



FEAR AND ANXIETY OF BLACKS IN *NATIVE SON*

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Abstract

The world contains different races. Each has their own characteristics, abilities, and qualities. One may distinguish them according to the different continents as Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and America. The attention will be on the African population in America. Racism is distinguished as an inferior and superior groups in which the inferior group discriminated by the superior. Race caused the problem of division between Black and White because of the racial stereotype picture which held in both races' mind, made them act in a prejudice way that harm both of them. Given the long history of African American literature, the first published works of African literature came about in the 18th century, at a time when the united states was just coming into being and when newly recognized citizens, with clearly defined rights and freedoms, owned slaves, Conditions of slavery produced a certain genre of writing, which we've come to describe as slave narratives. By the time the late 19th and early 20th centuries of came around, Jim Crow policies led to enormous discrimination and violence in the south, yet novelists still produced some of the most notable works of fiction in our collective history. This is an attempt to analyze the fear and anxiety of blacks in Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

Introduction

The slave narrative was the first black literary prose genre in the United States. It helped blacks to establish an African-American identity in America, and it has continued to exert an important influence on black fictional techniques and themes throughout the 20th century. Black American authors of the twentieth century employed many themes as, the search for identity by Richard Wright, anger against discrimination by James Baldwin, and sense of living invisibly by Ralph Ellison, underground life unacknowledged by the white by Toni Morrison. Wright fights against injustice American society and oppression of the Blacks by the Whites. He wanted to spread the idea of democracy and found a solution to the racial problems. Wright explained that he was a victim of White domination and oppression like the other Blacks.

The universal acknowledge that as a product of the Deep South, of the Depression, of poverty, of a broken home, face and experience in life, Richard Wright is the ideal writer known for intensive talk about an atmosphere of depression and melancholy, the unproductiveness of Negroes life. He was out and out the self-appointed representative of his people. Richard Wright had a deep-rooted hat for the whites like all Negroes. Like Ely Green, another Negro writer, Wright was determined to a man – not “nigger” not a “boy” – as Blacks was generally addressed by the whites. Richard chose to reject the social mask of inferiority and invisibility and in doing so, became a full- fledged rebel writer. The example of one emotion, and fear it suggests that insufficient attention has been paid to physiology and how emotions conciliate between the individual and the social. The distinction frequently made between ‘fear’ and ‘anxiety’, how emotions are fundamentally concerned with power relations. The discussions also considered the lived experience of emotions, and the social and cultural context of emotions has also been subject to discussion in the history of emotions, which as a developing subfield came to challenge the notion that emotions are universal.

Bigger Thomas represents all black men existing in a system where it is impossible for them to exist without crime or violence. Their behavior was dictated by their hared of white people. They were an

oppressed community full of anger and frustration that they could not achieve what whites could achieve. The limitations of the black American culture were extremely evident in *Native Son*.

The central aim of this study is to estimate prevalence, ages of onset, severity, and associated disability of anxiety disorders among African Americans, Caribbeanblacks. Fear is a common thread woven deep within the fabric of mankind. It drives our actions, dictates our beliefs and sometimes, as in the case of Bigger Thomas, mandates the type of person we become. An old adage states that the single greatest source of human fear is the unknown; we are most afraid of what we cannot predict given our limited ability of foresight. Bigger Thomas was a gross exception to this theory. What Bigger was most scared of, more than anything in the world, was the inexorable certainty of his future.

There are two black rats mentioned in the story. One is in the beginning of the piece that was described earlier. The other rat is mentioned Bigger feels trapped in the city after Mary's bones are found. The rat leaps across the snow and escapes into a hole in the wall where Bigger watches after it wistfully. Both of these rats are symbolic of Bigger. The other significant animal that was described in the piece was Mrs. Dalton's white cat. The white cat follows Dalton around and he feels watched and pressured by it. When Bigger is disposing of Mary's body, the cat is there to watch him. The white cat is symbolic of the white society.

Animal imagery continues to still be widely used. For instance, the Republican Party is represented as an elephant and the Democratic Party is represented by the donkey. Animals take on our projections in many other ways, like in the way as the United States' national bird is the Eagle. Another example of animals taking on other role is dogs taking on more of a support system role. Many people find support and aid in guidance dogs or emotional support dogs.

Richard Wright was the breakthrough man who came all the way up from all the way down. He was suckled on resentment and hatred, nurtured on anger and fear, grew up on restlessness and tasted every violent flavor of alienation and hostility. But his bitter strong will to expose to white Americans the psychological disturbance

produced by the resentment, rootlessness, violence, alienation and hostility that the creation of the poverty and humiliations attendant upon racism led him to blaze a trail that opened new worlds of countless young blacks. Right from his childhood, Wright had been taught to fear and hate the whites. These two negative feelings gave rise to his rebellious attitude, which in turn gave power and strength to whatever he wrote. The pen became the most effective weapon of warfare and Richard Wright got initiated into the weaponry of words which led him on to the reality world outside the South.

The tragedy of *Bigger* was a three-part progression. *Bigger* was born with the very death sentence he would officially receive twenty years later. The Great White Force In the novel's introduction, Wright called *Bigger* a "dispossessed and disinherited man". Wright wanted the reader to experience what he called "No Man's Land". *Bigger's* every move and every thought were determined by the stifling society in which he lived. As a result, *Bigger's* frustration was two-fold: he could neither attain the desired resources of American culture nor locate a tangible source of the blockade. White oppression pervaded the whole of society evasively and enigmatically. "To *Bigger* and his kind, white people were not really people; they were sort of a great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead, or like a deep swirling river stretching suddenly at one's feet in the dark".

Richard Wright did express his fear and hate for the white man to listen to him. *White Man* is a title of one of his books. Wright did not write for the black people but for Whites because the whites know nothing of the problems confronting Blacks whereas Blacks know fully well all about them. Imitating Mencken in his later writings, Wright used the pen as weapon, the word as ammunition for protesting against the life of the black American.

A *Native Son* itself is a weapon, a loaded pistol at the head of the White world. On the whole, the black writers including Richard Wright embarked upon a new direction and in so doing, emphasized the idea for the novel should be a vehicle for protest.

The culture and sociology of the black masses is to deal openly with anger and hate, fear and resentment expressed in unabashed terms. To analyze accurately Black who followed Marcus Garvey and Sufi Abdul, the writer had to attack the false premise upon which the middle class and the romantics had structured their cosmology. From the vantage point of the migrants, America was desperately in need of revolution and the writer who sought to function as their redeemer would have to record this desire for violent change. That *A Native Son (1940)* is the most celebrated novel of the post Renaissance years evidences the black writer's disregard of the dangers inherent in accepting a new function for the black writer.

Bigger Thomas became what he was, not because he was free to choose his course of action, but because circumstances over which he had no control had driven him to his doom. This is the philosophy of Karl Marx, of whom Wright at the time was a devoted disciple. The general nature of the novel is the tale of a Negro who hated and feared Whites. Bigger's hatred is to be understood as an outgrowth of his fear.

American society had set Bigger on a dastardly course from which there was no escape. It was this systematic and institutionalized torture and this awareness of the inevitable that caused Bigger to live in constant fear and anger. For Bigger, was disillusioned because the fundamental principles of his society were meaningless and functioned solely as bait for conformity to the status quo. Bigger was frustrated, scared and belligerent because his access to the bountiful opportunities of America was stymied by the color of his skin

Bigger was always afraid that something awful was going to happen to him. Hence, his principal fear was self-knowledge and this, of course, is the theme and title of book. The other fears that make up Bigger's life are by-products of this basic terror. All Bigger's actions spring up from his fear. He hates Whites because he fears them. He knows that they are responsible for his immobility, his frustration, yet to admit even this

would admit simultaneously a profound self-hatred. So he channels his hatred and aggression towards other Negroes and thereby, momentarily assuages his ego. He is afraid for example, to steal from a White store keeper and terrified can read his heart, he attacks them in order to prove his courage to himself.

As a Negro, Bigger is barred from entering the dominant White civilization “whose glitter came to him through the newspapers, magazines, radios, movies and the more imposing sight and sound of daily American life”, says Wright in the introduction to the novel. Bigger is the passive victim of the society that had conditioned him, although the motive of his actions would still be hatred, born of fear, but inspiring revenge worthy of a more positive character. It so happened that, that night a white girl was present in a bed and a Negro boy was standing over her, fascinated with fear, hating her; a blind woman walked into the room and that Negro boy killed that girl to keep from being discovered in a position which he knew would bring the death penalty.

Bigger felt he was in control because he was allowed to author his own story. The detectives working on the case wanted Bigger to “draw the picture” of what happened the night Mary Dalton disappeared” and he would draw it like he wanted it. Bigger’s sense of self had long been a social construction, but now he finally had the power to sketch his own he finally had the power to sketch his own identity. For Bigger, the autonomy was an epic breakthrough.

Once Bigger became a suspect, however, his fleeting period of confidence was replaced by a familiar and insurmountable fear. As a detectives uncovered Mary’s earring and bone fragments, “the old feeling” that Bigger had known all his life returned in an instant.

Bigger Thomas is stationed outside of the Negro folk sculpture; he carries with him the fears, hatreds and frustrations of his black culture. Like Wright, Bigger hovers in a no-man’s land between White and Black. There is a frustration caused by the restrictions maintained and guarded by the Whites, fear is always present and felt in the Negro’s heart. When Bigger and his gang plot to rob a white-owned and operated store, he is overcome by the fear of reprisal from an alien white land. In the *A Native Son*, Max, the lawyer draws at-

tention to the fact that in the midst of America there is mode of life a mode of life stunted and distorted. It is the duty of every White America to change that mode of life. Wright's unrelentingly honest creation of Bigger Thomas revealed the connection in national culture between rural black South of Mississippi and the urban black north of Chicago.

As the novel progressed, Bigger became hyperaware of this predicament. These were the rhythms of his life: indifference and violence; periods of abstract brooding and periods of intense desire; moments of silence and moments of anger like water ebbing and glowing from the tug of a far-away, invisible force. Bigger's intense fear of life's certainty and his own inability to do anything about it translated directly in to his characteristic anger and rage.

Bigger finally "had destiny in his grasp". Though the death of another, he had granted himself a life and "created a new world for himself". And within this world, he was not floating freely amid the omnipresent stress of his oppressors.

Ironically, the very crimes that eventually imprisoned Bigger is the first time in his life he moved consciously between two sharply defined poles: he was moving away from the threatening penalty of death, from the death-like times that brought him that tightness and hotness in his chest; and he was moving toward that sense of fullness he has so often but inadequately felt in magazines and movies.

As the case centered on Bigger, the media began to control Bigger's life through sensationalistic newspaper articles that described who he was and what he did. Bigger voraciously read each story, himself believing the half-truths embedded within the tiny print. The newspapers formed the mouthpiece of the "great natural force" Bigger had been running from his entire life. One report claimed the "conditioning of Negroes" was crucial in order to have them. Max would argue that this fear was not the answer to the "problem" of Black Americans. The hate and fear which we have inspired in him, woven by our civilization into the very structure of his consciousness, into his blood and bones, into the hourly functioning of his personality, have become justification of his existence.

A reveling moment in the mentality of Bigger is when he thinks to himself that he hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them, and the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness of how they lived. The extreme despair and frustration displayed in this quote allows us to sort of understand Bigger to commit the horrible crimes that he did. When people feel boxed in, ignored, hated, or any other array of negative feelings, they often feel no other way out than by violence. When a person is treated so badly, they oftentimes resort to extreme measures to feel some kind of worth or achievement, like when Bigger killed Mary. Even though it was accidental, afterwards he felt like he had accomplished something great because it was an act out against the white race that had oppressed him.

Black men still endure oppression in today's society. Whether it is from police brutality, racial acts of violence, black people still do not possess the complete and unlimited freedom that white people get just because of their skin color. Black people must surpass many more obstacles stacked against them than white people. Even in the decades since Wright's novel's publishing, the racism in this country still lingers on. Many Americans today still live in poverty or starvation. It can seem nearly impossible to achieve dreams when your every thought is consumed by need money or food. Financial hindrance is a huge obstacle to overcome and it kept Bigger working menial jobs just to make ends meet. It is the reason we still need programs and initiatives to combat poverty and starvation numbers in the United States, and larger scale than that, the world.

When Bessie was off work for that singular afternoon, Bigger said she wanted "hard and fast fun, something to make her feel that she was making up for the starved life she was living". Bigger uses a metaphor to describe her saying "she was very blind". Maybe Bigger thought she was being blind, but I believe it was just her way of coping with the sadness in her life.

Bigger's greater underlying fear, and the one that drives all of his actions, is that he will never be able to escape from the neighborhood and the empty, violent life he leads. He dreams about flying a plane and revels in the detective stories he

reads in magazines. He inwardly expresses a kind of admiration for the fascist dictators in Europe because they have the ability to whip their people up into a frenzy of action. Bigger has a despairing fear that the purposeless, poverty-stricken life of his family and others on the south side is a permanent thing, that there is no remedy for it.

When Jan and Mary behave (without knowing they are doing so) in a condescending, insensitive way to him, Bigger's feelings of fear and anger are brought to a head. Bigger's fears are thus confirmed; he is unable to escape the life he's been sentenced to by a racist society.

There is a fear of what White society thinks of him when he cannot say anything to Mary's mother about him being in the room. His fleeing from White society's police and the relationship and perception he has about White society all result in his fears of it. His fears are certainly justified and well-grounded in what is the reality for someone in Bigger's condition. Yet, they are fears and Wright might be using this to explore how African-Americans, particularly African-American males, perceive white society. The odd element in this configuration is that Bigger can actually find his own niche in the American Dream is one that inspires him to get the job that enables him to be near Mary in the first place. The fear of White society is enchanted by his desire to be close or to be a part of it. In this light, one can see his fear as a twisted condition of reality within it. Bigger was trapped by a situation he could not escape. His fear resulted from the realization that he was on one-way track to a future which he dreaded at every moment of every day. As the novel progressed, Bigger became hyperaware of his predicament. Bigger's intense fear of life's certainly _and his own inability to do anything about it_ translated directly into his characteristic anger and rage. He was unmistakably hostile at home because he realized his family's struggles were irreparable, yet he was "powerless" to help them in their suffering. Bigger knew that "the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness how they lived, the shame and misery of their lives, he would be swept out of himself with fear and despair". Bigger believed his mother evaded the fear he suffered by blinding herself from the reality of the world. Her life, he argued, "had a center, a core, and an axis, a heart which he needed but could never have unless he laid his head upon a pillow of humanity and gave up his hope of living in the world. And he would never do that".

The Whole thing came to him in the form of a powerful and simple feeling; there was in everyone a great

hunger to believe that made him blind, and if he could see while others were blind, then he could get what he wanted and never be caught at it. Bigger felt empowered by this unique vision. He had a rare ability to step outside his own situation and see its reality. He refused to live on empty hope and voluntary ignorance. He no longer feared the future, for the future was here. For the First time in his life he moved consciously between two sharply defined poles he was moving away from the threatening penalty of death, from the death-like times that brought him that tightness and hotness in his chest; and he was moving toward that sense of fullness he has so often but inadequately felt in magazines and movies.

Bigger felt he was in control because he was allowed to author his own story. The detectives working on the case wanted Bigger to “draw the picture” of what happened the night Mary Dalton disappeared and he would draw it like he wanted it. Bigger’s sense of self had long been a social construction, but now he finally had the power to sketch his own identity. For Bigger, the autonomy was an epic breakthrough. Once Bigger became a suspect, however, his fleeting period of confidence was replaced by a familiar and insurmountable fear. “Somehow something had happened and now things were out of his hands”. As the detective uncovered Mary’s earring and bone fragments, “The old feeling” that Baggers had known all his life returned in an instant. Bigger future was as it had always been predetermined.

Politics, history and literature cannot be separated in South Africa. Apartheid changed everything in and about literature; it was not a healthy ground for creative writing. There was made it very difficult for writers to write about certain very ordinary human situations.

Some acts of violence are understandable, perhaps even just, whereas others are condemned as out of bounds, devoid of sense. Although it is complicated enough to justify what seems to be an oxymoron, violence for freedom, now there is violence and freedom. The bleak reading of the situation in South Africa today is a ‘state of lawlessness, confusion, and disorder’ corresponding to the definition of anarchy. Although there is no anarchy in South Africa it is a country in transition, which is a difficult and lengthy process. Apart from having to come to terms with the past it has to deal with the many challenges of the present. The high-crime

rate is just one of them.

Every day in Chicago violence is the part of life. The country is striving to reconcile with its past it also faces many challenges of the present. Violent crime is so frequent in Chicago that one becomes inured to them. Fear and brutality are various but they all have one thing in common, they distort reality or even overtake it, they become a reality. The various forms of violence as they are represented or explored in contemporary African fiction, African writers different perspective on violence are examined, which leads to a better understanding of these complicated issues and raises further questions for consideration. Violence has been part of African societies and during the many years of colonial history it has often been used as a political tool. Africa is a country with a past where violence was justified by the struggle for liberation.

Conclusion

The fight against domination started with a non-violent, passive resistance and turned into hostilities, which left the country with much to reconcile. Nevertheless, whereas the motives and goals of violence were clear before fight against apartheid, for liberation, equality now they are ambiguous. Reactions to brutality and fear are various but they all have one thing in common, they distort reality or even overtake it, they become a reality. Violence and its residue contaminate the mind and create mistrust. These distorted realities are part of existence in South Africa and as such are reflected in literature. The role of violence is also in transition. Robert Morrell, professor of education explains that, violence in the liberation struggle was noble and necessary. In the new South Africa, it is criminal and destructive. Changing the role of violence is not a legislative matter but one, which involves changes on various levels in society. Crime is so common that one becomes accustomed to it. Only when it becomes personal does our view really change.

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