

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is made separately for it contains the reasons of my using the theories in this thesis. To describe my thesis clearly I have chosen The Expressive Theory and The Thoery of Autobiography as the supporting approaches to The Mimetic Theory as the leading theory .

A. Expressive Theory

'Poetry', as Wordsworth announced in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800, is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.' Poetry is the overflow, utterance, or projection of the thought and feelings of the poet; or else (in the chief variant formulation) poetry is defined in terms of the imaginative process which modifies and synthesizes the images, thoughts, and feelings of the poet. (The Mirror And The Lamp pp : 21-22).

This definition of the Expressive Theory as stated by Wordsworth gives an obvious picture that to express what is inside the author's mind, including his feeling, his ideas, his will, his wish, etc., a writer needs a way. A way in which he can thoroughly presents a message or at least a fact that concerns much with the

the social life and its problems.

The writer should describes the events in such a way that those who read his works will have a clear understanding and interpretation of what is actually meant by the writer and therefore may learn a lesson from what they read about reality of life. A good clear description or writing will help us know what is inside the author's mind, so that the readers are able to understand the essence of the story. Abrams has made a clear remark about this in The Mirror and The Lamp :

" The work ceases then to be regarded as primarily a reflection of nature actual or improved; the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself. The exploitation of literature as an index to personality first manifest itself in the early nineteenth century; it is the inevitable consequence of the expressive point of view. " (p:23)

I choose the expressive theory as one supporting approach in analyzing Black Boy, because the author of the novel has using "I" as the narrator of the story. "I" indicates the first singular person point of view. This is also one of the indicator that Expressive Theory is valid for analysing this novel. M.H.Abrams has mentioned this in his book The Mirror And The Lamp :

" Concurrently we discover a tendency to convert the lyric 'I' from what Coleridge called the 'I-representative' to the poet in his proper person, and to express experience and states of mind which can be

verified from the testimony of the poet's private letters and journals. " (p: 98)

I should also state that to understand a story besides knowing the sequence of events presented, the reader also needs to have a better knowledge about the writer; either the history of him, the background of his life, and his era, his family, etc. To get a clear description about all these, the reader may turn back to the way the author writes the story, so that the reader can understand the essence of the story and the exact message that he wants to say through his story. I quote Abram's statement which might clarify my explanation :

" A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. " (p: 22)

B. Mimetic Theory

Seen from the life of Richard Wright as the author himself; he was not imitating the real life to his story but also brings us, the reader, a reflection so that we can see the miserable life he has undergone. From this fact, we should look to the mimetic theory to take a better understanding about this novel.

I take one from Abram's The Mirror And The Lamp :

- " The historical genesis of art is traced to the natural human instinct for imitating, and to the natural tendency to find pleasure in seeing imitations. " (p : 10)

Abrams and William have similar opinion regarding Mimetic Theory, stating that " human beings have a tendency to imitate life " To emphasize Abrams opinion, I also quote from Response To Literature :

- " There is a natural instinct of men to imitate thing concerning life. " (p : 8)

From these , I conclude that Richard Wright has imitated the reality occuring at the time he wrote the story to the sequence of events in Black Boy. A statement by Michael Cusack in Black America may give a clear description about that period :

- " The decade of the Great Depression the 1930s- was a difficult time for all Americans, but it was particularly hard for black Americans. In many communities when welfare aid jobs were given out, whites came first. For many blacks families, staying alive was a daily struggle. " (Scholarship Magazine)

It was really a hard time for the blacks for they have to fight against poverty, segregation, and struggle for life after the war.

The description of the situation and condition of black America at that time, is portrayed by Michael Cusack from Black America:

- " Local laws and customs were used to deprive blacks of voting rights. Prejudice

increased and discrimination got worse. In most former slave states, a system of racial segregation arose, and blacks had to use separate schools, churches, hospitals, parks, swimming pools, lunchrooms, washrooms, bus sections and theater sections. In the early years of the 20th century, lynchings -the illegal killing of people for real or imagined crimes- greatly increased. After the First World War, the promise of equality and opportunity in the South for blacks seemed further away than ever. As a result, many blacks moved from the rural South to the great cities of the North. Although northerners did not practice formal segregation, blacks encountered discrimination in jobs and housing. " (The End of Slavery)

This also shows that Richard is telling us the story of his life. Since his mother becomes paralyzed, she is not able to look after him and his brother anymore. Richard is forced to make the choice he hates, that is living with one of his uncles or aunts. His brother has to take the same choice as well. Being separated from his mother and his brother, make him desperate.

