On the Deconstruction of the Dark Brother’s Cultural Otherness in *I, Too, Sing America*

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**ABSTRACT:** Although they have emphasized on the studies of Langston Hughes’s other poems regarding the cultural issues of dark brothers reflected in those poems in a negative way, many scholars have seldom paid special attention to *I, Too, Sing America* up to now. Fewest of them have interpreted the narrator of this poem. None of them have referred to the deconstruction of the narrator’s cultural otherness in it, so this essay will make an exploration of it to widen and deepen the studies in this respect by giving a logical justification to the academic proposition of this essay that the construction of the dark brother’s cultural otherness has much to do with its deconstruction by his white masters’ cultural selfness.

**Keywords:** deconstruction; dark brother; cultural otherness; *I, Too, Sing America*

1 THE OTHERNESS OF DARK BROTHER

As manifested in the academic summaries of the poetic criticism of this poem, no studies have been made of the dark brother in the sense of character analysis, not to speak of his selfness and otherness owing to the ubiquitous neglect of it for a long time. Therefore, it turns out to be important to make a study of his cultural otherness in comparison with the cultural selfness of his white masters and think about the ways the latter impacts the former but before this, it is more important to have a good understanding of his otherness before his factual communication with them.

In line with the articulation exemplified in this line “They send me to eat in the kitchen (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)”, it can be imagined that before his indulgence in the specific communication with them, he has been characterized with his submissive otherness so much that he has no choice but does everything as he has been told or even ordered to in order to support his temporary existence and takes unconditional submission or tolerance as one of the best communicative approaches for him to achieve adaptation to his advantageous alien master as shown in this line “But I laugh (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)” despite his awareness of the inequality, the injustice, the prejudice, the discrimination, the segregation and even the humiliation he has been suffering from his contacts with them in a humble, timid, docile and cooperative way without any luxurious expectation of a possibility to talk with them in an equal way or resist against them in a relentless way, which is because his otherness has most to do with his dependence on them who have been turning a blind eye to his existence. In this sense, his disrespected otherness ought to be regarded as the product of his instinctive slavery and their aggressive ruthlessness.

In fact, what may come to the minds of the readers is that in a narrow sense, what has been refracted in their requirement and his response is their indifference of and contempt towards him in interpersonal communication while in a broad sense, it refers to his identity recognition and cognition of his otherness if the cultural context of this situation taken into context, for the identification, reflection, construction, reformation, perfection as well as transience of his otherness considering the unfair treatment of their repression, isolation, marginalization, discrimination, segregation, subjugation, devaluation, degradation and destruction he is likely to suffer from have much to do with the interaction of their arrogant and hegemonic selfness which has been located in everything that has been rejecting his otherness whether it is seen or not, whether it is perceived or not, or whatever it takes shape (Jian Zhang, p118) in a preventive way just as what will be elaborated below.

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2 THE CULTURAL OTHERNESS OF THE DARK BROTHER

Forced by the cultural selfness of his masters’ cultural superiority, the dark brother has cared least about the otherness of his cultural inferiority as epitomized in his tolerable responses in the line “And eat well, And grow strong.” [7] (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)” regardless of the cultural indifference, disgrace and humiliation he has been suffering from their avaricious requirements as implied in the word “when” and simple present the tense seen in the word “comes” that have cropped up in this line “when company comes.” [7] (Rampersad, Arnold, p46), for both words have indicated that they have been accustomed to their avaricious cultural revenge from them and unfavorable for his existence. In fact, he knows that he is unable to put up with their cultural offenses which have been doing harm to the normal growth of his cultural personality owing to the situational limitation of his life but he knows more than what he cannot but do at that moment is to put up at their homes, and to grow up and become strong at the cost of his cultural condescendence to the effect that he is accumulating the strengths which will be needed in the future.

According to these analyses, it seems that he has a good knowledge of his cultural otherness and the power of his knowledge about himself based on his physical growth, empirical growth, intellectual growth and epistemological growth, which will endow him the power to fight against his masters for the construction and reconstruction of his cultural otherness in a subversive way with a heavy reliance on the ideological profundity instead of superficiality of his cultural otherness. As enlightened in this poem, the construction and reconstruction of his cultural selfness is closely related to the purposeful and purposeless identification, negation and deconstruction of it from their cultural selfness that refers to everything that is opposite to or deviate from it.

3 THE INTERACTION BETWEEN HIS CULTURAL OTHERNESS AND THEIR CULTURAL SELFNESS

In a general sense, this cultural interaction is often marked with the efforts of the latter to assimilate the former for the pursuits of its cultural wholeness or sameness “in a violent way” [8] (Xiangchen Sun, p86)” and that of the former to disseminate the latter for the maintenances of its cultural oneness or uniqueness regardless of “the irreducibility” [1] (de Oliveira Moreira, Jacqueline, p690)” of it.

What has frequently occurred to the readers of this poem is that the former has been seen sinking into the abysses of being discriminated, isolated, excluded and manipulated by the latter to give rise to the cultural “hegemony and domination” [3] (Jian Zhang, p125)” of the latter silently in the process of his “reification and objectification” [3] (Jian Zhang, p125)”.

In a dialectical sense, what is worth clear explanation is that even though the cultural otherness of the dark brother and the cultural selfness of his white masters as reflected in this poem have been oppositional, they are to some extent interdependent and relative, for under a given condition, one of them can be translated into or constructed by the other. However, it ought to be kept in mind that what has been focused on in this essay is the deconstruction of the former by the latter in spite of the possibility that this deconstruction might seem to be a little impulsive because of the uncontrollable emotions and desires of the latter.

Considering this relativity, it ought to be known that the final identification of the former rests much on the manipulation or deconstruction of the latter in the following four senses including the construction of the former via its deconstruction by the latter, the reconstruction of the former via its deconstruction by the latter, as well as the deconstruction of the latter via its reconstruction by the former as what to be analyzed in details below.

4 THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DARK BROTHER’S CULTURAL OTHERNESS

4.1 The deconstructive construction of the dark brother’s cultural otherness

Having been serving as the one of the participants in this cultural interaction of this poem, the dark brother of this poem has to hide his cultural otherness from his masters’ the cultural prosecutions at the expense of tolerating their frequent cultural humiliation in the presence of their distinguished guests by accepting the impolite or discriminative request of ordering him “… to eat in the kitchen” [7] (Rampersad, Arnold, p46), for in their minds, he is a dishonorable, an unnecessary or a nihilistic existence in their families whose presence ought to be based on his absence from the sights of them and their guests, let alone a “peaceful coexistence” [3] (Minkkinen Panu, p148)”.

In the case of cultural politeness, he has been deprived of his cultural otherness that has been built on the very cultural dignity and confidence he ought to
enjoy in this cultural community but at that time, it seems to be a unreachable and unmatchable dream for him due to his cultural humility that prevents him from articulating his cultural otherness and perceiving himself as an “authentic self” (Kidder, Katherine, p3)’. In essence, he has been at their disposal and control in presence of the cultural domination and manipulation owing to the stereotyped cultural inferiority he has been located in upon his birth that has imprinted on his racial identity. In other words, his cultural otherness has been dismantled by their masters’ cultural selfness in an unequal and an asymmetrical way that is bound to result in the cultural unbalance between them based on his purposeful development of their trust of and dependence on the pretended impression he has been giving that he has been loyal to their cultural selfless and infidel to his own cultural beliefs.

What is fortunate is that he has not been despaired at his marginalized situation because he has been trying his best to prepare for or seek for the construction of his cultural otherness when he has to be faced with the discriminative deconstruction of them due to their constructed cultural superiority or priority that have been rooted in their prestigious cultural arrogance, bias and impoliteness by means of giving a friendly responses to or show his unintelligible cultural tolerance and hospitality for their advantageous arrogance and hegemony as voiced in this line “But I laugh” (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)” and making his mind to lay a ground for the satisfaction with his physical needs in the course of his growth by trying every means “…to eat well and grow strong” (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)”, for without health, he could fail to realize his dream of succeed in the initial construction of his cultural otherness. In this sense, it is their cruelty of exclusion and segregation that contributes to his success in addition to his unconscious motivation of challenging the very cultural authority and hegemony he has been faced with in his life owing to their presupposed notion of “the normalized immortality” (Kidder, Katherine, p204)” of their cultural selfness that “results in an imbalance of power” (Martinez Celesté, p153).”

