

CHAPTER-III

NATIVE SON

The novel opens with the killing of a big rat in the Chicago ghetto room. It is a small rented room with the wooden floor that is shared by the four members of the poor Thomas family : Bigger Thomas-the hero of this novel, his mother, his adolescent sister Vera and the younger brother Buddy.

In the early hours of the day Bigger still in his night-dress hurries up to stop the clanging of the alaram-clock. The light is put on. His mother feels the presence of a big rat in the room and screams. In response to it Bigger rushes into the violent action; and smashes the rat on the floor with the iron skillet. It is his first venture into the act of violence. It is a prelude to the violent drama : the murder of Miss Mary Dalton.

The idea of killing the rat might have been brewing in his mind for a long time. The inadequate room, irritation, shame, fear, confusion, poverty, suffering and human misery are hinted at in the very description of the room. Some where deep down in him Bigger had a desire to escape from this ugly and troublesome life. His hatred for the poverty and his suffering is expressed in the form of violence. Bigger is henceforth to embrace any violent action to defend himself and his people.

Bigger is a jobless youth of twenty lost in the gang of his. His wretched life was compelling him to work, to seek a job but he couldn't get it. It created a sort of tension in his mind. He therefore hated his mother who always talked about his need of a job. However, his mind was not yet prepared to accept a job; to surrender to somebody else in the name of job and embrace servitude. But 'he was sick of his life at home.'¹

One day his mother gave him money to go to Mr. Dalton and make a request for a job. As soon as he left his room he thought of buying a magazine, of going to the movies; and then meeting his friends, Jack, Gus and G.H. at Doc's poolroom. To see the movie he needed more money so he thought of robbing of Blum's store. But Blum was a whiteman therefore he feared him. The robbing of Blum's store was a difficult and a different thing. He feared the white police and all police were white. Formerly, Bigger was caught by the police many a time when he was a child and was sent to the 'reform school'. But he was now a youngman; and he knew if he did something wrong he would go to prison. And, as his mother had hinted at, the gallows was at the end of his road.

Bigger is waiting for his gang. Gus meets him. They are now looking at the plane writing words with smoke in the sky. Bigger suddenly is lost in day-dreaming. He says to Gus :

'I could fly a plane if I had a chance....
God, I'd like to fly up there in that sky."²

Bigger longed for a flight in the sky. In Sigmund Freud's opinion, 'the dream, in its inmost essence, is the fulfilment of a wish'.³ He comments :

'It is a perfectly valid psychic phenomenon, actually a wish-fulfilment; it may be enrolled in the continuity of the intelligible psychic activities of the walking state; it is built by a highly complicated intellectual activity.'⁴

Although the hope of flying high up in the sky springs in Bigger's mind, he knows that he can't fulfil it in his actual life because he is conscious of the fate of the blacks in America. Many questions crowded in his young and sensitive mind :

"Why they make us live in one corner of the city? Why don't they let us fly planes and run ships..."⁵

He could do nothing because 'every time when he thought about it he felt like somebody was poking a red-hot iron down his throat.'⁶

It is clear that the mighty white world was threatening him. So he could do nothing. Primarily he was a black boy and he had no money to join the aviation school. His poverty, social position and social circumstances had hindered his progress.

Bigger then looked at a pigeon flying high up in the air and uttered :

'Now, if I could only do that.'⁷

The longing for the personal freedom is powerful in him. He wanted to excel in his work and to cross all the bondary lines of his black race.

Bigger's hatred for the whites is inborn as well as cultivated. He knew that the white social environment had reduced his existence. He had to control not only his full-bodied activities but also his strong wills. He was crumbling under the heavy burden of the white civilization. So his groaning had an occasional outlet in some bitter words. He was always reasoning about his neglected social position. According to him, the whites were right in not wanting him to fly; 'Cause if I took a plane up I'd take a couple of bombs along and drop 'em as sure as hell 'He said.⁸

Actually Bigger was day-dreaming. According to Freud, "The dream is the (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish."⁹ Here lies a strong will power to destroy the white world that had refused his full development as a human being.

In the opinion of Freud, 'only an unsatisfied person fantasises. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfilment of a wish.'¹⁰ It is interesting to note the involvement of Bigger and of his

friend in the pleasant fun of imitation. They speak to each other on an imaginary telephone. Bigger plays the part of some important officials and rich people of his days. His acting the white roles; his imaginary telephone conversation; his longing for the position of the General; for the rich merchant and the president of U.S.A. show us that he aspired for and was hungry for a higher kind of life. This acting is a kind of wish-fulfilment.

Bigger then reminds Gus of his design of robbing the Blum's store of. Gus knew that the whiteman Blum had a gun. A black man can never challenge a whiteman was his conventional idea. Bigger yearned to challenge the white world. But he was afraid of the white world. Deep down in his mind was saturated the fear for the whites so even though his friends Jack, Gus and G.H. were to join him in robbery, he was afraid of it. On the contrary, Bigger was calling Gus as a timid fellow. However, Gus reveals the situation.

