

SELF-EXPRESSION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST RACISM OF BIGGER THOMAS IN NOVEL RICHARD WRIGHT'S ENTITLED NATIVE SON

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Abstract

The aims of this research are (1) to describe the crimes committed by Bigger Thomas as the main character in Richard Wright's novel entitled Native Son, and (2) to analyze the influence Bigger Thomas' self-expression on against racism in Richard Wright's novel entitled Native Son. The data are words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, collected by document analysis, taken from a novel entitled Native Son that is written by Richard Wright. These data are then called as quotation. The theories used to analyze the data are racism and crime. Then sociological and psychological approaches are used to analyzed the data in this research. The crimes that are committed by Bigger Thomas in the novel are assault, negligent homicide, murder, and fraud. The self-expressions of Bigger are hatred, fear, powerless, desperation, ashamed, and prejudice.

Keywords: *self-expression, violence, racism, crime, Native Son, Richard Wright*

1. INTRODUCTION

Racism is a topic of discussion because racism has become a motivating factor for social segregation to become a criminal act that is capable of triggering war and it is not uncommon for humanity to become victims in this racism case in the survival of humanity in the world with race, ethnicity, religion and culture that different. Hence, many authors express the racism by novel, short-stories, poem, or drama to shows and make the audiences or the readers to enjoy his literary work. One of the literary works expresses racism is a novel entitled Native Son written by Richard Wright. In Native Son, he tries to reveal of self-expression, discrimination and social relationship between white people and black people in the United States.

The aims of this research are (1) to describe the crimes committed by Bigger Thomas as the main character in Richard Wright's novel entitled Native Son, and (2) to analyze the influence Bigger Thomas' self-expression on against racism in Richard Wright's novel entitled Native Son.

Soanes and Stevenson (2004) define racism in two ways. First, "It is the belief that each race or ethnic group possesses specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities that distinguish it as inferior or superior to another such group". Second: "It is the Discrimination against or antagonist towards other races or ethnic groups based on such a belief".

Racism can be differentiated into three levels:

1. Cultural level (Cultural racism generally be defined as the individual and institutional race's cultural heritage over that another race).
2. Institutional level (It is the institutional extension of individual racist beliefs, consisting primarily of using and manipulating duly constituted institutions so as to maintain a racist advantage over others).

3. Individual level (individual closest to race prejudice and suggests a belief in the superiority of one's own race over another and in the behavioral enactments the maintain those superior and superior positions).

In "Definition of crime", "Gwynn Nettler points out that" crime does not exist (1) without law, (2) where an act is justified by law, (3) without intention, and (4) without capacity" (Kelly, 1980:9).

Adler et al categorizes crime into four types:

1. Violent crimes (homicide, assault, family-related crimes, rape and sexual assault, kidnapping, robbery, and organized crime).
2. Crimes against property (larceny, fraud, high-tech crimes, burglary fencing: receiving stolen property, and arson).
3. White-collar and corporate crime (White-Collar and Corporate Crime) Public crimes (drug abuse and crime, alcohol and crimes, and sexual morality offenses).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to qualitative research . Norman E. Wallen and Jack R. Fraenkel stated that, qualitative research is a research study that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations or materials. The data of this research are presented in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences which indicate in the situation racism which show the character Bigger Thomas expressed his violence in the Richard Wright's novel entitled *Native Son* published in 1940by HarperCollins publishers.

The technique of collecting data is document analysis by reading and observing the novel. To conduct this research the researcher analyzes this research by reading the novel, answering the problems, and using two approaches: sociological approach and psychological approach. K. Smith in the paper with title *A guide to the Critical Approaches to Literature* stated that sociological approach is focus on the relationship between literature and society (Smith, 2000). Then Wilbur S. Scott (1962:72) states that psychological approach can be used to explain fictitious characters, provides numerous instances from life which clarify the actions and reaction of created characters, which might otherwise be puzzling or implausible.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Crimes That Bigger Thomas Commits

3.1.1 Assault

3.1.1.1 Using Weapon

Slowly, Gus stood. Bigger held the open blade an inch from Gus's lips. "Lick it," Bigger said, his body tingling with elation.

Gus's eyes filled with tears.

"Lick it, I said! You think I'm playing?"

