

CHAPTER I  
I N T R O D U C T I O N

I.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is not exaggerate I think for reading this novel entitled Black Boy by Richard Wright, is like a vision for us to turn back and look at the others which is involving a deep concern about the life that is never being thought before.

The novel depicts the life of a black boy from his childhood until he reaches manhood without any descriptions of happiness nor compassion. While undergoing these periods, often times he experiences mixed feelings; such as : loneliness because he can talk to no one , fear because he has witnessed too much brutal treatments that the white people often do to the men of his race, sadness because he never gets warmth and affection from his own family, anger because no one trusts him including his own uncles and aunts and the feelings of desolateness for none of his friends accept his ideas. All these feelings always haunts him whenever and wherever he goes.

Born as a black boy simply means a destruction to his life. During his early childhood he can never resists asking questions like why he has to

suffer, being hungry, to experience fear, most of the time in his daily life. Why can't he live happily, properly, and securely?. Why do blacks always and have to accept such " rigid " rule that the white people made for them?. Why should he accepts and take for granted all the white's treatment to him, even if they do not concern him as a human being?.

Nevertheless the worst of all things that happens to him is the bigotry of religion in his family. So strict are his aunt and grandmother are, so that he is even never allowed to ask questions, to suggest something, moreover to oppose an idea. He is not allowed to think, to say, or to act, whenever they are concerned with religion. Friends don't help him much. His schoolmates consider him as a " desolate bigotry family ", and friends from the church keep away from him as he is considered sinful, since he never goes to church.

Thus Richard, has to live with his own feeling; solely, with his own will, since he trusts no-one. Richard is different from all or most of the black people in his environment. He is courageous enough to speak about wrong things, he is able to pass his grades well in school, he likes reading and he realizes that through books he can see the real world. He also has

He rebels against the unfair treatment of the whites to the blacks; in his opinion both of them are the same kind. Meaning that there is no difference between black and white.

Richard is a genuine character presented by the author as a representative of his own character and his own experience as a black man. He is the portrait of one of the modern black's new idea. So the discussion will concern much about Richard Wright as the author of this novel that is regarded as his best work and as a masterpiece of his autobiography.

#### Statement of the Problems.

From this background of the study, I would like to state the problems which I will concentrate on, to make the analysis of Richard's character easier to understand. They are :

- Why Richard is different with the other black people ?
- Why his family educate him strictly ?
- What things influence his life most ?
- Why do the whites hate him ?
- What is actually the writer want to say to the readers ?

These questions will become the focus of the analysis of Richard, the main character in this novel.

## I.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the essence of the story that is written by the author as an autobiography, concerning his way of thinking, ideas, opinions, criticism about the life he has to undergo.

The unjustified rule he has to obey, the unfair and cruel treatment he has to accept from the white people, and the bigotry religion life in his family. By knowing these situations it is easier to see and know more about what he wants us to see through his story, what messages he brings, and to give a clear description through the main character's point of view about humiliation, cruelties, the lack of love and tolerance to his race .

Richard obviously intends to show directly the case of race discrimination occurring at that time. He also creates a character of black American who takes pride in his study, eagers to learn everything through books, magazines, newspapers; etc. His fond of reading make the window of the world open widely before him. The description of how it goes on will become the most important part in the next discussion.

### I.3.THEORETICAL APPROACH

Some black Americans who know and understand the way of life, usually have a great concern about the suffering which is generally caused by race discrimination upon their race. They realize that one of the effective ways to attack the humiliation done to their race, is to write it as the evidence of their own experience in life. Their writings are often based on the experience they have undergone during their life. Black Boy, can be categorized as a work of an autobiography of Richard Wright, the author; as it is reflecting his own experience that has happened to him. Therefore the application of the expressive theory is considered suitable in explaining the feeling of the author being described. The following quotation that is stated by Abrams in The Mirror and The Lamp may give a clear description of the expressive theory :

" 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. "

" This way of thinking in which the artist himself becomes the major element, generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged, shall call the expressive theory of art...." (p:26)

It is clear that Richard Wright is expressing his experience in this novel. The thing that can be seen directly is the feelings which is related much with the psychological aspects of himself. He writes the story in order to make the reader understand and see widely the maltreatment of blacks in the American South at that time. Implicitly there is a mission he wants to show to the reader through his story. A mission that is brought by the main character, Richard, that is purely expressing his own idea, describing his own thought about life of blacks, and the unhealthy environment where he lived. He brings the voice of the blacks of the American South, who claim justice and equality for their people. It be discussed in The History of Black America in the next chapter.