"You say I'm scared. It's you who's scared... Bigger ! you just a scared coward ! you calling me scared so nobody'll see how scared you is !" ¹¹

This analysis of Bigger's true nature was a matter of shame for him. It was the exposure of his weakness on the part of Gus. Actually Bigger was suffering from the inferiority complex among his friends. To get rid of this complex he tries to pull Gus down. Bigger's kicking Gus; holding him in the back of his collar; forcing him to lick the blade of his knife and threatening him to death are all the violent actions to cover

his weakness. This 'fighting episode' had spoiled their plan to rob. G.H., his friend, understands this and says to Bigger, "you done spoiled things now, I reckon that was what you wanted."¹²

G.H.too reads Bigger's mind. As his true nature is revealed he becomes restless. And he therefore tends to be violent. He then started cutting the green cloth on the Billiard Table with the long sweeping strokes of his arm. He focussed his attention on Doc, the owner of the pool room where they played. But how could Doc bear it ? He showed Bigger his gun and strictly warned him not to turn to his poolroom again. As Bigger was threatened to death he had to leave the poolroom at once. Bigger thus was in the habit of transferring his anger from one person to the other. Some minutes ago he had challenged Gus, and now G.H.was against him. How could he challenge all his friends ? It means he was psychologically disturbed and was restless to react to the situation. Bigger always wanted not to be understood by the others. But he was not an enigma. His behaviour occasionally becomes clear and transparent. His friends therefore could read his face and understand his actions.

Bigger was a victim of the inferiority complex. He helplessly tried to get rid of it in a false way. He challenged Gus and Doc. He thought that his fight had made him equal with them. But his was the false way of satisfying himself.

The inferiority complex largely looms in the lives of Bigger and his friends. The conversation between Bigger and Jack throws light on it. They were busy talking about the dinners and the dancing parties of the rich whites. Jack says to Bigger;

"Man, if them folks saw you they'd run, They'd think a gorilla broke loose from the Zoo and put on a tuxedo."¹³

In the Freudian sense, Jack 'was to throw off the too heavy burden imposed on him by life and win the high yield of pleasure afforded by humour.'¹⁴ Sometimes they exploited their weaknesses to please themselves.

Jack and Bigger then went to see a movie. They were seated in the Regal Theatre to see the film 'Trader Horn'. Before it there was a trailer of 'The Gay Woman.' the story of a rich and luxurious lady who enjoyed her lover's company all day along with her husband. Bigger listened to Jack's remarks about the adulterous rich ladies. Jack said that those ladies had money, much money to make much of the time available. Bigger remembered the tale of a Negro chauffeur who had married a rich white girl. He soon forgot the film and was lost in the day-dream :

Maybe Mr. Dalton was a millionaire. Maybe he had a daughter who was a hot kind of girl; maybe she spent lots of money; maybe she'd like to come to the South side and see the sights sometimes. Or maybe she had a secret sweet-heart and only he would know about it because he would have to drive her around; maybe she would give him money not to tell.¹⁵

Bigger's unconscious mind was now working. His indulging in this kind of day-dream is appropriate to the situation in which he was brought up. It seems that he needed money and affectionate relationships. That is what a young man generally needs. Some of the stories he heard were really romantic. He was sure that he could never enjoy those romantic moments as he was black. Moreover, his poverty had thrown him outside the main stream of white civilization. He was aspiring for the relationship with the whites and a higher kind of life.

Bigger's entry into the white world is important from the psychological point of view. He was going to the world the glimpses of which were available for any Negro boy in the movies only. Bigger, in a way, was fortunate to have a chance to serve in a rich white family as a chauffeur. A poor boy who had schooling up to the eighth grade had gone into the white world with a recommendation note for job from the Relief People. When he opened the gate of the Dalton house many problems crowded in his mind. He was afraid because he knew if a police saw him, he would punish him for his entry into this strange world. The police had every reason to imprison him in the name of robbery or rape. He paused to see if somebody was there but there was nobody. Then he pushed the button of the front bell. And the bell and Bigger sounded together. He was facing the whites directly for the first time in his life. He awaited with his heart beating against his ribs.

To his surprise, a white lady received him. He said that he was there to see Mr. Dalton. He was almost dodging when he was going through the main door of the hall. For the first time in his life, he was so close to a white lady that he could easily see a tiny black mole at the corner of her mouth. It made him think of himself and suddenly he was thrown deep down into the valley of inferiority. She requested him to have a seat, so he sat and looked at her. Now he knew that she was observing him. He therefore looked away in confusion. He was keenly aware of his blackness. It crushed him.

The moment Bigger feels inferior he quivers and hesitates to act correctly. When he sits in the chair he thinks that he is seated on the edge of it; then he slightly adjusts his position in the chair and sinks deep into it. Bigger loses the self-confidence due to this inferiority complex. Never was he acutely conscious of his movements and manners when he was among his own people. But he was now aware of them. The sky was completely changed. The circumstances had brought him face to face with the white world. As the sense of inferiority gets magnified in his mind, he feels uncomfortable and baseless before the whites. While speaking with Mr. Dalton, all the time he responded in a stereotyped way saying 'yessuh' and 'Nawsuh' though he could speak more. Mr. Dalton then demanded the recommendation note. Bigger was engulfed by the inferiority,

and as the inferiority complex breeds confusion and fear, he didn't know what to do. Either to look for the note which was in his vest pocket or to pick up his cap that had been lying on the floor. Before Dalton he stood with his knees slightly bent, his lips partly open, his shoulders stooped.¹⁶ Bigger couldn't lift up his eyes to see Mr. Dalton though Dalton was watching him closely. He simply looked downward. When Dalton started cross-examining him about his school day mistakes and ventures Bigger was brooding over some issues like 'the stealing of tyres' and his 'visit to the Reform School.' He thought that his past was to destroy him. He shrank absolutely. Soon a sense of superiority helped him as a friend in need. Bigger responded : 'They said I was stealing but I wasn't.'¹⁷

'I was with some boys and the police
picked us up'.¹⁸

It is clear that he was so forcefully dragged into the inferiority complex that he forgot to show a tinge of joy in his face even though his master had declared that he was to get \$ 25 per week. And clothes and meals, and a back room to sleep all free of charge.

On the first day of his job Bigger was given enough to eat. Peggy, the maid servant who had received him in the house showed him his room, the garage and the furnace and how to handle it. After it he was left to himself to look over his room. when Bigger was alone and solitary, the thoughts that flashed

in his mind were about his girl Bessie, and about liquor and driving. Freud counts man's actions in terms of the 'pleasure-principle.' What a man does or aspires for is a matter of pleasure for him. This pleasure principle is pinned down to the childhood days in everybody's life. Our playing with the toys is a source of joy in our childhood. As we grow the objects or the things we play with may change but the dormant desire to play lasts till we die. Sometimes due to the adverse circumstances we can't play or enjoy, but once we get a chance we can't help seizing the opportunity. Like everybody else Bigger is in search of his pleasure.

For the first time he was present in a spacious room. Bigger seems to be placed in the favourable situation. No sooner did he touch the soft bed than Bessie, his girl flashed in his mind. He decided to bring her there some night; and then to bring a pint of liquor up there someday and drink it in peace. Later on he slid on the simplicity and straightforward nature of Miss Mary Dalton, a sort of lady whom he had never met in his life. Puzzled as he was by her make up, he was now given to the thoughts about her. Then he anyhow controlled himself and went out of the room to see the make of the car and was lost in the day-dream of driving it fast.

Bigger's pleasure thus was in the arms of Bessie. Secretly he liked Mary but the thought of it couldn't come upon the tip of his tongue. He was afraid of the mighty separating line

standing between the blacks and the whites. It threatened him so much that he gave up thinking of Mary and tried to find pleasure in the delightful duty of a chauffeur.

Mary was going to attend the lectures in the University. It was Bigger's duty to drive her to the destination in the new, dark blue Buick car. When they travelled half the distance Mary suddenly changed her plan. Bigger had to drive her toward her friend, a communist-Jan Erlone. He was surprised by the whims of the girl who 'looked like a doll in a show window : black eyes, white face, red lips.'¹⁹ She was a girl with a different look in her eyes. He had a keen sense of power when driving, the feel of a car added something to him.'²⁰

His association with the Daltons had slightly elevated his thoughts and status for the time being. For he had realized that he was among the people who had everything.

It is interesting to note that though he was among the whites with a sense of superiority, the heart that was beating beneath his ribs was a Negro heart; the impulses and instincts were typically those of the Negroes. The white blood and the black blood was juxtaposed in the car with different cultural imprints. The car stopped; and Mary descended smiling at him. He was under the impression that 'she knew every feeling and thought he had at that moment and he turned his head away in confusion'.²¹ He hated her. In response to Mary's smile he

tried to smile but he couldn't . His hatred for Mary can be interpreted in the light of the theory of the 'collective unconsciousness'. According to C.G.Jung, each of us has the instincts, habits and experiences of our primeval past. Sometimes in our day to day life this hidden residue of our ancestral past springs up bouyantly uprooting all our conscious forces of mind.

Bigger however is unaware of the proper reason of this hatred. It had its long standing history and heritage of the black race. Basically this hatred is the racial hatred. As soon as Mary got down the car she asked a question,

"Isn't there a song like that, a song
your people sing?"
"Like what, mam?"
"We'll understand it better bye and
bye?"
"Oh, yessum."