Gus looked round the room without moving his head, just rolling his eyes in a mute appeal for help. But no one moved. Bigger's left fist was slowly lifting to strike. Gus's lips moved toward the knife; he stuck out his tongue and touched the blade. Gus's lips quivered and tears streamed down his checks. (NS, p.39)

The situation in the story is Gus afraid to do Bigger's plan to rob a shop of a white man. Bigger mocked him as coward and intimidated Gus with his blade.

From the citation above, it is clear that Bigger assaulted Gus by threatening him to lick the blade.

3.1.1.2 Kicking

"Hi, Bigger, "Gus said.

Bigger did not answer. Gus passed him and started toward the rear tables. Bigger whirled and kicked him hard. Gus flopped on his face with a single movement of his body. With a look that showed that he was looking at Gus on the floor and at Jack and G.H at the rear table and at Doc – looking at them all at once in a kind of smiling, roving, turning-slowly glance – Bigger laughed, softly at first, then harder, louder, hysterically; feeling something like hot water bubbling inside of him and trying to come out. Gus got up and stood, quiet, his mouth open and his eyes dead-black with hate.

"Take it easy, boys," Doc said, looking up from behind his counter, and then bending over again.

"What you kick me for?" Gus asked.

"Cause I wanted to," Bigger said. (NS, p.37)

The way Bigger treated Gus by kicking him in front of his friends is considered as assault. Actually Bigger did not have to kick Gus, just giving him advice not to come late. But Bigger preferred to do violence to respond the situation. He also did it intentionally that makes it become a crime.

3.1.1 Negligent Homicide

Bigger did not want to lose his job because he could not do the first job well. He had to drive Mary to collage, instead he take Mary drinking alcohol. In order to cover up this situation that endanger his job, Bigger take Mary to her room quietly.

He turned and a hysterical terror seized him, as though he were falling from a great height in a dream. A white blur was standing by the door, silent, ghostlike. It filled his eyes and gripped his body. It was Mrs. Dalton. He wanted to knock her out of his way and bolt from the room.(NS, p.85)

.....

Mary mumbled and tried to rise again. Frantically, he caught a corner of the pillow and brought it to her lips. He had to stop her from mumbling, or he would be caught. (NS, p.85)

Even though Mrs. Dalton was blind, Bigger felt afraid if Mrs. Dalton was found in Mary's room. It may stir up problems for Bigger. In panic, he tried to save himself by muffled Mary

with pillow, in hope Mrs. Dalton never knew about his presence, and it accidentally killed Mary.

3.1.2 Murder

Murder is part of homicide crime. It is done by killing people intentionally. Bigger also committed murder by killing Bessie, his girlfriend. He did this act because Bessie knew all of the crimes did by Bigger. At first, he wanted Bessie to run away with him but Bessie did not want to. He was afraid Bessie would tell other people about Bigger's crime.

He straightened and lifted the brick, but just at that moment the reality of it all slipped from him. His heart beat wildly, trying to force its way out of his chest. No! Not this! His breath swelled deep in his lungs and he flexed his muscles, trying to impose his will over his body. He had to do better than this. Then, as suddenly as the panic had come, it left. But he had to stand here until that picture came back, that motive, that driving desire to escape the law. Yes. It must be this way. (NS, p.236)

3.1.3 Kidnapping

"You mean.... You mean we could say we did it? You mean write to

„em..."

"....and ask for money, sure, "he said. "And get it, too. You see, we cash in, „cause nobody else is trying to." (NS, p.143-144)

From the quotation, Bigger got an idea to pretend to kidnap Mary to cover up his crime and make false accusation. Bigger also asked Bessie to get the ransom money.

3.1.4 Fraud

"Well, you jarred me... I see now. I was kind of blind. I – I just wanted to come here and tell you that I'm not angry.... I'm not angry and I want you to let me help you. I don't hate you for trying to blame this thing on me.... May be you had good reasons.... I don't know.(NS, p.287)

Bigger's act is called as fraud because he deceive people to get free from the law. He took Jan's freedom by putting him in jail about for Bigger's crime while Bigger was free.

3.2 The Influence Bigger Thomas' Self-Expression on Violence against Racism in Richard Wright's Novel Entitled *Native Son*.

3.2.1 Hatred

"It's all right, Bigger," Jan means it."

