

## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### A. Background of the Study

Modernity and all its attributes that overwhelmed the world have made many significant changes on many aspects of life; some changes are positive, some others are negative. One of the central ideas in modernity is men's dependency on rationality. Modern men 'worship' the brain that they regard every problems will be solved by the power of mind, in the forms of science and technology. Such attitude, according to Kvale in his essay entitled *Postmodern Psychology: A Contradiction in Terms*, has been built by modernity that 'modern time' involves a restricted concept of rationality, with a dominance of a technical means-ends rationality. There has been an emphasis on plans and programs, on calculation, prediction and control. Reason and science have been overburdened with visions of Utopia where all human problems would be solved in the long run by the methods of science and technology (36).

On one hand, modernity seems to be promising. Life indeed has become easier than before. Everything is made possible by science and technology, including also the idea of colonizing another planet, which is proved by the landing of some astronauts in the moon, as the first start. But on the other hand, there are inescapable effects, which may decrease the humanity values. Men are no longer what they were used to be. The loss of faith is the best representation of it. Kvale sees that being an object for a universal will, a man has become the

center of the world, the individual self-feeling being the cornerstone of modern thought, a self-stretched out between what it is and what it ought to be (34). Rationality, individuality, freedom and so forth have brought human into another complex problems which cover every aspect of this mortal life. The world, as some people say, has turn into the very nature of life, the barbarian life.

Against the suicidal impulses of modern civilisation in the 1960s, Saul Bellow— widely known as a novelist who rejects the orthodoxy of modernism— tries to share his humanistic concern of the contemporary society in one of his famous work *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, which was published in 1970. Bellow, who won the Nobel Prize in 1988, concerns mainly with the phenomena confronted in the modern civilization, including also the idea of expanding into another planet, the moon, and building a new colony and civilization there.

Here in this work, Bellow through his main character, Artur Sammler, shows his deep attention on how modernity with its issues, erases many ideal aspects of human life. Artur Sammler is above all a man who has lasted. Recognizing the collapsing world of Western civilization in New York, Sammler shares the same interestedness and disinterestedness of everything confronted: the activities of black pickpocket that he saw in the bus, his daughter Shula-Slawa's lunacy who was madly inspired by the memoir of Herbert George Wells; his niece Angela's sexual life and Wallace's irresponsibility; his son-in-law Eisen's weird thought and rudeness as well as the superb theory of a Biophysics; Dr. Govinda Lal, on the future of the moon and how to make use of it as human has reached it now.

The bestial violence, brutality, confusion that Sammler finds everywhere—inside and outside the university— puts him in the position of blaming the liberalism and modernity. All these phenomena, in Sammler's mind, are directed to the failure brought by modernity. Contemplating of his past life, as he has seen the world collapsed during the WW I, Sammler sees the possibility that it might collapse twice. Sammler believes that all these—the power in all of its form— may make one thinks about the end of the world. There are now several questions to answer: How long will this earth remain the only home of man? Is it time to go and find some other new places in another planet? Are we going to blow this planet, or be blown off it?. Sammler quite understands that the only way to free from all these pressures is through freedom. But how? By moving to other planets and building a new civilization in which everything is arranged in such an ideal and respectable manner?

The fact tells us that Neil Armstrong, the American Astronout who rewarded as the first man landing on the moon, cried over the world that place will no longer be the biggest problem of human. In case that the earth can no longer accommodate men and the earth is not suitable anymore to live on, they can move to the moon. His famous phrase stated as quoted in *The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates (737)* "That's one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for man kind " marked the human departure from the spatial limit of the earth, the only place that they used to step its feet on. At least, the landing opened a new possibility of finding a new place to live on.

The US society, for the decades, has been burying themselves on the discussions on how the moon, and any other planet, can be advantageous to human life. It is even said that the outer space voyages was booming in the era of 1970s. People were ready to travel to the moon. However, Sammler regards the idea of colonizing the moon in order to escape from the earth is not the way out of human problems. He believes man still needs to consider many things, including also the possibility that he can fix the present condition. He remembers one thing: not all people can join the trip.

The old observer, Artur Sammler, feels that his existence in this world is questionable and unworthy. His peculiar past experience, that he had ever been buried alive by the Nazi during the WW I, his own killing a Polish soldier, make him think about the existence of God. If He does exist, why he permits all these. Being surrounded by the power in all of its forms—control, influence, domination and so forth—, Sammler realizes that there is a turning point in him that he needs to resist and taste the air of freedom, although finally he may just stands back behind all the problems and feels the heavy burdens of the powers, .

Concerning this, Michel Foucault once says all power is equal, just as all resistance is approved. The self is justified in any and all efforts to reverse, resist, and otherwise disrupt the power relations in which it is embedded, and those very activities of disruption are portrayed as its experience of freedom ( McGowan 132). The individual, in his view, is constituted by power —hence individual existence and identity are among power's effect. The individual never posses power to act out her own autonomous desires or goals. The individual exercises

power at certain times and in certain places as a functionary of power's intentions, not her own (127).

It is always interesting to talk about the modern civilization and its complex problems; how the earth now becomes a prison and the Utopia of heaven on earth will be untouchable and unrealizable. Sammler, in the writer's opinion, represents the uniqueness of a man with all his weird experiences and views who is willing to stay in this doomed planet despite of its all pressures on it, rather than moving outside to the moon or any other planet that human may be destined. It is enjoyable to see how the minutely observant strategic himself concerning his existence in this old crazy world. Furthermore, the character brings such spirit, which is left behind by most modern people, the salvation of the soul.

### **B. Statement of the Problem**

Based on the depicted background of the study above, the writer tries to formulate one point of problem that is considered to be interesting to discuss and cover the idea of the work entirely. The problem is as follows:

How do Sammler's personal life and his views of modernity shape his understanding on the issue of the promotion of life on the moon?

### **C. Objective of the Study**

The writer finds that there is a close connection between Sammler's personal life, his views on modernity and the promotion of life on the moon, therefore the writer sees the necessity to dispose objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out how Sammler's past experience shape his character and his views on modernity.
2. To find out how far his views influence him in understanding the issue of the promotion of life on the moon.

#### **D. Significance of the Study**

Modern civilization and its complex problems are always interesting to discuss. As one simple reason, the problems of civilization, covers every aspect of human life. In accordance with such situation, this study is meant to give a sufficient, hopefully, contribution towards the literary studies. So that by understanding the contemporary problems, the horizon of thinking among literary readers, mainly those students of English department, will widen and deepen their vivid perspective in viewing and sharing expressions and expectations. In broader terms, it is hoped that human being will wisely confront the unavoidable-rapid changes of the civilization.

#### **E. Scope and Limitation**

It is widely known that Saul Bellow has already been accustomed to putting his novels with his humanistic consciences and clear-sighted analysis of contemporary society. Therefore, it is not a surprise if his readers found many ideas and thoughts that point out his idealism. The same situation can be found in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* as well. In order to avoid misleading discussions in analysing the novel, the writer would like to focus on the protagonist—Artur

Sammler— and his characterization. The writer would see how his personal experiences of life and his views on modernity shape his understanding on the issue on the promotion of life on the moon, as it is the booming idea, and still it is, that overwhelmed the US society at the time when the literary work is written.

### **F.Theoretical Background**

In analysing the novel, intrinsic element—characterization—will be widely taken as the writer would like to pay attention on the protagonist character, Artur Sammler, who tries to set himself up from the chaotic world that he lives in; how the powers—in many of its forms— suppress him. The writer wishes to see how he manages to resist that.

Therefore, in analysing the work, the writer would like to apply a theory which is most suitable, that is Michel Foucault's theories on power. Once he states that " Where there is power, there is resistance and yet, rather consequently, the resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" ( McGowan 129).

There are two approaches being used, namely Edmund Husserl's thoughts on phenomenology and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism. Phenomenological approach is unavoidable as the character puts himself aside in order to understand all the phenomena that being confronted. Husserl proposes that in order to understand the objective world, we have to look upon the phenomena without rendering any opinion, so that we can the life of the consciousness, the ego, which is known as the source of knowledge (Stumpf 490).

Whereas Sartre's existentialism is applied as in the literary work it is found how the character builds his self-awareness concerning his existence and the idea of God's existence based on the way he sees phenomena in life, which is much influenced by his experiences. Sammler believes that God's existence is not the main issue. Man is responsible for himself. Concerning this, Sartre says that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respect is free, because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does (Stumpf 72).

### **G.Method of the Study**

The method of the study is content –analysis method as the discussion mainly is composed on the original concept of the literary work. The writer starts the process of analysis by compelling some related sources—theoretical books, articles and dictionaries—, either from library or from internet online services or any other places that may widen and deepen the writer's understanding about the work. After having a very close reading towards the literary work —surely as it functions as the primary data—the writer tries to formulate several points of problems that suits with the general theme of the work being discussed.

### **H.Definition of Key Terms**

There are several terms that are considered to be given more emphasizes:

Promote (to) : To encourage, organize, or help the progress of something.

- Speculation** : Mental view of anything in its various aspects and relations; contemplation; intellectual examination.
- Conscience** : A knowledge or sense of right or wrong; with an urge to do right; moral judgment that opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle and that leads to feeling guilty if one violates such a principle.
- Civilization** : The condition of being civilized; social organization of a high order, marked by advances in the arts, sciences, etc.
- Colony** : a group of people who settle in a distant land but remain under the political jurisdiction of their native land.

**CHAPTER II**

**THEORETICAL FRAMWORK AND  
RELATED STUDIES**