Richard can be regarded the representative of the suffering black, living in such depressing situation, under the brutality of the whites. Richard's expressions are so vivid and since the story is told from the narrator's point of view, this clearly shows his own idea, thought and perception. It is the expression of his soul poured totally in this story. His feelings are clearly described. The readers should bear in minds that this story was written in 1945 in U.S.A, especially in the Southern States, where the condition of the black people were badly suppressed by

the whites. So miserable were their condition, that John Reilly from State University of New York at Albany mentioned in his afterword in Black Boy :

" Given the Jim Crow way of life, Negroes must, in order to acculturate themselves, deny their own honesty and passion and brutalize their children. In order to live in a society built on the white man's belief that they are less than human, Negroes must behave inhumanly. "

Seen from the history of America, it is proved that during and after World War II in 1945, the situation and condition of America were so messed up because of the war. Many people lost their family, house, property, and almost all of them lived under the poverty lines. The life of the blacks were much more pity. Poorly live in slums area, far from health and proper life, they still have to abandon the inhuman treatment from the white people. Such life was truly undergone by the Americans. These facts has encouraged me to choose the Mimetic theory as the second main theory which is presenting a natural phenomena of men to imitate what is valid in the reality of life in the world, as stated by Abrams in The Mirror And The Lamp :

" The mimetic orientation - the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe - was probably the most primitive aesthetic theory. It is the fable or plot that is the end and purpose of tragedy, its life and soul, so to speak, and this because tragedy is

essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life... ( page 10 )".

Richard Wright as an author, is showing his idea and his way of thinking through the main character, Richard who is manifested through his mind. He hates the white's prejudice toward the blacks, the humiliation and maltreatment of the whites to his race. He hates the suppression of his bigot family. He hates the " take for granted " attitude of his friends in facing these suffering situation. He doesn't even believe in God, for God never comes to help him when he is in great need. This novel also concerns much with the biography of the author, for he has undergone those misery moments in his youth. The discussion of The Author And His Life is presented in the chapter IV.

" Wright himself undergone the moment when his father abandoned his family, and for the next ten years, he was raised by a series of relatives in Mississippi. The poverty, hunger, the bigot of his grandmother, together with the humiliation and hatred in a racially segregated South were there on him...." ( taken from The Norton Anthology of American Literature p:1761 )

From these facts, the existence of the history of black in America really affects this novel. Since it is written as his own experience, so the theory of autobiography can be included as one supporting theory in analyzing the feeling of the author which is poured in the description about the suppression he had suffered



in his time. Rene Wellek in Theory Of Literature strongly believes and states that :

" The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author; hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the writer has been one 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 emotion 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 ".  
( page: 75 ).

These two supporting theories are applied in such a way that may enable to reach the points of better understanding in analyzing this novel.

#### I.4. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This thesis is written purely on library research involving many sources about American History, especially about black people. Since there is limited critical books and essays about Richard Wright, I use my own interpretation in analyzing this novel. The descriptive method, is applied through description, this novel has aroused natural emotion from the reader. I begin the research by collecting datas; the primary source used for the analysis is, of course, the work itself, Black Boy.

Some reference books such as The English Literary Thought are proved as helpful in understanding Wright's way of thinking, and the ways he creates his prime characters. Because the main character presented is the figure of the author himself, Black Boy can be classified as an autobiography work. I have also used autobiography theory of Rene Wellek's and some of Graham Hough and William Grace's. The expressive and mimetic theory of M.H. Abrams are also helpful to analyze Richard's character.

#### I.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Hopefully, this thesis will contribute useful knowledge and is able to serve as a valuable introduction for a further research which will contribute the understanding of literature in general, particularly Black American literature. This thesis is also hoped to give understanding of literature in the emphasize on the importance of appreciating human social rights through the description of the main character. And what is needed then, essentially, is to extend the feeling of respect and appreciation upon human social rights which is the basic rights of human life.

By clearly understanding the cruelties and brutalities showed by the white people to the blacks, we may learn much more valuable things about other people's life from this novel.