, there are six sectors that caused women to struggle. Those are the working field, financial independence, political rights, education, sexual exploitation and marriage. Only five of the six sectors are found in the novel; there is no data found about sexual exploitation experienced by the two main female characters. Thirty three data are found in the novel but only twenty one data are displayed in this chapter. The rest of the data will be shown in the appendix section.

White women struggle is dominated by their political rights. Men as husbands or fathers were considered to be the head of the household with extensive power. This "patriarchal society did not allow women to have the same privileges as men." (Appel 3) Due to these inequalities, white women had to fight for equality to be able to participate in areas that are dominated by men.

White women during the Victorian era should avoid enthusiasm towards intellectual pursuits, because it is considered as unfeminine by attempting to gain men's 'natural' intellectual superiority. Some doctors at that time also reported that too much study could cause a damaging effect on the ovaries that could turn attractive young women into dried-up prunes. (Hughes 5) This kind of struggle of white women is shown in this novel through the white female character. There are five data found about women's struggle in the marriage sector shown. Emily needed to visit a doctor and received a treatment to shape her as an obedient wife. As a result of the annual visits with her doctor, she shows up as a silent and calmer wife to his husband at home. She no longer states her opinions nor discusses things that his husband reads in the newspaper every morning. This result satisfies her husband and he sees that as an 'improvement' because that was how women should behave in a marriage during the Victorian era.

Black women struggle in the novel and are shown very dominant in the working field. To be a black woman in the nineteenth century was to be plagued with the label of belonging to a stigmatized race and gender. (Jackson 1) They had no other options to work even though they were educated and had a lot of capabilities. Sylviane in her book states that most deported African women were between the ages of 15 and 30. (4) It is in line with Jackson's statement in her thesis, which says that to be a black women in 19<sup>th</sup> century was to be plagued with the label of belonging to a stigmatized race and gender.

It is also shown in the novel where the black women who worked as slaves were still in a young age, because their value is also defined by their age. They were trained and skilled not as a way to upgrade themselves as individuals to have a better life, but to be trained and

skilled slaves that will benefit their masters. Black women as slaves did not have any right. Not in the political fields nor the right to have their own names. They belong to their masters and their masters named them similar to pets. Slaves were not seen as humans, rather they were seen and treated as objects. Eisenstein has the same opinion about this in her journal entitled *Between Women: Domestic and Their Employers*, where she says that women share an oppression with each other; but what they share as sexual oppression is differentiated along class and racial lines in the same way that patriarchal history has always differentiated humanity according to class and race (7).

#### D. CONCLUSION

This chapter will present the conclusion of black and white women struggle found in the novel and also states several suggestions for future research about women's struggle.

##### Conclusion

There are 37 data that the researcher found from *The Various Flavors of Coffee* novel portrayed by two main female characters in the novel. There are five kinds of struggle committed by Fikre and Emily as the female characters in this novel. Those are (1) work, (2) political rights, (3) financial independence, (4) education, (5) marriage.

There are several quotations displayed in order to prove that Fikre and Emily received discrimination which caused them to struggle as women. Even though both of the characters are women, due to their racial background and different geographical background, they do not endure the same struggle and oppressions that they are forced to handle and accept in their daily life.

##### Suggestions

Based on the above analysis, the researcher has a couple of suggestions, which are; the readers should be able to increase their knowledge about women's struggle, the roles of women, and how the difference of women's racial background results in the difference of oppression as well. Other than that, the next researcher would be able to analyze other aspects of this novel. This novel contains other interesting issues that are worth analyzing. Such as, poverty, women's suffrage, racial discrimination, sexuality, and business ethics.

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