

## CHAPTER I

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

## I.1 Background of the study

The choice of literary field as the source of thesis substance is concerned with the function of literature as a means to understand life. It is so, because literature depicts the actual occurrence human being deal with. Getting in touch with literature will highly arise awareness of the values of life since it subjects to the implied moral and social as well, and others. Working out on literature is expected to bring the writer to the deepening of consciousness in gazing at life.

Robert G. Carlson identifies literature as a means to transmit the loves and hates, the hopes and fears, ambitions and frustations, the failures and triumphs, the questions, the problems, the experiences of people confronting life and literature's function is to record man's struggle to live and from it certain recurrent themes and ideas emerge (*American Literature*, 1979:89).

Under the title of *Bigger Thomas's Rebellion in Gaining Dignity: A Study of the Main Character's Conflict*

in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, this thesis is committed to analyze Bigger Thomas, a black American living under the segregation and discrimination of white social caste and takes revolt in brutal violences. The analysis of black American novel interests the writer since it is universally conceived as struggle for better black condition in America where *Declaration of Independence* takes into its form as well as the whites oppression on blacks.

*Native Son* by Richard Wright takes into the form of novel. Compared to others, this type of literary form offers more details which make the writer possible to grasp the understanding of its essence easily. Here, the elements are also figured out more clearly and lively with the result that the writer will be able to construct the impression of the implied significance. Novel is a portrait of life in miniature for it presents matters and characters picked out from real life. Taken from *The American College of Dictionary*, a novel is defined as:

fictive prosaic story in certain length that describes the action of the characters as the representation of real life  
(1960:830)

Another definition states that novel is one of the best vehicles for the expression of moral and social ideas, as the majority of novelists and readers have recognised for several centuries (Graham Little, 1966:101).

Richard Wright is notably noted as a black American writer who succeeds in the world of writing. The publishing of *Native Son* in 1940 brings him to become the outstanding black writer. The creation of *Native Son* itself is a crucial momentum for black movement to gain equality in rights. The author in this work wishes to incorporate within his work the semblance of truth by using realistic details. It also brings political load for it is intended to reflect Wright's goal to show the world that black condition in America can be traced directly to his treatment by the white men.

*Native Son* reveals the struggle of Bigger Thomas for gaining dignity and being recognised as a human by handling some violent actions. Trapped in rat-infested apartment that signifies the narrow area and limited chances he has in society he obtains lack of social respect. Through his entire life, he undergoes psychological burden upon his shoulder and plunges him into inferiority. He loses his belief in God for his acceptance

and confession will prove his acceptance of having 'dark' fate. Also, he is so alien from his own world. Though he murders Mary Dalton accidentally and Bessie for his dread, yet both has deepened his consciousness. A queer strength arises after his actions. His attacks at society are to accomplish his self-realization and to kill the majority of white society that has treated him as a beast. For him, self-realization and confidence can only come again through brutal actions .

*Native Son*, in fact is Wright's brutally honest depiction of the relationship between sex, race and violence. This masterwork has revolutionized American literature because it is encourageous enough to attack old taboos that previous writers never approach and because it creates startling new images about black experiences.

In the writer's opinion, Richard Wright's novel is a good fiction because it strongly committed a realistic portrayal on the distorted implementation of civil rights that white literature never touch. Moreover, Emil Hurtik and Robert Yarbert states that a good fiction does not end with the reading, it is not a mere escape; it is the fuel for thinking, questioning and evaluation. It is not an escape from life; it is a part of life, part of the

writer's life, and part of the readers' life (*An Introduction to Short Fiction and Criticism*, 1971:57)

Taking Bigger Thomas as the center of thesis analysis is under consideration that he is not merely the hero of oppressed black American but also is an embodiment of all oppressed minority. His struggle to gain pride and dignity for his existence as a living being not merely signifies the way to feed himself, yet in broader sense this struggle, in general wishes to locate minorities to their proper position as human being with a complete rights standing side by side equally with the whites.

Moreover, Richard Wright, through the plea of Mr. Max -Bigger THomas's lawyer wishes to emphasize that society should also be responsible for his brutal deeds. Typically, Bigger Thomas has struck America's most sensitive nerve; he attacks the white female signifying the symbol of beauty -it beckons the norm of white society has long kept, norm that puts blacks as outsiders.

*Native Son* by Richard Right is both a psychological as well as a social novel. It is a psychological novel because it intimately tries to enter the character's mind and soul. It also displays to understand the character's thought, motive, desire and personality. Moreover, it is an

attempt to enhance psychological field. This novel is also a social one. It deals with all sort of situation in society, preferring the treatment of evil in the social order (Anton Baker, 1978:81). Like *Native Son*, it consumes the evil treatment of white society that employs segregation and discrimination upon a negro like Bigger Thomas. Centering on Bigger Thomas, this thesis would like to analyze his conflict, considered as a psychological one which is generated by his social circumstances.

### **I.2 Statement of the problem**

Dealing with the preceeding discussion, the writer will draw an attention on Bigger Thomas's psychological development further by proposing problems as follows :

- a. Why does Bigger Thomas commit violence ?
- b. What does he get through those violence in connection with his psychological state?

### **I.3 Objective of the study**

The writing of this thesis is meant to explore the reasons why Bigger Thomas in a certain psychological condition commits crimes. Further, this thesis is to observe the outlet of his psychological development after

his having committed those violences.

#### I.4 Significance of the study

*Native Son* is a crucial black literary work with the significance of black's aspiration about equality and human rights. Yet, *Native Son* is not simply revealing blacks' struggle to obtain equality of civil rights. In more sense, this novel adopts a complex problem of black minority that consumes a harsh white treatment. This thesis analysis is intended to help us to view black minority's problems under the domination of white-ruled society from sociological and psychological points of view.

#### I.5 Scope and limitation

Even though *Native Son* is not a biographical work of Richard Wright, yet some critics say that the analysis of each his work can't be freely separated from talking about his background of life and idea. Some details coincidentally go paralell with the actual ocourence correlating with its author and his life, but their presences in *Native Son* are limited to perform the setting of the work. The writer herself are consistent on the opinion that *Native Son* is purely fiction as a product of

Richard Wright's imagination.

This study comprises some descriptions of society in which Bigger Thomas lives in with its treatment. It figures out the condition of Bigger Thomas's life under the domination of white society that applies the double standard of law and that employs border-line to isolate blacks in certain slum area. It also portrays the existence of black man in white community that denies his free will and freedom. Those will bring into reasonable response of violence that Bigger Thomas does. The important thing from this thesis, that is, the writer will limit and concentrate the analysis on Bigger Thomas's conflict with its cause and result for him psychologically.

#### I.6 Theoretical background

Having stated previously, this thesis is concentrated to analyze Bigger Thomas's social life that has strongly influenced to form his disorder psychological state and has directed him to commit violences. It also concerns with the effect of committing those for his psychological development. All these are seen from social and psychological point of views that are covered in the mimetic theory.



Since the analysis deals with the elements beyond the work itself, the writer's starting step is to perform mimetic theory which emphasizes that a literary work is an imitation of life.

The conflict that Bigger Thomas undergoes is from distorted psychological state generated by the disorder social treatment (caused by pressure coming out from the environment). From this, psychological approach as well as sociological approach are applied. Freud states that human psyche consists of three elements, those are, id, ego and superego. In connection with this thesis, the analysis of id and ego are clarified. Harry E. Garret expresses statement concerning with human behaviour.

#### I.7 Method of the study

Writing this thesis is purely library research. Revealing to the thesis's problem, the writer uses the novel of *Native Son* as main source of analysis. The writer then attempts to understand the essence of the novel thoroughly in accordance to her own interpretation. Since the thesis analysis should be applied into a written form, the writer should describe her interpretation into sentences.

To support interpretation, the writer also presents other references instead of the novel itself that function to affirm the interpretation. Concerning to the novel that reveals the struggle of a black American to obtain equality in civil rights, the analysis should be connected with the history of black in white society. Thus, the use of other references instead of the novel are required to support the analysis. *Encyclopedia Americana*, for instance, can present an information of the history of black men in white-ruled society. Some references taken from sociological and psychological fields are displayed since the thesis analysis observes the main character's psychological conflict that is mainly revived from the white's abnormal social treatment.

#### I.8 Key-terms and Definitions

- Being recognised* : a condition in which a man has dignity and pride by taking social worth and treatment as human being.
- 'A man' : someone who possesses equality in dignity, worth and respect (values) that position him as

human being.

- Civil Rights* : rights of each citizen to freedom and equality regardless of sex, race or religion.
- Dignity for a black* : man's value that can invite others' respect and worth.
- Self-actualization* : the development of self capacity, the acceptance of self-essence and integration of self motive.
- Inferiority* : it connects with a sense of doubt about person's value as human being. The feeling of inferior is because of social neglect, getting lack of intrinsic human worth, dignity and respect. They (victims) are usually hungry for feeling equal with others.

### **I.9 Organization of the thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters that are analyzed respectively in turn. In the first chapter, Introduction,

there are nine points in which each is elaborated in details. The second chapter, Theoretical framework contains the scheme of approach and theory used in this discussion that have previously listed in the former chapter, Theoretical Background. The next chapter talks about the history of black in American society. The fourth chapter concentrates on biographical sketch of the author of *Native Son* and also short discussion about the novel's significances. The chapter of analysis much proposes the writer's analysis while it picks up some quotations which later are elaborated. Those are employed to make solutions over the problems. The last chapter signifies the conclusion of what the whole analysis talks about and even represses expression that beckons the answer of the problems. Bibliography organizes the list of reference from which the the writer get data to support the analysis.



## CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK