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Bigger Thomas as a Hegemonized Character in Richard Wright's *Native Son*

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Letter of Recommendation

Nabina Basukala has completed her thesis entitled "Bigger Thomas as a Hegemonized Character in Richard Wright's *Native Son*." She carried out her research from May 2016 to November 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voice.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Bigger Thomas as a Hegemonized Character in Richard Wight’s *Native Son*” submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ms .Nabina Basukala has been approved by undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

This whole research is concerned with the representation of white hegemony, oppression, suppression and extreme domination upon black's people in America. Richard Wright's *Native Son* that unfold the social, political, historical and psychological condition of African American Bigger Thomas. Where characters like Mr. Dalton, Bukley, and the media construct white hegemonic regulation in that society. To be black in America means to be the victim of social values and race prejudice. Having been segregated, marginalized and oppressed by the white hegemonic society, there develops in the mind of Bigger Thomas a great sense of hostility and unspoken antagonism. The environment and social conditions just mark upon him the impressions of hatred, fear and shame. Due to the wall of fear and hatred for being caught by her blind mother he accidentally murdered Dalton's daughter Mary Dalton. By killing the girl and her girlfriend Bessie he tries to go against the white's domination and ideology. He creates his identity by killing the white. Wright's novel *Native Son*, attempts to reveal the hegemonic ideology and racially hierarchical identity in that society. Bigger's fear and anger is fully against the hegemonic attitudes of the white dominated society. Bigger Thomas represents the millions of blacks in America. Hunger, poverty, frustration, white men's operation in the society and Bigger's quest for identity, all these things create broad grounds of protest against hegemonic rules and regulation of whites. This research has taken the idea of new Marxists theory to analyze hegemony in American Society. The present study is just an attempt to add one critical approach to this novel.

Bigger Thomas as a Hegemonized Character in Richard Wright's *Native Son*

This research paper tries to argue Bigger Thomas is a hegemonized character in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The novel presents the real struggle that one black man faces while trying to live in a segregated society. This research explores the impact of hegemony on Bigger's psyche and its consequences in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Bigger Thomas is a poor, uneducated and twenty years old black man. The environment and social conditions just mark upon him the impressions of hatred, fear and shame. Due to the wall of fear and hatred for being caught by her blind mother he accidentally murdered Dalton's daughter Mary Dalton. Though he was innocent but white hegemonic people like Mr. Dalton a landlord and white people accused him as a murderer and he was insulted, assaulted and punished. People like Mr. Dalton in the name of the donation and help takes the consent of poor black Americans. Though Mr. Dalton thinks of himself as sympathetic to the black cause, the way in which he looks at Bigger to make Bigger feel ashamed. Wright here shows how Mr. Dalton amused and therefore implied superior gaze in a form of white hegemony. This research depicts that Bigger can't be considered entirely responsible for his actions rather the harsh racist world he lives in molded him in to a villain. Wright excavates social, political, historical and racial situation of African American people of 1940s.

Richard Wright is a rewarding black writer emerging during a period of racial oppression and economic hardships. Richard Wright (1908-1960) was born on plantation near Natchez, Mississippi. He underwent extreme poverty, humiliation, family discord, fear, and violence. His grandparents had been slaves and his father, a man of a casual affection was a sharecropper who deserted wife and family when

Wright was only five. His mother worked as a cook or housemaid to raise two growing boys. Wright has tested various jobs like newspaper delivery boy and assistant to an insurance agent.

Richard Wright joined the Communist Party in 1932. Wright's *Native Son* became an instant best seller. The novel was a major breakthrough for the Negro writer. With one powerful thrust, Wright demolishes the walls of the ghetto. Many white Americans saw Bigger Thomas, the central character, as a symbol of the entire black community. The social upheavals taught him to hate the white people. As Richard Wright writes, "Every time I think about it I feel like somebody is poking a red hot iron down my throat" (23).

Richard Wright's personal life experience and social condition are reflected together in his writings. Wright's *Native Son* portrays the struggle that one black man faces while trying to live in a segregated society. The protagonist is a social misfit; he is a victim of the adolescent lure of sex, money. He accidentally commits crime and is condemned to the electric chair. In the real sense, Wright had been studying Bigger Thomas all of his life. Wright's essential Bigger Thomas was not so much a particular character caught in a specific episode of criminal activity as a crime waiting to happen. All the elements to create Bigger's mentality were historically in place in America, stocked by the criminal social situation that was America.

Wright's *Native Son* is divided into three chapters: "Fear", "Flight" and "Fate", the novel explores the impact of oppression on the black psyche. In first chapter Bigger Thomas, the protagonist family member his mother, brother and sister are endangered by a huge rat and he kills the rat. Killing the huge rat is the symbol of defiance. Due to the fear, despair and frustration Bigger Thomas also accidentally kills Mary Dalton who is a daughter of millionaire and landlord Mr. Dalton and Mrs.

Dalton's daughter. Similarly, the second chapter revolves round the themes of freedom and rebirth. Bigger Thomas commits murder in order to become real and free, to make the white world acknowledge his existence. At last, in chapter three, by rejecting Christianity and communism he seeks desperately for something to believe, something that will give his life meaning.

Wright's *Native Son* deals with the closed society of the Northern ghetto. It reveals how racial segregation is inextricably linked with white myths of the "Bad Nigger" in shaping Bigger Thomas attitude and actions. The first part, 'Fear', begins with a dramatic episode that is symbolic of the relationship between those who fear and those who cause fear. Bigger and his family are the oppressed victims of the white, exploitative, industrialized World. Because of their color, their poverty, and white myth they are confined to the black Belt of Chicago and prevented from developing their potential for growth. Mr. Dalton whites play a very significant role in Bigger's character development. After killing Mary, Bigger convinces himself that the circumstances of his fear and hatred militate against accommodation to social conventions and structures if he is to achieve a meaningful sense of self.

The novel *Native Son* deals with the theme of racism and oppression, fear, hate and the separation between whites and blacks. It is a psychological as well as sociological novel. In this way, *Native Son* as a whole is a realistic novel. It articulates how a black hero demonstrates fear and frustration with white dominated society. In the novel, Wright constructs white hegemony as shaming, condescending, condemning, dominating and dehumanizing as a way of critiquing white racist mentality and its effects on the black race.

Wright uses the character of Mr. Dalton to construct white hegemony as shaming. Though Mr. Dalton thinks of himself as sympathetic to the black cause, the

way in which he looks at Bigger to makes Bigger,feel ashamed. Wright here shows how Mr. Dalton amused and therefore implied superior gaze is a form of white hegemony.Bigger Thomas is falsely accused of the rape of Mary Dalton, a crime obviously worse than murder in the minds of some whites; however, Wright took pains to show that the rape of Mary Dalton was ended a possibility with Bigger.Therefore, it deserves to be analyzed in the light of hegemony which will cover the whole thesis as analyzing tool in this research.

Native Son remains his greatest achievement.Richard Wright worked hard to evoke and dramatize the sordid unstable reality of his main character's inner life, which matched the sordidness and instability imposed on Bigger by white racism and the deep effects of that racism on black culture.

Native Son has actually been analyzed through some different perspectives by some researchers. Right from its first publication in 1914, Richard Wright's *Native Son* has been gravitated the attention of various critics. They viewed this novel from different perspectives. As expressed in *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, Richard Rurland and Malcolm Bradbury show the absurd aspect of human beings:"The book has such a powerful impact because of its intense immediacy but also because, under the close examination the literary imagination can bring to such matters, pure protest is transfigured in to a deep sense of disordered human identity, and awareness of absurdity" (336). The burden of racism in America is so much loaded upon the blacks that a protest is inevitable for them, for their freedom and justice. Richard Wright's hasrepresentedblack poor disordered people who were discriminated and dehumanized by powerful white rich people.

According to Ervin Beck said" in *Native Son* by Bigger Thomas's identity denied him by white society" (672). Here,the critic argues only about the identity

where White people refused Bigger Thomas's identity in the then American suppressed society. Harper and Brothers in their review, they argue that *Native Son* by Richard Wright is a historical novel. It discusses about the present and past situation of the African American people status in America:

This novel is historical in more than one sense. The book deals with an important present day situation which is deeply rooted in the past and the success with which the book has met the test is epoch-making. The status of the Negro treated in this book has been so long neglected by the American people until it has been thus suddenly forced, upon public attention has been the author himself who has rapidly pushed up from obscurity through relief channels to an outstanding position in the public eye.(251)

He means to say that *Native Son* not only deals with present situation but it also shows about the history of black people and their situation in the white community. So, according to the critic *Native Son* is a historical novel which often discusses about how African American people used to treat in white American society.

Different critics have different point of view about Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Some give focus on history and some talks only about the racism. In similar way, Nathan A. Scott has clearly expressed psychological point of view in the book *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing* as:

Native Son is controlled by just those hopeless assumptions about Negro life which elicited its rage. In taking its measure of Bigger's homicidal malevolence- inspired in him, woven by our civilization in to the very structure of his consciousness, in to his blood and bones –it

tells us that to multiply this black enrage twelve million times...have the psychology of the Negro people.(289-90)

The critic proceeds to clarify that the very structure of society creates the hopelessness, rage and other psychological complexities in to Bigger Thomas. He is unknowingly ruled by the white hegemony and power. Again, M.E. Grenander has noted: "...he (Bigger) draws psychic strength from it justifying it as an existential affirming his own personality" (225). He artistically depicts Bigger Thomas Existential quest of in Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

Fanon in his chapter "Concerning Violence" from the wretched of the Earth confirms this construction saying: "Confronted with a world ruled by the settler the native is always presumed guilty" (213). The critic argues how Negroes were dominated and mistreated in white community. There are two types of people, the settler people who rule their power upon other poor people.

H. Philip Bolton depicts about Bigger's irrational fear : "Bigger identifies with this [black rapist] figure and expects to become the object of a man – hunt simple, for having been caught in a white girl's bedroom"(114). After committing accidental murder Bigger the main protagonist of the novel feels fear. When he was in Mary room her blind mother comes in the same room in order to assure the presence of her daughter. Due to this incident Bigger Thomas is hunt time and again that Mr. Dalton family surely caught him as a balk rapist one day.

The JBHE Foundation, Inc expressed: "The story is a strong and powerful one and it alone well force the Negro issue in to our attention, Certainly *Native Son* declares Richard Wright's importance, not merely as the best Negro writer, but as an American author as distinctive as any of those new writing" (123). Most of the black's writer depicts about black people issues. Among them Richard Wright's *Native Son* is

also talks about issue of race, identity and self defense. Due to this reasons it is selected as more prominent and important novel in literary history.

Similarly, Gladys Margaret articulates Scenes of Bigger's Interaction with family and friends and descriptive passages conveying his sense of white oppressiveness central to the meaning of the novel are omitted what remains are the moments recording Bigger's Frenetic and desperate thoughts and feelings....(573) Though, *Native Son* by Richard Wright is more focused upon black main character where Bigger Thomas insane feelings and desperatethoughts are articulated. But, the critics argues that despite of dealing with sense of white oppressiveness it is more considered on Bigger's weird activities.

White people dominating attitudes towards black people have been continued till now in America. Hegemony is not an ideologies rather they are social constructed. Due to the rigid racist society people like Bigger Thomas is not allowed to do anything that he wanted to do eventually at last he has protested against the authority. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1940 expressed:

Bigger Thomas Wright's protagonist, belongs to that under stratum of society which is the poor, but mere than that he has a black skin. Besides being oppressed by poverty, he is hemmed in by the invisible, but nonetheless real, wall that shuts the Negro off from participation in American Culture. It is a wall of fear, white men built that wall, and white men carrying guns, ropes, and faggots patrol it. As Bigger told his layer, "...I always think of white folks.... Well, they own everything. Well, they own everything. They choke you off the face of the earth."(223)

The upper mention lines show how Bigger was oppressed by poverty. Because of wall of fear Thomas always feels afraid in front of the white people thought they behave good. Thomas was not only poor but he was also black. Due to a black skin they were always oppressed and segregated in their society.

Many critics have tried their best to reveal the various aspects and approaches to fulfill the purpose of this text. Some of the critics have shown absurd issues, historical issues and psychological issues. But the prime concern of this research is utterly different to the issues of other critics. This research paper tries to explore white culture domination and hegemony upon African American people's way of life. The Neo-Marxist theory Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci is applicable for the study of Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

Hegemony is a form of power based on leadership by a group in many fields of activity at once, so that its ascendancy commands widespread consent and appears natural and inevitable. Hegemony means domination, influence, or authority over another, especially by one political group over a society or by one nation over others. In other words hegemony domination of one social group over another, such that the ruling group or hegemon acquires some degree of consent from the subordinate, as opposed to dominance purely by force.

Author Renate Halub book *Antonio Gramsci Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*: Gramsci "calls it , hegemony, via civil society, where a set of ideological practices guaranties the status quo anchored in political society ultimately legitimating certain economic practices".(144). This line shows that ruling class created hegemony not by force but by taking approve permission of black people. Domination of one social group over another, such that the ruling group or hegemon

acquires some degree of consent from the subordinate, as opposed to dominance purely by force.

Most accounts appear to regard hegemony as predominant power that manages to assure 'spontaneous' consent to its dominant operations traditions, coerced ideas, beliefs and ideologies, but of practices that involve the most minute operations and expectations of everyday life. Furthermore, again Antonio Gramsci makes a similar argument, "particular social groups struggle in many different ways, including ideologically winning the consent of other groups and achieving a kind of ascendancy in both through and practice over them (224). One superior social group take the consent of another inferior groups but later, after taking the agreement they practice supremacy power over them.

Between 1929 and 1935 the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci, while imprisoned by the fascist government, wrote approximately thirty documents on political, social, and cultural subjects, known as the "prison notebooks." Gramsci maintains the original Marxist distinction between the economic base and the culture superstructure, but replaces the claim that culture is a disguised "reflection" of the material base with the concept that the relation between the two is one of "reciprocity," of interactive influence. M.H. Abrams in *A glossary of Literary Terms* articulates Gramsci's most widely echoed concept is that of hegemony: that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological views so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression (159).

Again, Raymond William analyses in *Antonio Gramsci beyond Marxism and Postmodernism* book by Renate Halub: "In my opinion, written some of the most beautiful pages on hegemony. I paraphrase him like this: "Hegemony is a lived

system of meanings and values, not simply an ideology, a sense of reality beyond which it is, for most people, difficult to move, a lived dominance and subordination, internalized”.

The ruling class exercises the power upon the ruled class not through force and fraud but through shaping the common sense into consensus that is hegemony. E. Shreedharan in his book *A Text Book of Historiography* argues about hegemony: “The essence of the concept of the hegemony is the appropriation of the culture by the dominant class for the sake of social control not the identification of culture with sheer class power” (278). There is a vast difference between the dominant white class people and the dominated black group in Richard Wright’s *Native Son*. In this sense, Bigger Thomas is an individualized and dominated metaphor for millions of blacks in America.

According to theorist E. Shreedhara for him hegemony means one dominant class attempt to control social power in order to show their supremacy towards other groups. It has already been stated in this research paper. African Americans were never privileged for more skilled jobs. Rather they continued to be concentrated in less skilled jobs. In Richard Wright’s *Native Son* Mrs. Dalton is from the dominant class person and she applies her power in the presence of Bigger Thomas. In the name of help, she offers a chauffeur job for Bigger Thomas to control his life. The author expresses in his book that:

He had not raised his eyes to the level of Mr. Dalton’s face once since he had been in the house. He stood with his knees slightly bent, his lips partly open, his shoulders stooped; and his eyes held a look that went only to the surface of things. There was an organic conviction in him that this was the way white folks wanted him to be when in their

presence: none had ever told him that in so many words, but their manner had made him feel that they did. He laid the cap down, noticing that Mr. Dalton was watching him closely. (45)

Bigger Thomas is afraid of white prejudices. If Bigger did something wrong, he might be punished by police. Similarly, while Bigger Thomas is making conversation with Mrs. Dalton Thomas in his room, at that time he is feeling nervous, fearful and he couldn't look straight toward his master. Because of the previous white people beliefs and prejudices Bigger Thomas naturally lay his cap down in front of Mrs. Dalton. Through, the consensus of black people like Bigger Thomas white people ruled and used their power upon them.

Richard Wright depicts the real situation of black people in *Native Son*. Bigger Thomas and his gang have robbed many black owned businesses in order to earn quick money to buy news paper or to watch movies. But, they have never attempted to rob a white man because Bigger sees whites not as individuals, but as a natural, oppressive force. As the Neo Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci viewed in previous page, hegemony is an ideological practice which maintains to secure social political practices which will be legal and legitimate certainty. Similar, things happen in this novel *Native Son*. The author says:

“But it would be the toughest one that they had ever pulled. All the other times they had raided newsstands, fruit stand, and apartment. And, too, they had never held up a white man before. They had always robbed Negroes. They felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people, for they knew that white policemen never really searched diligently for Negroes who committed crimes against other Negroes.

For, months they had talked of robbing Blum's, but had not been able to bring themselves to do it.(18)

The upper mention lines show Bigger Thomas and his gang used to earn easy money by attacking the newsstands, fruit stand, and apartment but they had never tried to rob white. The white authorities made a rule if black do anything with whites they will suffer more. And those legitimate rules automatically affect black people. Though, Bigger and his gang have been planning to rob white name Blum's poolroom but they didn't because they were afraid of already exist legitimate white rule and regulation. After some time, rather admitting his fear, he violently attacks a member of his gang to sabotage the robbery. Gus looked away, avoiding the conversation. "If old Blum was a black man, you all would be itching to go, 'Cause he's white, everybody's scared" (27). Here, Gus meant to say that even Bigger Thomas is afraid to rob the white man Blum poolroom. And he is revealing in front of his friend without any hesitation. They clearly understand the white authority strict rules.

On the first day of work, Bigger drives Mary to meet her communist boyfriend, Jan. Mary and Jan force Bigger to take them to a restaurant in the South Side. Despite Bigger's embarrassment, they order drinks and all three of them get drunk. Bigger then drives around the city while Mary and Jan make out in the back seat. Afterward, when they reach home Bigger helps her to up the stairs. Just as Bigger places Mary on her bed, Mary's blind mother, Mrs. Dalton, enters in to the bedroom. At that time, Bigger worries that Mary, in her drunken condition, will reveal his presence. According to author: 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 (75).

Thomas is very much terrified when he saw the presences of blind Mrs. Dalton in Mary room. He never thought that she will come to visit her girl in mid night. He wants to hide but he can't. Here, Raymond William idea of hegemony can be suitable. In his views, Hegemony is not simply ideology; it is lived dominance, subordination and internalization. For most it is difficult to move. Similar, events happens in this novel. Bigger Thomas internalizes his Mistakes. Due to his big mistake he feels difficult to move form that situation. In order to move ahead from that situation he accidently kills Marry with pillow. The author says:

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. Mrs. Dalton was moving slowly towards him and he grew tight and full, as though about to explode. Again, Mary's body heaved and he held the pillow in a grip that took all of his strength.... The white blur was still. (75)

The inner fear, despair and frustration of being caught by Mrs. Dalton Thomas unknowingly kill Marry. He can't stop to think about the white authority. He totally terrifies with Mrs. Dalton as well as the whole white people. He feels very difficult to breath and move from that severe, devastating incident. He wants to move from that but I can't. His mind is occupied by the white's subordination and domination.

In order to delude from the vicious, violent and destructive incident Bigger Thomas has planned to write the ransom note for Mr. Dalton. On the other hand he is asking for tenthousand money. And he makes sign of hammer and curving knife which are sign of red people of communist pamphlets. Bessie refuses to take part in that incident. She wants to know whether he kills that girl or not. The author articulates:

He began to feel cold; he discovered that his body was covered with sweat. He heard a soft rustle and looked down at his hand; the kidnap note was shaking in his trembling fingers. But I ain't scared, he told himself. He folded the note, put it in to an envelope, sealed it by licking the flap, and shoved it in his pocket. He lay down on the bed beside Bessie and took her in his arms. He tried to speak to her and found his throat so husky that no words came.(145)

Bigger Thomas lives in the America. There are many differences between white people in class, education and social rights. Bigger Thomas has been watching, lived dominance and subordination of white people in his life. Not only this, he has internalized the subordination of white people. While Bigger was writing the ransom note he seems nervous. His hand was shaking. Though, in reality he was afraid, terrified of his action but he shows he was not scared of being caught by police. By behaving like this he was convincing her girlfriend to be a part of his plan.

According to Gramsci hegemony means: social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological views so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression. In Richard Wright's *Native Son* Mr. Dalton achieves a predominant influence and power and subordinate class people like Bigger Thomas unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression. Bigger Thomas lives in rented house in black belt. He is uneducated because he is too poor and the authorities convince them to live their life according to white aristocratic. Wrights says:Mr. Dalton was somewhere far away, high up, distant, like a God. He owned property all over the Black Belt, and he owned property where white folks lived, too. But Bigger could not live in a building across the "line." Even though Mr. Dalton

gave millions of dollars for Negro education, he would rent houses to Negroes only in this prescribed area (142).

Similar things have happened in this novel, where Mr. Dalton represents from aristocratic superior class group and he has every power to control and to rule over the black people. On the other hand Bigger Thomas and other black people represent the inferior who are being used by white ideology. So, Richard Wright's *Native Son* protagonist Bigger Thomas is lost in thinking about the two worlds- white world and black world:

How easy it would be for him to hide if he had the whole city in which to move about! They keep us bottled up ere like wild animals, he thought. He knew that black people go outside of the Black Belt to rent a flat; they had to live on their side of the "line". No white real state man would rent a flat to a black man other than in the sections where it had been decided that black people might live.(233)

Bigger again and again reminds how black people were restricted in American society whose lives were dominated and controlled by white society people. And they had to live in separated place in Black Belt like animal. While Bigger Thomas was running from police after murdering Mary and his girlfriend Bessie, he was too much afraid and fearful that he searched more place to hide but there was limited place separated for black people of America.

In order to improve Bigger Thomas family economic condition, he has started to work as chauffeur for Mr. Dalton family. "In Dixie there are two worlds, the white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white businesses and black businesses, white graveyards and black graveyards ,and ,for all I know, ... "(xi)While

Mr. Dalton was interviewing Bigger Thomas as chauffeur in his house at that time, whenever he was in front of white people he feels assault, scared and he hang his head down. By hook and crook white people take permission of particular social groups winning the consent of other groups and achieving a kind of ascendancy in both through and practice over them.

In a conversation with his fellow black, Bigger Thomas states:“I ll. could fly a plane if I had a chance,” Bigger said. “If you wasn’t black and if you had some money and if they’d let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane”, Gus sad (20). “They don’t let us do nothings... the white folks”(22).White people dominating attitudes towards black people have been continued till now in America. They are not an ideologies rather they are social constructed. Due to the rigid racist society people like Bigger Thomas is not allowed to do anything that he wanted. Having grown up under the climate of harsh racial prejudice in 1930’s America, Bigger’s burdened with a powerful conviction that he has no control over his life and that he can’t aspire to anything other than menial , low- wage labor. So,he is helpless, live as an outsider and a prisoner.Erlone depicts:He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he hated. He hated the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin. It was a shadowy region. a No Man’s Land, the ground that separated the white world from the black that he stood upon. He felt naked, transparent.(67-68)He hated himself because he was from back background. For the fact that he thinks there is no physical existence at all in his society. Jan Erlone, as important characters to support Bigger’s protest, was a young Communist who has shown an enthusiastic personality. He believed in the equality for all men, regardless of social class or race.

Multiply Bigger Thomas Twelve-million times, allowing for environmental and temperamental variations, and for those Negroes

who are completely under the influence of the church, and you have the psychology of the Negro people. But once you see them as a whole, once your eyes leave the individual and encompass the mass, a new quality comes in to the picture.(364)

Bigger Thomas was a symbol of African American peoples. Bigger was part of dislocated and subordinated society. He was living unwanted life because on the one hand, he was Afro-American and on the other hand he was also a member of American white society .Though he was poor black man,he also wanted to be aeducated personlike white people. But he has the psychology of the Negro people. His mind was always occupied by fear, distress, angry and hate toward dominant class people. Wright forces us to enter in to Bigger's mind and to ucdrstand the devastating effects of the social conditions in which he was raised.

There was no good relation between both classes. The white upper class people have been continued to oppress or show hegemony towards poor black uneducated people.So, Bigger is searching for way out in order to recall him:

Every time I think about it I feel like somebody's poking a red –hot iron down my throat .Goddammint. look! We live here and they live there we blacks and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just lie living in jail. Half the time I felt like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knot- hole in the fence...(23)

From the very beginning Bigger shares his frustration and anger with his friend Gus.Thomas was much conscious about his black skin and poor condition of his family. Due to the social environment there is no harmony between black and white people. Bigger and his friend know that policemen never searchcarefully for blacks

that commit crimes against other blacks. Wright also describes the racially oppressive character of the education and law enforcement system in Chicago and how “black people, even though they can’t get good job, pay twice as much rent as whites for the same kinds of flats” (248).

Though he had killed a black girl and a white girl, he knew that it would be for the death of the white girl that he would be punished. The black girl was merely “evidence.” And under it all he knew that the white people did not really care about Bessie’s being killed. White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. He had even heard said that white people felt it was good when one Negro killed another; it meant that they had one Negro less to contend with. (155)

Bigger Thomas is a victim of white society because he is black and poor. But also due to the fear and hatred toward white people he accidentally killed Mary. After that Bigger is arrested in jail and in the court only the white girl is focused. The white audiences don’t care about Bessie because they only care about white people and don’t care about black people. The fact that even here in the Cook County Jail Negro and white were segregated into different cell-blocks (262). Even in the jail also white and black people are put separately.

Bigger Thomas is deprived of the opportunity to live a free and full life because he is a black poor guy. Many of his activities show that he is overwhelmed by fear and anger. Due to these reasons he seems to have a fierce attack on a huge rat vicious attack on his friend Gus and the brutal murders he commits. Max said:

“Bigger, the people who hate you feel just as you feel,.... Bigger, they say that all people who work are inferior. And the rich people don’t

want to change things; they'll lose too much. But deep down in them they feel like you feel, Bigger, and in order to keep what they've got, they make themselves believe that men who work are not quite human....Well, the side that feels life most, the side with the most humanity and the most men. That's why... y-you've got to b-believe in yourself, Bigger..."(323)

Bigger's life takes a significant turn when he chooses his first job as a chauffeur for a rich white Dalton family. Mr. Dalton donates millions of dollars to pro-black institutions and schools. His wife always seems to be sympathizing with the blacks. Mary advocates for social equality but she can't rise from her own class therefore, she becomes the subject of Bigger's hatred. Here we can see the white people hegemony towards Black poor people.

He is afraid of everything which is related to white people and the society: I wanted to be an aviator once. But they wouldn't let me go to the school where I was suppose' to learn it. They built a big school and then drew a line around it and said that nobody could go to it but those who lived within the line. That kept all the colored boys out (323). In the name of the donation white aristocrat like Mrs. Dalton announced to distribute millions for poor, African American and separated people in order to educate as white people. Most of the schools are open only for rich and for who live within the line but not for those poor blacks children. Though Bigger wants to be an aviator. But due to the bad economic condition and difference between black and white he couldn't join the good school. There are no equal rights for black people.

The white authorities unjust laws always ruled upon them. In an introduction to "How Bigger Was Born" Wright asserts. The opportunities and possibilities of splendid life style of Negroes are snatched by the white personals but

the blacks do not even have the equal right to knock the door of court. “The Bigger Thomases were the only Negroes I know of who consistently violated the Jim Crow laws of the South and got away with it, at least for a sweet brief spell. Eventually, the whites who restricted their lives made them pay a terrible price” (xi).

Boris Max, the lawyer of Bigger, speaks the lines while defending Bigger in the court. According to his point Max says that the blacks are treated inhumanly as if they have no any feeling. Blacks were always taken as opponents. Every movement of his blood is an unconscious protest, every desire, and every dream, no matter how intimate or personal, is a plot or conspiracy. Every hope is a plan for insurrection. Every glance of the eye is a threat; this very existence is a crime against the state! (367).

In America, there is equal right for both black and white people but practically only whites get the opportunities for everything. And even Jim Crow law in not for black thought in written version it is for both so the main character Bigger Thomas is very much angry and frustrate with his own life. According to the author:

And then there was Bigger No.4, whose only law was death. The Jim Crow laws of the South were not for him. But as he laughed and cursed and broke them, he knew that someday he’d have to pay for his freedom. His rebellious spirit made in violates all the taboos. And consequently he always oscillated between moods of intense elation and depression. He was never happier than when he had outwitted some foolish custom. (x)

After killing Miss Mary Dalton Bigger Thomas feels free, real and happier. Even though there is Jim Crow law but the rights were not practically given to the blacks. He was always furious because of his society environment and his black skin.

Bigger Thomas seeks for the way out of his frustrated life. So, he murdered the white girl and had created the new life and freedom for himself. Bigger Thomas as a character is a form of violence created from white oppression that leads to the confirmation of the racist fears of whites. Bigger violence is an assertion of his freedom and a rebellion against society constraints:

The thought of what he had done, the awful horror of it, the daring associated with such actions, formed for him for the first time in his fear-ridden life a barrier of protection between him and a world he feared. He had murdered and had created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in his life he had had anything that others could not take from him. (101)

Before the horror crime Bigger Thomas doesn't have any kind of purpose and self confident. But after killing Mary at first he feels fearful but later he feels free and superior only after the murder of the rich family girl Mary Dalton. Because of the suppression, segregation and domination of upper class white peoples authorities he wouldn't have that much freedom and free from any kind of hegemony.

Due to the extreme fear from white authority rules Bigger Thomas denied to take Bessie with him because Bessie blames Bigger of killing Mary and he admits to it. Now that Bessie knows about death, Bigger thinks of killing her to keep her quiet:

He could not leave her and he could not take her with him. If he took her along she would be crying all the time; she would be blaming him for all that had happened; she would want whisky to help her to forget and there would times when he would not get it for her. (221)

Bessie has really become a burden for Bigger. So, Bigger kills Bessie by dragging her to a vacant tenement on the south side where he rapes her, and then beats her head

with a brick before tossing her body down an airshaft. All this happens due to the fear of being caught by the Dalton's family. The white authorities never give equal rights to blacks. Bigger's fear of being discovered leads him to kill Bessie. The writer depicts:

And under it all he knew that the white people did not really care about Bessie's being killed. White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. He had even read it said that white people felt it was good when one Negro killed another, it meant that they had one Negro less to contend with. Crime for a Negro was only when he harmed whites, took white lives, or injured white property. (307)

Max argues that in the case of Bigger, no individual is punishable but the law itself which discriminates the blacks and whites. This very court forbid justice for the blacks and creates the grounds for crime. The court and the white peoples are careless about the Bessie death.

When there is domination, there is also fear and anger in people. Therefore, Max argues that in the case of Bigger no individual is punishable but the law itself which discriminates the blacks and whites. He doesn't see an ultimate solution of the case by the decision of the court. He sees the case in relation to race and argues:

This boy represents but a tiny aspect of a problem whose reality sprawls over a third of this nation .Kill him! Burn the life out of him! And still when the delicate and unconscious machinery of race relations slips, there will be murder again. How can law contradict the lives of millions of people and hope to be administered successfully? (36)

Here, Max Bigger Thomas layer shows the narrowness of the court not to be able to see the case with relation to dominant social and racial factors. His appeal to the court is “to recognize the laws and ...change them” (359). He even warns that if it is not improved and corrected, there will be another civil war: Your Honor, another civil war in these states is not impossible, and if the misunderstanding of what this boy’s life means is an indication of how men of wealth and property are misreading the consciousness of the submerged millions today, one may truly come (369). The point of Max is that when oppression and hegemony is there, there is also the consequence. Max sees society as an integrated part in the crime of Bigger. According to Max, Bigger is the product of black oppression and killing him will only produce new Biggers and more black violence. He further argues before the judge that Bigger should receive life imprisonment. Max says that Bigger’s psychology is the psychology of the Negro Peoples.

In *Native Son*, Wrights tries to figure out the nature of hegemony and its consequent effect on the black psychology. And by horribly propagating hegemonic ideology and conditioning the black’s natural inferiority, the white media create, ideology and conditioning the black’s natural inferiority, the white media create, manipulate, maintain and naturalized social stereotypes, prejudices.. The environment and social conditions just mark upon him the impressions of hatred, fear and shame. Due to the wall of fear and hatred for being caught by her blind mother he accidentally murdered Dalton’s daughter Mary Dalton. By killing the girl and her girlfriend Bessie he tries to go against the white’s domination and ideology. He creates his identity by killing the white.

Wright’s novel *Native Son*, attempts to reveal the hegemonic ideology and racially hierarchical identity in that society. Bigger’s fear and anger is fully against

the hegemonic attitudes of the white dominated society. Bigger Thomas represents the millions of blacks in America. Hunger, poverty, frustration, white men's operation in the society and Bigger's quest for identity, all these things create broad grounds of protest against hegemonic rules and regulation of whites. This research has taken the idea of new Marxists theory to analyze hegemony in American Society. The present study is just an attempt to add one critical approach to this novel.

In conclusion, this research tries to figure out the nature of hegemony and its consequent effect on the black Bigger Thomas psychology in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Wright demonstrates that social ideology is socially constructed and applied for destructing the black psyche. On the one hand, the whites represent the blacks as savage, beast, ape, violent and fearful to justifiably suppress, oppress and degrade and subordinate them. On the other hand blindness prevents the blacks from seeing the reality. Due to Bigger inner fear, hatred and frustration he accidentally kill Mary. Not only this, after that incident he again felt insecure from his girl friend so he also murder her in order to save from his misdeed. Bigger Thomas represents the millions of blacks in America and their grievances. The greatest stories of tragedy, to my understanding, are the stories of the blacks. Bigger Thomas tragic story is one of the examples. He is much conscious about his skin and the badges of fear, hatred and shame provided on its basis. In the novel, Wright exposes Bigger to a multitude of white racist oppress characters in order to critique the many faces of prejudice and its effects on the black people. This research has been succeeded by applying the Neo Marxist Theory Hegemony of Antonio Gramsci. Finally, Wright has tried to deconstruct the hegemonic ideology and racially hierarchical identity constructed by gaze and blindness to reconstruct a dignified identity for the twentieth century African American like Bigger Thomas.

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