

CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. Background of the Study

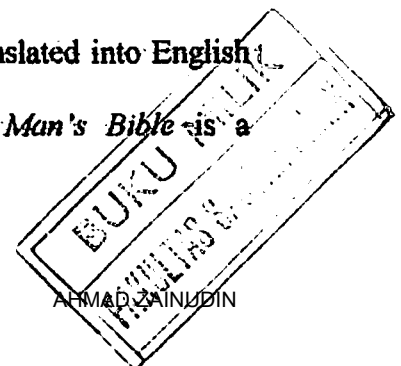
Literature is a creation of imagination which is made by an artist that consequently tends to be abstract. There are three genres in literature: novel, poetry, and drama. Yet, the most popular genre among people is the novel. This was what X. J. Kennedy said: "Among the form of imaginative literature in our language, the novel has long been the favorite of both writers and readers" (X. J. Kennedy. *An Introduction to Fiction* : 180).

Richard Gill, in his *Mastering English Literature*, reveals another understanding about the novel that is a world specially made in words by an author, he adds:

"This means that novels are not real life. Like all works of art – poems, plays, pots or pieces of music -- they have been constructed or crafted. Novels, however, are fictional; that is to say they have been made up. A character in a novel can't be compared to a real person from whom he or she has been copied" (77).

Yet, Kennedy suggests that there is also nonfiction novel. For this, he says: "More recently, we have heard much about the nonfiction novel, in which the author presents actual people and events in story form" (185).

One Man's Bible, a novel written by Gao Xingjian, is considered as a fictionalized account of the author's life. This novel was translated into English by Mabel Lee in 2000. *Boston Globe* comments: "*One Man's Bible* is a



fictionalized account of Gao Xingjian's life under the Chinese Communist regime" (*From One Man's Bible book*). Like Gao himself, the central character of this novel is a Chinese writer, a painter, a playwright and a critic who lives in France. Furthermore, the central character is an author who writes *One Man's Bible* as though the confession of himself. Although, it is difficult to separate Gao Xingjian as the author from the central character, an author, yet it is also difficult to make sense on how much the Cultural Revolution had affected Gao and how much 'isms' have given to or taken away from him. However, according to what Richard Gill said above, the central character in this novel can not be compared to Gao Xingjian from whom the central character has been copied.

Gao Xingjian is the Chinese novelist, the playwright, the dramatist, the translator, the director, the critic and the artist, who was born in Ganzhou, eastern China. He studied French literature at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute between 1957-1962, and taking a degree in French and literature. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000. He becomes the first Chinese writer to win this prestigious award. The Swedish Academy said that Gao was, 60 years old, won the prize, worth about \$900,000. And, in a statement, the academy praised two of his novels, "*Soul Mountain*" and "*One Man's Bible*."

Through *One Man's Bible*, Gao depicts a man's journey in searching for freedom. The man takes a great risk in life struggling for freedom: freedom to live, freedom to express and freedom to love. This unnamed central character had encountered the fearful era in China under Mao Zedong and Cultural Revolution. He is an exile, a creative writer who places himself as a citizen of the world. He is

a frail man who has managed himself not to be crushed by authority but he speaks to the world with his own voice. The central character in his *One Man's Bible* lets himself writing whatever he wants to writes. He writes the novel in the business of his-self fulfillment. The result of this act is an unmasked writing through which the central character could enjoy the total freedom as he writes freely.

One Man's Bible is an account of China's Cultural Revolution, seen through the eyes of the central character as a writer, a victim, an exile, and an outside observer. He recounts his experiences, the fearful experiences, during China's Cultural revolution. He paints a stark or the unforgiving pictures of the results of Mao's regime, of the Cultural Revolution, and of the political oppression that had forced him to practice his art in secret and to become a ruthless political intriguer in order to survive. In order to observe and listen to the past version of himself, the central character turns himself into fiction, a character that is unrelated to him and has qualities yet to be discovered.