He has never lived happily and tasted warmth in his family since very young; after his father left the family and married another woman. Life became very hard for him after that. The life of Richard Wright, the author is more or less the same with Richard's life, as stated in The Norton Anthology Of American Literature

" Wright was born near Natchez, Mississippi. When he was five, his father abandoned the family -Wright, his younger brother, and his mother- and for the next ten years Wright was raised by a series of relatives

in Mississippi. By 1925, when he went to Memphis on his own, he had moved twenty times. Extreme poverty, a constantly interrupted education that never went beyond junior high school, and the religious fundamentalism of his grandmother, along with the constant experiences of humiliation and hatred in a racially segregated South; all these contributed to Wright's growing sense that the hidden anger of black people was justified and that only by acknowledging and expressing it could they move beyond it. " (p:1761)

Richard Wright does not merely imitate things happening in reality in Black Boy, but apparently, it has the resemblance quality with the ones he undergone himself. I believe that Mimetic theory is suitable to describe Black Boy; based on the quotation stated by Graham Hough in An Essay On Criticism :

" Yet the 'imitations' of the poet, though not of specific objects with a substantial historical existence, are not cut off from the real world. Shakespeare's Othello is not an imitation of an actual man who has actually existed, as Gibbon's Marcus Aurelius is. But he is an imitation of a man. So there is a sense in which the poet is a maker: he makes things that have never existed before. Yet he is also an imitator: he makes them by analogy with things that have existed. " (p : 44)

C. Theory Of Autobiography

Autobiography theory is applied because this novel is an auto-biographical work. The fact is stated clearly by Elizabeth Schultz in To Be Black And Blue p: 4 describing that Black Boy is an autobiography of the writer, Richard Wright. The afterword given by

John Reilly from State University of New York at Albany also emphasized that this book was a prime work of Richard Wright which is telling his own experience as an abandoned boy. There are many other literary criticism which also mention about this.

Theory of Autobiography is thus relevance to the analysis of the novel since it is presenting the fact on the author's life which is relevant to the topic I have chosen. I mentioned this theory in supporting my thesis because from the autobiography of the writer we will know the history of the author's life better. We will be able to imagine the fact, the truth which is , of course still relevant with the history of the nation in such era. (Grace William, Response to Literature)

" A more extended use of prose as personality and reflection is to be found in the biography and autobiography. These are the fields where the borderlines of literature and history become hard to define. "
(p : 138)

Autobiographies help us know what has happened in the past that can be remembered by the next generation. All these events should be recorded for the sake of the people and nation's history. Autobiography is not an exact copy of one's life, however, it is still able to lead us to notice the story. We will have a better picture of the situation at that time which is surely different from one decade to another.

This can be concerned as an important knowledge to the readers. It is important for the readers to understand what is in the author's mind when writing the book. That is why the readers are able to catch the entire message and meaning of the author. The purpose of the novel is to present the reader not just a story but facts about life which happens in reality as might be seen or undergone by the reader.

" The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author; and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the oldest and best-established methods of literary study. Biography can be judged as a study of the man of genius, of his moral intellectual, and emotional development, which has its own intrinsic interest; and finally, we can think of biography as affording materials for a systematic study of the psychology of the poet and of the poetic process. "
(Theory of Literature p : 75)

The story becomes more interesting if the author's own experience, if it is presented in such a way, where the events are drawn and described in unique and attracting. This is the author's own experience, the ones he has undergone in his life, he is the witness of the situation and condition at that time. He should be able to explain and visualize all the moments vividly and detailly.

My analysis on black autobiography, is based on the fact that the black people have a unique and interesting history. Their life can not be separated from the fact that they are considered as the lowest class of human race in the U.S.A merely because they are black. Previously, many are descendants of slaves, and it is not surprising that their life are always haunted by the rigid segregation rule, especially for those living in the South. The blacks had to undergo the lynching act which is considered legal at that time, the violence of Ku Klux Klan, an organization which is established to destroy black, by calling themselves as the anti-Negro; the famous Jim Crow Law, a law enacted to forbid the blacks to enter certain public places like washrooms, buses, theaters, libraries, hospitals, parks, etc.

These indicated the unfair treatments of the whites toward them. The history of Black American can be seen from The American Autobiography by Albert E. Stone :

" The history of Afro-American autobiography is long and full. In America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thousands of former slaves set down the history of their escape from bondage into freedom in writings which came to be called slave narratives and to be identified as an independent literary genre. " (p : 109)

literary works. This can be seen from the quality of their writing and the eternal of their story. They are usually representative of their race which talks about in justice, unfair treatment, the confession of their existence, the equal right, etc.

" Characteristic of the black autobiography, however, is the fact that the individual and the community are not polarities; there is a community of fundamental identification between "I" and "We" within any single autobiography in spite of differences in autobiographical modes and in the autobiographers' visions. Black autobiography in general, however, like the blues expands the solo. The voice of the single individual retains the tone of the tribe. Of Richard Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy* (1945), Ralph Ellison says that it is, like the blues, "an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically," but that "in it thousand of Negroes will not for the first time see their destiny in public print. " (p: 110)

Through these works they hope that the world may listen to them and consider them as human being, among human races of the world, and to admit their existence. By showing their true color, they hope it will open the world's eyes about the truth and reality of the blacks as a race.

CHAPTER III

RICHARD WRIGHT, AUTHOR OF BLACK BOY