In this sense, the stereotyped deconstruction of his cultural otherness with an aim of cultural marginalization and isolation has turned out to be very conducive for him to have a reflection on his identity crisis regarding his cultural existence, their cultural violence as well as his introspection of coming up with effective countermeasures to cope with this cultural plights he has been faced with and contribute to the cultural construction of his cultural identity, confidence as well as dignity in the superficial phenomenon of his rebellious cultural fidelity to their hegemonic manipulation of him in unbearable way.

Therefore, it can be seen from the cultural confrontation between the cultural construction of his cultural dignity on his own and the construction of his cultural otherness by his white masters that the temporary bitterness he has to be faced with in his life is not necessarily unfavorable for his ideological growth with respect of the cultural reflection on his previous cultural inferiority in relation to his masters who have been in possession of a variety of cultural resources that they have been resting on for their intellectual, cultural and academic growth owing to the conducive illumination he is likely to gain from. In short, his cultural adversity of being deconstructed by them has been playing an important role in the invisible construction of his cultural otherness.

4.2 The deconstructive reconstruction of the dark brother’s cultural otherness

With the preparation made for the success mentioned above, the dark brother begin to stay awake from the dangerous and barbarous assimilation of his cultural otherness to the cultural sameness and wholeness of his masters in line with their goal of cultural identification and uniformities with the core awareness that his genuine cultural oneness and selfness are likely to be acculturated or replaced in their cultural persecution driven by the madness of their hierarchical isolation, their ideological permeation and their cultural manipulation despite his strong willingness to fight for cultural dissemination to keep his cultural fidelity rather than infidelity because the blindness between them is likely to throw him into the spiritual deterioration and cultural alienation at the thought of their cultural secessionism and terrorism that have been epitomized in the panoramic microcosm of the cultural provincialism that they have been accustomed in their bossy lifestyles and used to object to or even put down the cultural newness of this dark brother, for it has always been considered not to be in consistent with their hegemonic cultural permeation into their cultural weakness as has been implanted in his lives for a long time to make him believe that he is unable to catch up with them for good and it is better for him to give up any thoughts of resisting against them based on the misconception that his cultural disadvantage has been brought about by his racial genes that have been regarded as the origin of his cultural disgrace. In this case, what he cannot but do and they have expect him to do is to take it from them that he is bound to be faced with his cultural nothingness and stay infidel to his cultural otherness.

Hidden behind his pretended cultural infidelity to his cultural otherness as shown in his unwillingness to be the victims of their cultural hostilities and enslavements according to his expedient submission to their arrogance seen in the last three lines of the first stanza of this poem, he has been aware that upon this growth at the expense of their cultural deconstruction of the cultural dignity and fidelity he ought to have inherited from his ancestors and made it graceful, elegant and admirable in his life, he has to bear in his
mind his cultural mission in this regard in the future to the effect that he ought to seek for his own cultural reconstruction that has been characterized with his indomitable persistence in reminding them of his remarkable cultural existence, making them guilt for the harms they have been doing him in this unjust cultural interaction, removing the cultural indifference they have been keeping in their mind that he together with his so-called cultural singularity should have seldom been paid enough attention to and the cultural barriers that have been stopping him from growing stronger and stronger, and subverting the biased attitudes they have been holding towards him and his cultural otherness in the superficial phenomenon of their deconstruction in accordance with his cultural ambition of preventing them from asking him to eat in the kitchen again in an impolite way as articulated in these lines "… I’ll be at the table…/Nobody’ll dare say to me /'Eat in the kitchen'" (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)

establishing his own authority while spoiling their outdated cultural hegemony and authority in a subversive way and reconstructing his cultural identity and authority in their presence in the hope of bossing them to do everything as he has been bossed before after the cultural empowerment gained in his own cultural reconstruction with a plumb prospect of working hard enough for the eventual and overall fulfillment of the cultural rehabilitation of the negroes and African-American culture he has been speaking for.