He flushed warm with anger. Goddamn her soul to hell! Was she laughing at him? Were they making fun of him? What was it that they wanted? Why didn't they leave him alone? He was not bothering them. Yes, anything could happen with people like these. His entire mind and body were painfully concentrated into a single sharp point of attention. He was trying desperately to understand. He felt foolish sitting behind the steering wheel like this and letting a white man hold his hand. (NS, p.66-67)

When Bigger got attention and kindness from white people, Bigger felt they hurt his pride. Jan and Mary are from white people who is superior to him. However, when they be nice to Bigger, Bigger felt they looked down on him. This made Bigger grew angry.

3.2.2 Fear

..... *He did not understand her. She confounded him. Her actions made him feel that the entire universe was tumbling about his head. What would any man in this court room do if the sun should suddenly turn green?* (NS, p.397)

When Mary tried to be nice to Bigger, Bigger felt her action cannot be understood. He felt scared about this new treatment. He always treated badly by white people. However, Mary's kindness made him confused and fear.

3.2.3 Powerless

Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knothole in the fence.... (NS, p.20)

.....

"I reckon we the only things in this city that can't go where we want to go and do what we want to do." (NS, p.21)

From the quotation it is clear that black people where left behind. They could not do anything without white people's permission. Their movement, thought, and dream were limited by white people. They do not had any power to take initiative nor be responsible their action.

3.2.4 Despretion

Desperation is the outcome of discrimination. It can make people do anything blindly and unexpectedly because they are stuck by the situation.

"I realize that," Max said. "the boy got the idea from the newspapers. I'm defending this boy because I'm convinced that men like you made him what he is. His trying to blame the Communists for his crime was a natural reaction for him. He had heard men like you lie about Communists so much that he believed them. If I can make the people of this country understand why this boy acted like he did, I'll be doing more defending him." (NS, p.292)

3.2.5 Ashamed

Bigger knew that they were thinking of his life and the life of his people. Suddenly he wanted to seize some heavy object in his hand and grip it with all the strength of his body and in some strange way rise up and stand in naked space above the speeding car and with one final blow blot it out – with himself and them in it. His heart was beating fast and he struggled to control his breath. This thing was getting the better of him; he felt that he should not give way to his feelings like this. But he could not help it. Why didn't they leave him alone? What had he done to them? What good could they get out of sitting here making him feel so miserable? (NS, p.70)

Jan and Mary were eating. Bigger picked up a piece of chicken and bit it. When he tried to chew he found his mouth dry. It seemed that the very organic functions of his body had

altered; and when he realized why, when he understood the cause, he could not chew the food. After two or three bites, he stopped and sipped his beer. (NS, p.73-74)

The situation in the story is Mary and Jan wanted Bigger to show them the life of black people. They asked Bigger to go to a restaurant where Bigger usually went. Actually Mary and Jan tried friendly and know more about Bigger. However, Bigger felt ashamed by their request. It was because Bigger knew they were from different class.

3.2.6 Prejudice

In this case prejudice means when someone accused to do something bad when they do not even know the wrongdoing. Black people often get the false accusation when something went wrong. This injustice happened because as the oppressed ones, black people were labeled to do crime to survive. Their action made white people felt concern.

“Every time he comes in contact with us, he kills! It is a physiological and physiological reaction, embedded in his being. Every thought he thinks is potential murder. Excluded from, and unassimilated in our society, yet longing to gratify impulses akin to our own but denied the objects and channels evolved through long centuries for their socialized expression, every sunrise and sunset makes him guilty of subversive actions. Every movement of his body is an unconscious protest. Every desire, every dream, no matter how intimate or personal, is a plot or a conspiracy. Every hope is a plan for insurrection. Every glance of the eye is a threat. His very existence is a crime against the state! (NS, p.400)

4. CONCLUSION

In this research the data are words, phrases, clauses, sentences. Those data are collected by document analysis. These data are then called as quotation. They are taken from a novel entitled Native Son that is written by Richard Wright. The theories used to analyze the data are racism and crime. Then sociological and psychological approaches are used to analyze the data in this research.

The first problem, the crimes committed by Bigger Thomas as the main character in Richard Wright’s novel entitled Native Son, can be answered in this research. Crimes is any human conduct that violates criminal law and is subject to punishment. The types of crimes that are committed by Bigger Thomas in the novel are assault, negligent homicide, murder, and fraud.

The second problem of this research is the influence Bigger Thomas’ self- expression on against racism in Richard Wright’s novel entitled Native Son. It can be found in this research. The self-expressions of Bigger are hatred, fear, powerless, desperation, ashamed, and prejudice.

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