The novel conveys the horror of China under Mao Zedong, especially, during the period of Cultural Revolution that had really happened in China. It portraits how people have been the victims of China Communist regime's bloody persecutions. The intellectual class, including the central character, has been purged with the utmost cruelty; "daily life is riddled with paranoia and fear, and government propaganda turns citizens against one another" (From *One Man's Bible* book). Cultural Revolution had been Mao's effort to apply his principles of Socialism and Communism in China. This had happened in China for about a decade, between 1967 until 1977. Much has been written about this period, and

the Chinese people are often portrayed as innocent victims, powerless to stop the government:

“Writers and artists, especially, have been the victims of their bloody persecutions. Every expansion of “literary rectification” has signaled another power struggle. This is ample demonstration that the Maoists oppose humanity, and ethics and negate culture and knowledge so as to implement their tyranny, make fools of the people and prolong their own perilous survival.” (The Taipei Chinese Center International P.E.N., *Thirty Years of Turmoil In Asia Literature*, 1976 : 6).

The central character as a narrator who is in a phobia, shares the novelist's credentials as a dramatist and public figure, is visiting Hong Kong for a 1996 production of one of his plays. There he encounters a lover, a pale and a voluptuous Germanic named Margarethe. They spend several days in a prolonged sexual encounter: "It had been three days and nights of making love over and over again, striving to dig and suck in the other party" (132). She persuades him to write, freely, everything he wants to write. She is the woman who stirs him up remembering his life during the dark period in China, although it is the matter he tries very hard to forget. While this novel reveals the memoirs of the central character's past life, it also becomes “a profound meditation on the essence of writing, on exile, on the effects of political oppression on the human spirit, and on how the human spirit can triumph” (*Boston Globe*). Thus, he contemplates the very process of remembering, and, therefore, the novel becomes the process of discovering his self through the past. According to John Lock, the “self” could be understood as:

“Conscious thinking thing (whatever substance made up of, whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not) which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends” (Blackstone. *Meaning and Existence: Introduction Reading in Philosophy*; 107).

Gao writes this novel intelligently and the central character is like really lives. The central character often develops the story of the novel in the form of monologues. He criticizes himself as though the observer who is looking at himself, he says: “You know you are certainly not the embodiment of truth , and you write simply to indicate that a sort of life, worse than a quagmire, more real than an imaginary hell, more terrifying than Judgment Day, has, in fact, existed” (195). The novel seems to be pure and deep. It reveals astounding insights about human nature under duress as the government, using threats, imprisonment or violence to compel people following the Communist Party line. Moreover, he reveals the dueling urges to express oneself and preserve oneself, and the tremendous value of freedom, life, emotion and self-discovery. It is as if the writing of the book itself is an act of freedom.

Besides showing an act of freedom, this novel also becomes the realization of appearances of freedom. It is a frank writing, or an unmasked writing, unlimited effort look at one man by that same man. It is as if the central character is an observer, many years and many experiences later. It expresses and communicates the central character’s thoughts, feelings, and attitudes without a mask. This is the nature of literature which Lees said: “Literature is writing which

expresses and communicates thought, feeling, and attitudes towards life" (Lees. *English Literature : An Introduction for foreign Readers*, 1973).

The stories within the novel are written as though they come to the central character's mind. Even, it is not organized, rather just a chronicle of a variety of thoughts and experiences. The narrator says, "You seek only to narrate your impressions and psychological state of that time, and to do this, you must carefully excise the insights that you possess at this instant and in this place, as well as put aside your present thoughts" (182). Gao develops the central character's past and present selves as two different individuals, 'he' and 'you'. The continual changes in setting and the shifting from the second to the third person, mixed with a sprinkling of dialog throughout, add to the novel's complexity and make it a difficult work.

In this novel, the central character frankly reveals his way of life or his life style: the way he treats his friends and enemies, his conduct when alone and in society, his attitude towards his country, his religious beliefs, his ethical standards, his social adjustment, and his personal happiness. Therefore, these discussions also lead the writer to analyze the quality of the central character, or his personalities, according to Existentialism.

