

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Postcolonial Theory

In analyzing a literary work, the use of theory cannot be avoided because it is an important tool to approach a certain literary work. In this thesis, the writer uses a theory and several approaches which might suit to the main theme of discussion. The literary work that was analyzed is *A House for Mr. Biswas*, a novel of V.S Naipaul. This novel is closely related to the issue of post-coloniality. That is the reason why the writer will apply postcolonial theory as a major approach and also several studies to support the analysis. Before discussing postcolonial theory, it is an obligatory for the writer to firstly reveal the definition of postcolonial literature since its occurrence was considered as a starting point of the emergence of postcolonial theory.

The writer hopes that by giving postcolonial literature definition together with postcolonial theory, the readers will have broader comprehension in viewing postcolonial literature especially to V.S Naipaul's work *A house for Mr. Biswas*.

A. A Brief Description of Post-colonial Literature.

According to Bill Ashcroft, Garreth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their book *The Empire Writes Back*, Postcolonial literature firstly emerges in the middle of 20th century when many countries under influence of colonials gained their independence. It consists of a body of writing emanating from Europe's

former colonies, which addresses questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender and language. This postcolonial literatures are mostly concerned with writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain, though much of them deal with interest and relevance to countries colonized by other European powers such as France, Portugal and Spain.

The semantic basis of the term 'Post Colonial' might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. And this term has occasionally been employed in some early work in the area to distinguish between the period before and after independence ('colonial period' and 'post-colonial period'). The critics use the term 'Post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonialization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations through out the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. This term is also suggested as the most appropriate for the new cross-cultural criticism, which has emerged in recent years, and for the discourse through which this is constituted. In this sense, this post colonial literary theory is concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of these on contemporary literatures (Aschroft 1-2)

So the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries and Srilanka are all post-colonial literatures. The literature of USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its

current position and power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its post-colonial nature has not been generally recognized. But its relationship with the metropolitan center as it evolved over the last two centuries has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literatures everywhere. What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form, out of the experience of colonialization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial (Ashcroft 2).

A.2 Development of Post-colonial Literatures

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft also explains that Post-colonial literatures developed through several stages which can be seen to correspond to stages both of national or regional consciousness and of the project of asserting difference from the imperial center. During the imperial period writing in the language of the imperial center is inevitably, of course, produced by a literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonizing power. Thus the first texts produced in the colonies in the new language are frequently produced by 'representatives of the imperial power; for example, gentrified settlers, traveler's and sightseers, soldier or the Anglo Indian and West African administrators (Ashcroft 5).

He added that such text can never form a basis for an indigenous culture nor can they be integrated in any way with the culture, which already exist in the

country invaded. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom and language, they inevitably privilege the center, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. At the deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created.

The second stage of production within the evolving discourse of the post-colonial is the literature produced 'under imperial license' by 'natives' or 'outcasts', for instance the large body of poetry and prose produced in the nineteenth century by the English educated Indian upper class, or African 'missionary literature'. The producers signify by the very fact of writing in the language of the dominant culture that they have temporarily or permanently entered specific and privileged class endowed with the language, education, and leisure necessary to produce such works. The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limit and undercuts their assertion of a different perspectives. The development of independent literatures depended upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for a new and distinctive usage. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literatures (Ashcroft 6).

A.3 Post-coloniality and Theory

The idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of the Universal. Theories of style and genre, assumptions about the universal features of language, epistemologies and value systems are all radically questioned by the practices of post-colonial writing. Post-colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this different practice. Indigenous theories have developed to accommodate the differences within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions (Ashcroft 11).

Post-colonial like colonial itself is not a theory but merely points to a certain historical stage which occurs after the colonial era. When the colonialization over, there occur many theories deal with the social, historical, cultural and psychological condition of countries and the societies before, in the moment of colonialization and after. Those theories are used by the ex-colonized people as a tool to convey their aspirations, their voices to their mother country, to their colonial and indeed to the whole world.

There are a lot of issues discussed in post-colonial theory. The famous writers or critics in post colonial are Gayatry Spivak, Jan Mohammed and Homi Bhabha. These critics have sought to offer ways of dismantling colonialism's signifying system and exposing its operation in the silencing and oppression of the

colonial subject. Their writing is profoundly influential to the world's society in viewing colonial and post-colonial issues.

The writer is screening and choosing which theory would be the most proper to be applied in analyzing a novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. The following are several theories used by the writer.

A.3.1. Mimicry

In the moment of colonialization, the colonized people are suppressed in every aspect of their life. They cannot freely do what they like to do. The indigenous values of the colony are put in the lowest position in the social life. The Colonial takes their 'colonial slaves' into marginal and subordinate position. The colonial inserts their influence to their colony continually so that the colony is being hegemonized to regard the colonial values as the best.

Within the process of hegemony, approximately half of the society are accepting their colonial values and the other half are reject them. The success of their hegemony is supported by the way colonial people treat their colonies (Ashcroft 7). When the colony accept their colonial values they will try to elevate themselves into the same position with their colonial through what the so-called 'Mimicry'.

In discussing the main character's transformation of values, the writer views it with the idea of Homi Bhabha's mimicry. But before going to Bhabha's mimicry, the writer will initially give what other critics write on mimicry. Jacques Lacan, in *'The line and Light', Of the Gaze* writes:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage... it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled-exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare.