So to speak, it is in this way that the dark brother has eventually achieved the very reconstruction of his cultural otherness in his implicit resistance against their explicit discrimination, deconstruction or even destruction of it by dwarfing him and bossing him to be absent from the presence of their guests for the aim of maintaining their utilitarian graces and spare their blushes owing to his disgraceful existence regardless of the cultural humiliation of doing so and the harm it is likely to do him and his cultural dignity, for it has been believed in their minds that his dignity is worth no polite mention, let alone respectable attention.

It is their frequent violations of his dignity and cultural otherness that reminds of the importance for him to take challenges against their cultural authority, their blind arrogance as much as their ignorant hegemony by means of making them submitted to the acceptance of his sitting at table in a silent way and admitting his normal presence in their dinners without a single courage to ask him to be absent from the presence of their guests in the kitchen in spite of their habitual disrespect for the existence of others who they think are inferior to them owing to the deep-rooted philistinism in their cultural awareness and the ignorance of the importance for them to show their politeness and respect for others and the harms their arrogances and indifferences are likely to bring for them.

To be short, their cultural dehumanization has been playing an important role in his cultural introspection and reflection owing to the luxurious illumination he has been acquiring from the bitterness of being discriminated and isolated from their cultural impoliteness, disrespect, humiliation, permeation as well as deconstruction of his cultural otherness, in his decision to challenge their hegemonic ignorance and make them have a completely new understanding of him in a subversive way with a variety of surprises and suspicions despite their internal disbeliefs in what have been witnessed in their own eyes, and in helping him to pick up his courage to take relevant effective measures to defend and reconstruct his cultural otherness that means most to him after his personal experiencing the bitterness of being humiliated and bullied by them when he is ignorant of the importance, the maintenance as much as defense of his cultural dignity and confidence that have been epitomized in the enhancement of his own cultural otherness in the process of the cultural progress he has been forced to take into account. In this way, his cultural reconstruction has been indebted from the cultural deconstruction of his white masters in a hostile way out of ignorance and blindness in their cultural optimality, so he ought to take them as his benefactors who have contributed a lot to his remarkable growth.

4.3 The reconstructive deconstruction of the cultural selfness of the dark brother’s white master

Given that his white masters have been satiable and seized with the development of their habitual adaptation to his discursive limitation, his cultural powerlessness, his cultural ruination in their eyes and his unbalanced juxtaposition with them, the dark brother has taken every possible opportunity to feed, to strengthen, and highlight himself with the adequate absorption of the material and spiritual resources available for him to contribute to his normal and noble growth characterized with unmatchable cultural profundity, optimality, and superiority either in a horizontal way or in a vertical way, which they have turned out to be unable to keep pace with owing to their excessive additions to or satiations with their intrinsic cultural priority in an arrogant fashion regardless of the distance that have been lengthened between his cultural otherness and their cultural selfness as poetized in these lines “…They’ll see how beautiful I am/And be ashamed" (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)”, for he has achieved a thorough subversion of their cultural arrogance, indifference and hostility in communication with him in the silence that he has been keeping on purpose for a long time to avoid their cautious prevention and violent interference.

In some measures, the remarkable progress he has been making in quietness all the time has an unexpected and unbelievable impact on their blind and ignorant satiation with the prestigious pride they have been taken in, their delights to the very manipulation of a variety of cornered servants like the dark brother they have been tasting for ages, and the hedonist
pleasures they have been lost in. In essence, what he has been doing has been deconstructing their cultural selfness that they have been depending on to look down upon him, to turn a deaf ear to his cultural existence and turn a blind eye to his cultural progress out of their habitual carelessness that has been brought about by their superficial understanding of their own cultural superiority and his inferiority without knowing that the relativity of the cultural superiority and inferiority between them, let alone the cruel truth that their cultural satiation with what they have possessed is unlikely to prevent him from making his great efforts to translate his cultural insatiation into his satiation with every bitterness and pathos he has been suffering from on a daily basis and their decadence gives him opportunities to them.

To be specific in the textual sample of the stanza of this poem as mentioned above, What the word “beautiful” is likely to remind the readers of is their unexpected admiration for him that have made a sharp contrast between their previous attitudes towards him to enslave him in the deprivation of his epistemological otherness rather than the ideological liberation of him and his limited cultural otherness. It seems true from the illumination of this word that the beauty or charm of his cultural otherness lies in the honest and impartial recognition, admiration and subjugation of them based on their incomparability with him to the effect that the real deaf of his cultural competitors is located in his persuasive progress and transcendence in the remarkable highlights of the profundity and extensiveness of his cultural otherness in contrast to the superficiality of their cultural selfness.

Besides, the line “I, Too, Sing America” (Rampersad, Arnold, p46)” shows that he has finished his final reconstruction of his cultural otherness that is favorable for the identification and cognition of his cultural identity. In the minds of the readers, what has been seen in him is nothing but his subversion of their cultural selfness with the implicit reconstruction and the explicit articulation of his cultural otherness with a sole dependence on his internal introspection and the violent illumination of their discrimination and manipulation in their unfair and unbalanced communication. In another sense, this reconstruction is not only a deconstruction of his previous cultural image but also that of their images to the effect that the reconstruction of his cultural otherness has been rooted in the deconstruction of their cultural selfness.

To sum up, what ought to be mentioned most in the analysis of this poem is that all analyses that have been made of above are very evident for the logical justification of the academic proposition this essay that in the binary unbalanced cultural competition between the dark brother’s cultural otherness and his white masters’ cultural selfness just as what has been exemplified in this poem, the violent and brutal deconstruction of the cultural otherness of the dark brother by his white masters has to a great extent contributed a lot to the construction and reconstruction of his cultural otherness and at the same time to the deconstruction of their cultural selfness.

5 CONCLUSION

On the basis of the logical justification of the academic proposition of this essay given above, it has been concluded that this academic proposition has turned out to be reasonable because the dark brother’s deconstruction of his cultural otherness has turned out to be very conducive for his final construction, consolidation as well as reconstruction of this poem in the process of enriching the cultural diversity as expected in the cultural rehabilitation during Harlem renaissance owing to the mutual construction, deconstruction and reconstruction between them either in an enthusiastic way or in an confrontational way owing to their mutual subversion and justification. What it really takes in dealing with cultural resistances between the cultural otherness of the dark brother and the cultural selfness of his white masters ought to be mutual tolerance and generosity for the sake of cultural coexistence and tolerance by means of putting one of them into the shoes of the other in the process of solving the cultural resistances between them.

On the whole, the theoretical and practical justification of the academic proposition of this essay will urge poetic scholars and readers to rethink about the dialectical relationship between the construction of one’s selfness and the deconstruction of the other’s otherness, the dialectical relationship between the construction of one’s selfness and the deconstruction of his otherness as well as the dialectical relationship between the construction of one’s otherness and the deconstruction of the other’s otherness.

Despite a lot of academic illuminations that have been articulated in this essay, a lot of unconsidered academic limitations regarding the profound understanding of the textual implication of this poem, the rich accumulation of the academic resources related to the analyses of this poem as well as the inappropriate judgments of the values of this poem are likely to be left in this essay and some unintentional offenses to be made to the academic pioneers with respect to the contestable arguments that are likely to be expressed in this essay owing to the limited academic horizons of the author of this essay. All those academic limitations are expected to be overcome in the sustainable exploration of the researching questions in this respect and the possible breakthroughs in future studies and all the possible offenses to be forgiven based on the rules of academic tolerance.
REFERENCES