B. Statement of the Problems

Base on the background of the study, the writer formulates the problems and would like to find out the answers through the following questions:

1. What is the role of Margerethe in the central character's development so that he writes this unmask novel *One Man's Bible*?
2. How far does the construction of the story show the central character desire's of freedom?
3. Why does the central character use the pronouns 'he' and 'you' in this *One Man's Bible*?
4. How far do the central character's thoughts and attitudes go on as an aesthetic person?

C. Objective of the Study

The writer regards three aspects as the objective of this study:

1. to discuss Margarethe's role on the development of the central character.
2. to analyze the way the central character constructs and tells the story so that it becomes the act of freedom.
3. to discuss the quality of his selves in both pronouns, the he and the you.
4. to discuss the central character's personality who lives as an aesthetic person viewed from Existentialism.

D. Significance of the Study

From this study, the writer hopes that the readers will be able to have a clear study of what Gao is trying to portrait especially the thoughts and feelings of

a man who had lived under oppression. This study is important because it also implies the discussions whereby the writer hopes the reader would make sense the important issues of the novel that are the effect of political oppression on the human spirit, and on how the human spirit can triumph. The writer expects the readers will study about how writing becomes the act of freedom as the central character tries to enjoy the total freedom through writing. The writer of this thesis also hopes that the study on the central character, as an individual who is conscious of himself, viewed from Existentialism, would give the readers a reflection about the way to exist in this world well.

As the novel is written in unordinary form, the writer hopes that this study would enrich the reader's knowledge about literature. Thus, the writer of this thesis hopes that this study will encourage the readers to understand about Gao Xingjian, through his works, that phenomenally got an international award, Nobel Prize in Literature, in 2000. In addition, the writer also hopes this literary study would be useful for Airlangga University.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study is intended to analyze the central character of *One Man's Bible*. This would bring this thesis in the discussion of the events and the scenes in which the characters involves as the background of his personality. Since Gao Xingjian develops this novel as though a confession of the central character, this study also reviews the novel from the perspective of the way he constructs and tells the novel. This study also analyzes the central character personality

according to Kierkegaard's Existentialism. And, although the novel seems to be a fictionalized account of Gao himself, this study is putting aside the discussion whether the central character is the real Gao Xingjian or the fictional Gao Xingjian.

F. Theoretical Background

In order to gain the objective study of which the writer has mentioned before, the writer uses the theories that are considered relevant to the discussion. In this study the writer uses the intrinsic theory and Kierkegaard's Existentialism. The use of intrinsic theory is intended to explore the way the central character writes the novel, whereas Existentialism is intended to bring this study into a comprehensive analysis about the central character's quality. In this thesis, the writer will use the idea of Kierkegaard about the stages on life's way. The study using intrinsic theory focuses on plot, setting, characterization, and the character analysis. Finally, this thesis would come to be the study on the central character's quality.

G. Method of the Study

In writing this thesis, the writer uses analytical method. By using this method, the writer will make the descriptive explanation of the problems through the central character's actions, talks, narrations, thoughts, and the critics or the perceptions on himself. This method is applied based on the facts within *One Man's Bible* itself and supported by other information about the work.

The writer also considers the library research as an appropriate method in developing this study. This method help the writer to gets some information from many books in the library to make a comprehensive analysis. This effort is also supported by collecting information from *internet* sources that could help him in developing a good discussion. The information, from both library and internet, are dealing with *One Man's Bible* and the theories.

H. Definition of Key Terms

In this analysis the writer considers the importance of describing the definition of some terms. This is meant to help the readers to make sense the discussion well. Below are the terms:

1. **Freedom** : the quality or state of not being coerced or constrained by fate, necessity, or circumstances in one's choices or actions (Webster's New Twentieth Dictionary).
2. **Socialism** : the belief in a political and social system in which everyone has the same rights and opportunities, which State ownership or control of the major means of wealth and production.
3. **Communism** : a belief in social system in which the State owns and controls the means of wealth and production.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK