

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Autobiography is a story of a person's life or part of a person's life written by the individual himself. It tells the experiences, events and circumstances of the autobiographer as well as his thoughts and personalities. An autobiography may also be considered as the historical facts of the autobiographer.

Robert C. Pooley in *Outlooks through Literature* stated that "a biography is the life history of one person, written by another, while an autobiography is a person's own life history, written by himself. These two classes of non-fiction, along with histories, sermons, essays, and some poetry, made up practically all of America's early literature". Both still "form a large part of the literature published each year, and many are as widely read and enjoyed as the most popular works of current fiction" (Pooley 148).

Biography and autobiography lay closer with history compared to other forms of writing. Yet, they still differ from history in which

biography and autobiography concern more to “feeling” and “matters of value judgement”. In *An Approach to Literature*, Brooks explains that biography and autobiography go “beyond ordinary history in that, with its concentration upon an individual, it tends to give a more complete and coherent picture of character in action, and invites, with reference to the character presented, an imaginative involvement that makes for dramatic tension. The story tends to be, in the emotional sense, rounder, the problems of human values more fully explored” (Brooks 559).

“As for biography as an art, much that we have said of fiction, and some things that we have said of poetry, apply here with equal force. Like fiction, biography is concerned with the pattern of action woven by a human character. Like fiction and poetry, it is concerned with creating a compelling verbal picture, an imaginative event”. This imaginative event leads the readers into interpretation. Thus, interpretation brings into “the realm of literary values” (Brooks 559-560). It means that autobiography can be identified as one of the various forms of literature.

The writer of this thesis chooses to analyze an autobiography under the consideration that autobiography is the closest form of life. It is life brought to literature. Wilhelm Dilthey in *Philosophy and Literature* observes: “In autobiography we encounter the highest and most instructive form of the understanding of life” (189). So, by reading

autobiography, one may be hoped to be able to increase his understanding of life and enrich his human sensibilities.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass is a story of Douglass' true experience from early childhood until he escapes from bondage. When he is a teenager he lives under the most kind-hearted mistress, Mrs. Hugh Auld who teaches him alphabet. Yet, not long after that, Mr. Hugh Auld stops the lesson, the action that increases Douglass' curiosity of the relationship between literacy and freedom. Since that, with his own effort, Douglass determines to learn to read and write.

Slavery had invited many debates. Since the coming of the Africans to America and their spread over the South, slavery had lead into discussions. Some Northerners disagreed with slavery, some stated that it was a "necessity that it was good for the slave as well as for the owner", while the Southern slave-holders maintained that it was actually a far more humane system than Northern capitalism (Becker 115-117).

It was not quite clear how the slaves felt about slavery. Yet, obviously, there were many rebellions, one of those performed by Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831, and the runaway slaves, one of those performed by Frederick Douglass on September, 1838. "Much of the evidences were perhaps in the form of anecdotes, slave songs and stories or narratives that slaves created and told to one another (Becher 118-

119)". Mostly they contained the expressions of unhappiness, suffers and dreads, for they were sold, forced to work and treated inhumanely by the slave holders.

Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, together with other slave narratives aim to "make his story an example to other people and a justification of his continued fight" (Stone 22). The story voices Douglass' cries as well as the screams of his fellow-tribe living in slavery. Having no freedom to learn to read and write, Douglass fights to learn it himself. After some time, finally he is able to read, the very first way for him to know the out-world, the exact truth about slavery. Since then Douglass encourages himself that someday, he will be free.

Douglass' courageousness to struggle on his own for his freedom, and then the freedom of all Blacks becomes the writer of this thesis' admiration for him. It is supported by Mark Twain put in a letter to President elect James A Garfield on January 12, 1881, promoting Douglass as Marshall of the District: "I offer this position with peculiar pleasure and strong desire," writes Twain, "because I honor this man's high and blemishless character and so admire his brave, long crusade for the liberties and elevation of his race" (Quarles 320).

This thesis is about Douglass's psychological process when he struggles for freedom. His own experience as a slave, facing the most horrible views of the masters' cruelty becomes his main motivation to escape. It starts since he gains his consciousness that in fact, slavery is a falseness, a hypocrisy of Christianity of that land. He believes that there is equality for Black and White and that still there is a chance for him and for anyone to reach liberty. The struggle continues when Douglass plans to escape until at last, he succeeds to reach New York and declares his liberty there. So, the writer will go further from that consideration to analyze the story.

B. Statement of the Problems

Regarding to the description above, the writer of this thesis wants to analyze the story based on some important problems as follows:

1. How does Frederick Douglass' consciousness about escaping from slavery arise ?
2. How does Douglass struggle against his enslavement ?
3. How he succeeds to escape ?

C. Objective of the Study

The writer's objective of the study in this thesis is to describe :

1. How Douglass' consciousness about escaping from slavery arises.
2. How Douglass struggles against his enslavement.
3. How he succeeds to escape.

D. Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that her thesis will enrich the English Department library of Airlangga University as well as will inspire other English Department students to analyze other works of black writers.

Through this thesis, the writer wants to show the life of slaves, so that people knows about slavery. If people has already been aware of slaves' life, and their feelings of suffer, it is hoped that they will not give the same treatment to their slaves.

She also wishes that this thesis can be one of the supporting sources related to the works of Black Literature.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to deepen the analysis, the writer restricts her attention in Douglass' character influenced by the oppressive setting where he lives. Douglass' process in gaining his consciousness, his struggle mentally and physically, his escape until his performance to audience standing out for freedom will be the focus of her analysis. However, Douglass' background that creates him to be such character will also be discussed. It is beneficial to understand Douglass' desires in his life and the cause of his act of defiance towards his master.

F. Theoretical Background

Since the analysis concerns with the intrinsic aspect of the story, the writer uses the intrinsic theory, which consists of plot, character and setting. Hence, the writer also applies the psychological and sociological approaches to support the analysis since the main attention of this study is to analyze the main character's psychological process influenced by the surrounding condition and social moral. She will also apply the autobiographical approach because the work she analyzes is an autobiography.

G. Definition of Key Term

Escape

running away from something that is not appropriate with his wants. Mostly it is about the condition in which the agent lives and feels.

Frederick Douglass

- the author of the autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in which he writes down his own experience being a slave.
- the character being analyzed in the stor. He is the slave who fights for his liberty, starting from his being illiterate until his gaining literacy and his success to become Marshal of the District of Columbia, Recorder of Deeds for the District, and United States Minister to the Republic of Haiti.

Self Consciousness

the awareness of an individual of his own existence, thoughts and actions. This word implies the consciousness of consciousness, that the individual feels a strong attachment to his own self.

Slavery

practice of having slaves, in which they are forced to work, being treated inhumanely and considered as property.

H. Research Methodology

The writer uses the library research, that is the process of finding references relating to the story and the author, as a means to support the analysis of the story. The book, essays, encyclopedia will also be considered besides the novel of Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* as the main source of the study.

The writer also applies the descriptive method, that is the method of giving the picture of the story as the goal, in analyzing the story. In this study, the character, setting and plot are the essential elements used to analyze the problems mentioned before.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK