

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

The thesis writer will divide this chapter into four parts. The first part is about the social and historical background of the South, In the second part, she will present the role of a father in the Southern tradition that are closely related to the topic of this thesis. The third part is Psychological theory of the lost of identity. Finally, the writer uses some of the elements of literature including the theory of characterization and conflict.

2.1 The social and historical background of the South

People cannot deny the reality that their background and environment will influence their lives for instance the way they think, speak and express their idea. For some authors, writing is essentially an autobiographical exercise since

their background and environment is “the ground and subject matter” for their writing (Getz, 1980: 3). As a novelist, William Faulkner also wrote some works that reflected his background and environment. Therefore, to understand Faulkner’s works, it is necessary for us to study Faulkner’s region and era.

People who lived in the South plantations were divided into several classes. They were plantation owners or aristocrats, poor-white workers, and black slaves. The upper class are aristocrats. They were “the ideal agrarian gentleman, a cultivated, well-educated man, living a life of gracious enjoyment and fulfilling the basic responsibilities from his station on a great plantation”(Current, 1965:319). Their belief, social life, manners, speech, way of life and way of thinking reflected a noble tradition that was called “**genteel tradition**”(1965:320).the South, this genteel tradition was rooted in the hearts of the rich people. They held tight the genteel tradition because “the Southern tradition is a family tradition”. As a result, the genteel tradition, created differences and made a greater gap between the upper class-aristocrats and the lower class-poor white workers. The general picture of the Southern aristocrats is easily found through their life style. Mostly, they lived in their big houses and the great plantations. The wealth of the family enabled them to provide their life with the sorts of pleasurable things like good clothing, well-bred horses, fascinating accessories and glamorous outfits. This genteel image was picked from the glory of the aristocrat’s in the past. The reflection of life that was based on the genteel tradition was clearly seen through the behavior

and attitude of the aristocrats. They practiced and established the idea of strict education and discipline.

The next, is the poor-white workers or country people. They only had small farms and many of them work in the big plantation. The life of the poor-whites is as low as the black slaves except they have freedom. **As** "white" people, they refused to work with Negroes. They will be underestimated if they worked with the Negroes. Besides, as small planters, they were too poor to own any slaves or to be masters of larger plantation (Aaron, 1959:513).

The lower group were the black-slaves. The positions of the black slaves were lower than the Whites. Due to this assumption, the White had mistreated and abused the Black for a very long time. Among 1808 and 1860, there were a million slaves were owned in the United States and the cotton plantations that absorbed the greatest number of slaves in the ante-bellum South. The white masters had the cruel custom for the black slaves. Some planters set their dogs on run away slaves, some were burned alive; others were starved, shot or hung (Aaron, 1959:513). The fall of the South after the Civil War made the people's way of life change. One important thing for the South to do is to make adaptations to the modern values that often created new obstacles. The South in its loyalty to the tradition still appears to orientate to the glorious past that is a precious heritage. The social and historical background of the South will help the thesis writer to understand the background of Thomas Sutpen as a poor-white which later influences his ambitious point of view as an aristocratic.

2.2 The role of a father in the Southern tradition

In the South, rearing of children is a maternal function, and fathers exercise disciplinary or developmental control over their young sons and daughters indirectly, only when they reach adolescence (Clinton, 1982:40). Within the plantation society, as in most patriarchal cultures, the father represents “real,” the mother “false” power. Although a mother has direct, daily supervision of her children, the father clearly rules the household. **Sons** and daughters can see that their mothers are merely carrying out the wishes of patriarch; no matter what the strength of her will or influence might be, male authority **is** dominant.

Fathers autocratic rule offspring and state alike, but the manner in which they exercise their authority varied from family to family. Law and custom give priority of possession to fathers. The authority of fathers is superior to that of the mother (Brown, 1982:243). Fathers are busy with less profitable and social functional duty such as: muster rolls, courthouse visits, hunting parties, and other activities that conferred status (134). Fathers often went abroad to escape the monotony and the control that their **wives** seek to impose **upon** them (251). *So*, Southern fathers usually have less contact with their children. They are only bread-winners in the family and all the duties at homes and children become the mothers’ burden. Moreover, fathers’ love to the land and the country make them follow the Southern tradition strictly. They honor the rules in the society and apply them in their own family. For instance: male’s position is higher than female’s position and sons are more valuable than daughters.

Because of that in Absalom. Absalom! Faulkner creates sharper conflicts of the father and **sons** than the conflict of the father and daughters (Volpe, 1964:205).

In the South, having **sons** are more advantageous than having daughters. Only **sons** will continue family traditions and carry on the family name (Clinton, 1982:46). The family name is not only important for the son himself but also for the glory of his family. Family name is not only showing their status in society but also becoming a family's honor. According to Irving Howe, "honor points to what one is in the world, integrity to what one is in oneself and honor involves a standard of pride and dignity, a level of status and reputation; integrity an ease of being and a security of conscience" (1968:1020). Besides, honor depends upon an assertion of one's worth, integrity upon a readiness to face the full burden of one's existence (1968:1020).

2.3 Psychological theory of the lost of identity

Self-identity **is** the sense of uniqueness as a person and distinctiveness from others, equivalent to answering the question "Who **Am I** ?" (Dyk and Witkin, 1965: 214). Lost of identity **is** something that often happens nowadays. Yet, it depends on the people and society surrounding, such as the treatments of family and friends. The social circle of family and friends can also determine whether someone will have **his** self-identity or lose it. Someone will also lose his or her self-identity if he or she gets conflicts related with inner side of himself or herself (1965:215).

According to Maslow in Introduction to Psychology by James W. Kalat, it is described that every human being has the desire to find or reach his or her self-identity. It is also described that there are five stages of needs. If someone can meet all of these stages, he will be able to find his self-identity (1990:381). The first one is Physiological Needs or the needs of food, drink, oxygen and warmth (381). Second is Safety Needs or the need of security, order, and stability, and these are needs to avoid pain, to obtain bodily comforts, and to be free from fear and insecurity (381). Third is Belongings and Love Needs or the desire to obtain security by means of identification with a group, and for this reason a person seeks to identify with his or her family (381). The love needs involve giving and receiving affection. Fourth is Esteem Needs or needs of being worthwhile person who counts for something (382). Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feel self-confidence, worth, strength, or being useful and necessary in the world (382). The last is Self-Actualization Needs or the need to find self-fulfillment and realize one's potential (382). Those needs are the substantial needs that someone has to carry in his life. It shows that when someone has found his or her self-identity, he or she will feel satisfied. On the other hand, if he or she does not find it, he or she will always struggle to find it, though he or she will be involved in bad life.

In this thesis, Charles Bon, the first and rejected son of Thomas Sutpen, does not have belongings and love needs from his father in his life. Because of that, he keeps on searching for his identity and dangling between the world of

the white and the black. When Charles Bon later finds out who his father is and knows that his father rejects him, he chooses die rather than live.

2.4 Literary Theories

The thesis writer analyzes this thesis through the theories of characterization and conflict that will help her a lot in analyzing the father and sons' relationship.

2.4.1 Characterization

Characterization is an important literary device, particularly in courses on drama and prose. "Character in literature is an author's representation of a human being, specifically of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions, or attempts to shape his or her environment." (Perish, 1977:54). Because of that in studying and observing human behavior, characterization plays a very essential role. Without characterization, it will be difficult for an observer to study human nature. "Without characterization, no thesis, no plot and no setting can develop genuine interest for a reader or cause him to care what happens, or does not happen, to whom, and why" (Shaw, 1973:71). So, through characterization, the writer will get a better picture of what kind of persons they are.

According to Robert C. Pooley, there are four ways in which a writer usually indicates and describes a character. First, by appearance or personal description. Here the author or another character describes a person's appearance and clothes. Second, by speech. The kind of language employed by a character and his manner of speaking express something about him. Third, by character's external action. The readers or the audience can have clues to his inner motivations by observing how that person reacts to various situations and events. Fourth by what others say about a character. In this novel, Faulkner gives his readers a clear picture of his fictional characters indirectly through what others say (1967:516-17).

In describing his character in Absalom, Absalom!, the dominant techniques Faulkner used to present Thomas Sutpen, Charles Bon, and Henry Sutpen are through what other say about them. Through Miss. Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson and Shreve Mc. Cannon speeches as narrators, we can know their characters and conflicts clearly. In this thesis, the writer uses the second, the third and the fourth ways to indicate and describe Thomas Sutpen, Charles Bon, and Henry Sutpen characters in the novel. The writer could see their characters easier from their appearance or personal description, their speech and through other characters' reaction and comment toward them.

2.4.2 Conflict

A fiction involves, at one level or another, Conflict. This is what Robert Penn Warren, a contemporary American poet, novelist, and critic, has said: “No conflict, no story”. The readers normally view conflict as the struggle of forces in relation to characters, for conflict at least in part is embodied in characters (Muller, 1985:44). The word conflict is taken from Latin word that is “contra” means against and “fligere” means strike (Barry, 1966:33). Conflict is interpreted as a struggle between two opposing forces that can be a clash of actions, idea, desire or value (Pooley, 1967:518). Because of that, conflict is an important element of plot since it provides the elements of interest, suspense and tension in any form of fiction whether it is a short story, a drama and a novel (Holman, 1973:105). Without conflict, the story becomes flat, monotonous and boring for the reader. Through the conflict, the authors attract the readers to keep on reading the pages of book to know the continuity of the story till the end of the story

Conflict can be divided into two basic categories. Those are external conflict and internal conflict. External conflict is the conflict of characters against external forces such as the forces of nature and society including the conflict among characters (Pooley, 1967:518). In the external conflict, the protagonist and the antagonist attempt to maintain their opinion. Both want to defeat each other. In Absalom, Absalom! Charles Bon and Henry Sutpen also have conflict with their father, Thomas Sutpen. Internal conflict

is a struggle between desires within a person with some elements of his or her personality or struggle of a character against himself or herself, his or her conscience (Pooley, 1967:518). In other words, the opponent is himself or herself. In the daily life, a person **is** confronted with many problems. In the process of achieving and maintaining his or her goal, he or she is often involved in his or her conflict. In this kind of conflict, he himself or she herself is facing a rather complicated situation in which he or she should choose the best alternative according to his or her consideration. In Absalom. Absalom!, Charles Bon and Henry Sutpen undergo the struggle with himself that can be identified as their inner conflict,