(qtd in Kice 235)

While Sir Edward Cust Stated that the original policy of conferring on every colony of the British Empire a mimic representation of the British constitution. (qtd in Kice 234)

Mimicry is the term used by the theorist to point the colonized people that always imitate every aspect of their colonizer's life; mentally or physically. They are imitating the way the colonizer speaks, eats or behaves. They do 'mimicry' because they consider that the colonial values are better than theirs. Whereas the fact is not always like that. They want to put themselves in the same position with their ex-master. They are trying to elevate their level. Like what Edward Said say "That is, a mimicry of the center proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It caused those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become '*more English than the English*'" (Aschroft 4). Homi K Bhabha noted that Mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a different that is *almost the same, but not quite*, and the

effects of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing (qtd in Kice 234).

A.3.2. Place and displacement

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. Indeed, critics such as D.E.S. Maxwell have made this the defining model of post-coloniality. A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labor. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial society whether these phenomena have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place and displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English. The alienation of vision and the crisis of self image which this displacement produces is as frequently found in the accounts of Canadian 'free settlers' as of Australian convicts, Fijian-Indian, or Trinidadian-Indian indentured labor (the main character, M Biswas) (qtd in Ashcroft 9). The use of this displacement approach, especially linguistic displacement is important

because in the main character's transformation of value process, this displacement is clearly revealed.

B. Psychological Approach.

There are no doubt about the influence of psychology upon the creation and the criticism of modern literary works. Dealing with such works, the psychological critics used to adapt the psychological method to the study of the characters in the literary work itself and then treating them as self complete entities wholly within the context of the work.

A House for Mr. Biswas is a novel in which the main character, M. Biswas is experiencing an enormous internal conflict. Lacking formal education and was in an extreme poverty, he has to face the flame of the problems within his soul alone and try to solve them without anyone to support him. Every single happening within the character is best analyzed through psychological approach.

According to Wellek and Warren in their book *Theory of Literature*, it is mentioned that:

By 'psychology of literature, we may mean (1) the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, (2) as the study or the creative process, or (3) the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature as, finally, (4) the effects of literature upon its reader (81)

In this study, the third definition is the one taken into account because this analysis will deal only with the psychological aspect of the character. In studying

a character, it is important to judge the character to be psychologically true. To understand a character, a deep study is needed, and to achieve a complete understanding, the character is considered as a real person. From this, the psychological approach is needed to make closer move to study about the character.

In this part the writer intends to use Abraham H. Maslow's humanistic psychology. The most important concept of humanistic theory is that of *becoming*. A person is never static; he is always in the process of becoming a new person. For that reason, the person has a responsibility as a free agent to realize as many potentialities as possible, because this is the only way for the person to actualize, so that he can live in a truly authentic life (444).

It is clearly mentioned above that according to Maslow's Humanistic Psychology, the most important concept is becoming, which is about the fact of a human being actualizing oneself. The responsibility of actualizing is to deliver to a truly authentic life. In the existential-humanistic view, an authentic existence requires more than fulfilling biological needs or sexual and aggressive urges. Those who refused to become have also refused to grow. It is a mistake for people to refuse making the most of every moment of their existence, and for fulfilling the existence to the best of their ability. Those who refuse to accept the challenge of creating a meaningful and authentic life reflect what the existentialist call bad faith. They fail to struggle with the ultimate issues concerning their existence. Instead, they assert the meaning of their lives through blind conventionality to society's expectations and they are living an in authentic life (444).

C. Sociocultural approach

Talking about life, people could hardly avoid the society. It is arguable that literary work is the imitation of the real life. There must be some social aspects to be found and must be considered in the analysis. Wellek and Warren state:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation...literature represents life and life is, in larger measure, a social reality...literature has usually arisen in close connection with particular social institutions...literature has also a social function, or use, which cannot be purely individual. (94)

While Hegel viewed literature as expressive of its society and as the reflection of that society's dominant ideas (Grebstein 162).

In order to have a better explanation, in this thesis the writer employs the sociocultural approach in analyzing the story. The use of this approach is extremely important because the analysis will deal a lot with the sociocultural of Trinidad, where the story is exactly taking place. The writer will not use the certain sociocultural theory but merely the sociocultural approach in general.

According to Sheldon. N. Grebstein in his book *Perspectives in Contemporary Criticism: A Collection of Recent Essays by American, English, and European Literary Critics*. He states:

The literary work cannot be fully or truly understood apart from the milieu or culture or civilization in which it was produced. It must be studied in the widest possible context rather than by itself. Every literary work is the result of a complex interaction of social

and cultural factors and itself a complex cultural object. It is, in any case, not an isolated phenomenon. Any literary work that endures is profoundly moral, both in its relation to the culture in which it appears and to the individual reader. That literature interacts with the larger life around it; that its medium, language, is a social construct; that its creator is a man affected by the economics, morality, and politics of his time and place; that it can on occasion produce social change or be itself produced by such change (164-169).

To Lionel Trilling, a Sociocultural critic in his essay "The Fate of Pleasure" literature is an integral element of culture. Literature becomes a social institution, like politics, in that is combined with human wants and is compelled to take them into account (166).

It is obvious that literary work cannot be separated from its society and the culture of the people involved in the story. Therefore, it is important to include the social condition of Trinidad and its cultural identity in order to have deeper understanding toward M Biswas's life.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS