

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

II.1 RELATED THEORIES

According to Edmund Wilson, the function of the literary critic includes not merely the text of a work, or even a group of such text, but the whole pattern of influence and causation, of action and reaction of psychological and sociological forces, of which the given work is the center (*Critical Approaches to Literature*, 1981:336)

Native Son vividly pictures the dull condition of black Americans living under the resentful segregation of white society. Actual condition depicted partly for its setting that the author has been undergone, this novel can be regarded as a 'representative of Wright's struggle for blacks' existences'. Through the character of Bigger Thomas as the main character, Richard Wright deeply exposes all blacks' wishes in order to be treated equally and humanly. For this reason the use of mimetic theory as the major theory is suitable. By using this mimetic, it means that the analysis promotes extrinsic approach. The thesis analysis primarily centers on the conflict of Bigger Thomas.

who is socially and psychologically trapped. As the implications, the use of sociological approach as well as psychological approach as the supporting theories are also required.

II.1 Mimetic theory

Native Son is a realistic portraits of the impoverished masses of urban blacks. This statement can be true because the creation of *Native Son* itself is made when the racial movement is in flame. Some details of *Native Son* then are covered as mirrors of the actual harsh condition of blacks under the white-ruled society. Richard Wright depicts some of realistic description of blacks in order to perform the setting of the novel. From these, the use of mimetic theory in the analysis of *Native Son* is required because it will help the writer to see more clearly what *Native Son* centers on.

As stated that mimetic theory is probably the most primitive aesthetic theory . It considers a work of art in various of its external relations, affording each of its due function as one of the 'causes' of the work (Abrams, 1953:8-10). Thus, the mimetic theory applied results flexibility of the analysis of *Native Son*.

Moreover, the use of this mimetic theory will enable the writer to cover up the sociological and psychological point of views of the novel. According to M.H. Abrams in his *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953) :

The mimetic orientation -the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of the aspects of the universe.

(p.8)

In the book one of the novel entitled *FEAR*, Wright intentionally goes it parallel with black situation. Through the character of Bigger Thomas who lives in miserable apartment, Wright described the narrow path and limited chances blacks have. Rat described running in the narrow circle in a fruitless attempt to avoid death because it can't escape through the baseboard hole is so closely picture of black condition. Bigger's experiences of life both at home and at the larger community expire hopeless -hopeless of all blacks.

After World War I over, Blacks find themselves again segregated as second-class citizens. This segregating is done in a number of ways. On a personal level, blacks are kept out of white neighborhood by violence directed at them

in the form of beatings, stoning, and the bombing of their homes. White home owners also form so-called neighborhood improvement associations for the purpose of excluding blacks, and real estate agencies like that owned by Mr. Dalton in *Native Son* develops restrictive covenants and conspiracy that prevent blacks from renting apartment and buying homes in white sections. Whites reject blacks' participation socially and politically and economically as well, like Whites make impossible for Bigger Thomas to enter aviation school.

II.2 Psychological approach

The study of literature is not limited on the artistic value of it, but more crucially on its capability to cover other field of sciences. The writer can say that the truth in literature is the truth of life. The study of literature has correlation with other fields. the scope of psychological used in this thesis analysis is restricted only to the study of types and laws of psychology present in the literary work. Thus, the use of psychological approach can derive general conclusion about Bigger Thomas's state of mind psychologically which has driven him to do crimes. As in *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas undergoes

psychological conflict performed by his disappointment toward society. What he confronts against white society is a psychological conflict since it deals with the feeling, and personality.

II.2.1 Sigmund's theory of id, ego and superego

Sigmund Freud states that there are 3 zones comprise human being, those are id, ego and superego. In the case of *Native Son*, id and ego take a part. Id is totally submerged in the conscious and its function is to fulfil what is called the primordial life principle (pleasure principle). This id as totally lacking in the laws of logic since mutually contradictory impulses may exist simultaneously without cancelling each other. Id knows no ethics or values. It knows no good or evil and so on. Since the id is both amoral and lawless, it demands gratification without regard for any religious or legal ethics, social conventions or moral constraints. Ego's function is to govern the id and channel the id's drives into socially acceptable outlets. In normal state, individual has a balance for both (1980:115-116).

II.2.2 Garret's theory of motive

Garret exposes that those arise motives, goal-directed state of man. When strong motive is blocked, conflict or

indecision develops (*Humanistic Psychology*, 1982:75).

In the case of Bigger Thomas, he receives lack of human worth, dignity, pride and respect. He is not treated equally as white. Even they treat him less than human being, as a beast. He is alien from larger community, his isolation within abstract walls, his loss of freedom and his legacy of despair. Bigger Thomas undergoes the invalid psychological order since he lives in inferiority and shame over his whole life. Throughout *Native Son*, his surrounding is used to remind him the powerful environmental forces both inside and outside that all make him helpless. he also loses his free-will and chances to do things he wishes. As he tells Gus, " They don't let us do anything". Such opportunities do not exist for black like him. Bigger Thomas takes psychological burden on him since his free-will and desire to stand equally are arrested and blocked. The whites do not allow him getting chance as them. Bigger Thomas never feels secure for his life. He feels like the rat cornered with the white that are always ready to kill him just because he is a black nigger. He feels the pain constraint. The id on him, in fact is bigger than his ego state. What he wishes is just killing the majority that has buried him into misery. He knows no ethic

or moral concepts. It can be seen from the feeling on him after the murders. He never regrets for what he has done, even he still insists to reject the Christian belief. Paradoxically, he feels the queer of power exist on him.

II.3 Sociological approach

Native Son exposes the social problem of black minority in white-ruled community. White majority isolates black ghetto by performing social, political and economical barriers. White's law creates social stratification in which power, wealth are distributed unequally among the member of different social status. The status of black minority is certainly lower than white. White performs social oppression toward minority. The relationship among them is covered up with prejudice. Whites in short do not let black take a part in social life. The barrier against minority leads to injustice and then injustice distorts personality of the character. White society never let him become the member of the community. Even Jim Crows law to prevent community from going mixture with black race makes the situation getting worse. Whites segregate blacks in such distorted ways and plunge them into despair and pain. Sociology teaches that

the social pressure will arise the flow of protest and action. As in *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas can no longer hold the pain and he strikes out against the oppressors. Then he rebels against social law. And his rebel takes form in violence and crime.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1980) said :

We're through with tokenism and gradually and see-how far you've comeism. We're through with we've-done-more-for-your-people-than-anyone-elseism. We can't wait any longer. Now it is the time.
(*Sociology Full Circle*, p.239)

Since this novel also deals with the social problem of Bigger Thomas as the member of minority, the sociological approach is applied. It is hoped to understand the way Bigger Thomas takes from the sociological point of view.

As Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, he kills Mary Dalton for he no longer afford his misery. And his crime on her is to compensate his anger. Also his brutal deed on her will beckon his victory against white social caste.

II.2 RELATED STUDIES OF OTHER WORKS ABOUT NATIVE SON

Before writing this thesis, the writer absolutely realizes that she is not the only one who analyzes *Native Son*. From its publication up to the present, *Native Son* has sparked a vigorous critical debate involving a wide variety of critics who have approached the novel from many revealing perspectives.

Henry Sadel, for instance writing for *Book-of-the-Month-Club News* boldly asserted that *Native Son* was the finest novel written by an American negro, a book was so deeply grounded in black American experience that only negro could have written it (February 1940). Eldridge Cleaver sharply criticized writers like Baldwin for ignoring the sociology of black experience and praised Wright for the depth of his social and political visions. Wright's political commitments to marxism and black nationalism were viewed by Cleaver as artistic advantages, for they enabled him to envision more fully the condition of twentieth-century black people. Accordingly, Bigger Thomas

becomes someone very different from the pathological monster Baldwin saw; on the contrary, he is regarded as the black rebel of the ghetto and 'a man'.

But many reviewers are equally vigorous in their condemnation of the book. One day after its publication, Howard Mumford Jones strongly attacked *Native Son* on aesthetic grounds, describing its plot as melodramatic and its themes as dull propaganda (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 2 March 1940). A number of other reviewers faulted the book for a lack of realism, claiming that its vision of American life was overdrawn and unfair. James Baldwin put the case against Richard Wright. He claimed that Bigger Thomas was a monster created by the American republic and a social symbol revelatory of social disease rather than a fully developed, realistic character who could adequately reflect the richness of Afro-American experience.

Native Son has a unique quality because it brings a fresh perspective on black life in America. Bigger Thomas, its character is a realistic portrayal of hero's emancipatory struggles against a society intent on crushing him. Richard Wright vividly describes the real picture of black American life under the domination of white social caste. The condition of Bigger Thomas is an embodiment of

all blacks' condition. Blacks' life that are characterized by pain, misery as shown obviously in *Native Son*. The writer sees a peculiar vitality in this novel. It has inquired the position of blacks in American society. It also has shocked the readers on a new awareness of American public who treated blacks less humanly.



CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL TRAIT OF BLACK AMERICAN