He reflected : ' The guarded feeling of freedom
he had while listening to her was tangled
with the hard fact that she was white
and rich, a part of the world of people
who told him what he could do and
could not do.'²²

He was surely conscious of his poor position in the rich white world. His thoughts and activities were conditioned by the world in which he lived.

When Mary went to meet her sweet heart Jan, Bigger pondered over the world of communists. He had heard Mary calling her father as Mr. Capitalist. Actually Bigger didn't know what a capitalist was. He asked himself, ' what made people communists ? was she

one ?"²³ In the bleak world of his own experiences there was much scope for prejudices. He grappled with the false and prejudiced impressions about them. He faintly knew that those communists were fighting against the rich whites. Mary was on their side. So he feared Mary. He thought Mary would make him lose his job. And his job, his bread and the money he was to get was more important for him than the struggle between them. Again he remembered the detective stories. He had heard of the detectives working for the rich people. What would happen to him if Dalton's people spied on him ? He feared. Hence he hated both : Jan and Mary.

The episode 'Bigger's meeting with Jan' is one of the important events from the psychological point of view. After Mary had introduced Jan and Bigger to each other, Jan smiled broadly and extended his open palm toward Bigger saying, 'How are you, Bigger ?' Nowhere in his former life, not even in the world of films had he witnessed such an encounter. He hadn't dreamt of it. He himself was involved in the strange meeting of the two persons : one white and the other black. As Jan was a communist, it was not at all a strange thing for him. But wasn't it a thrilling moment in Bigger's life ? He couldn't deny Jan's earnest desire to go on and shake hands.'He felt Jan's fingers tighten about his own.'²⁴

The tumult of excitement it was ! It was a golden and a long awaited moment. A white man was joining hands with a black

one irrespective of the colour of his skin and his social position only in the name of the struggle against the capitalists.

Nevertheless, Bigger misunderstood this meeting. Jan was uplifting him while he was guilty of being a black. He brooded over it :

Were they making fun of him? what was it that they wanted? Why didn't they leave him alone?...He felt foolish sitting behind the steering wheel like this and letting a white man hold his hand. What would people passing along the street think? He was very conscious of his black skin and there was in him a prodding conviction that Jan and men like him made it so that he would be conscious of that black skin. Did not white people despise a black skin? Then why was Jan doing this? Why was Mary standing there so eagerly, with shining eyes? What could they get out of this? May be they did not despise him? But they made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him, one holding his hand and the other smiling. He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something 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; he felt that this white man, having helped to put him down, having helped to deform him, held him up now to look at him and be amused. At

that moment he felt toward Mary
and Jan a²⁵ dumb, cold and
inarticulate hate.

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It is clear that some personality traits were already formed in Bigger's make-up. He was a Negro first and anything else afterwards. Though he was given a chance to develop in the so called civilized white world, he was dragging himself behind. What was pulling him back, then ? Definitely his personality traits, his mental make-up. The peculiar mentality of a black person haunted him eventhough he was surging upward. The extreme inferiority complex overruled him. Racial difference, the colour of his skin and his neglected social position had created his typical Negro sensibility. His sensibility had blurred his self-image. His inferiority complex is like a double edged sharp knife that cuts on its both sides. He hated himself for being a black as well as those whites who had spoiled his life.

This is the psychology of a Negro. This is what it means to be a Negro in the white world. Neither he can prosper, nor can he cling to his skin forever. He can never join hands with the whites.

He fails to adjust with the white world. This is all the magic of the inferiority complex that dwells among the human beings. This complex had spoilt Bigger.

Jan and Mary were too great for Bigger to understand. They were enjoying the company of their new black friend. Jan was driving the car. Bigger was seated in between them.

Bigger was always taught to keep a safe distance between him and the white world. But now he was sandwiched between the two white persons. Suddenly his friends stood before his eyes. He wondered what would they think of him if they saw him thus sitting and travelling with the whites ? He shamefully contracted reflecting :

These people made him feel things
he did not want to feel. If he were
white, if he were like them, it
would have been different. But he
was black.²⁶

After all Bigger was a product of black race, of black community, and of black sensibility. Jan and Mary's intimacy raised myriad clouds of hatred in his mind. His hatred was bitter and profound. It vaulted more and more when Mary expressed her strong will to see the dark ghettos of the Negroes. As she never had been inside the Negro house before, she wanted to see how the black people live. Was not her pleading, 'yet they must live like we live. They're human'...foolish ?²⁷ was not it paradoxical enough that the so called white reformers were totally ignorant of the actual ghetto life and its problems ? Therefore he failed to understand Jan's genuine efforts to help the blacks. Jan wanted to do something for the Negroes. And Bigger had heard of the donation given for the 'Negro welfare' by the Daltons. But his colour consciousness had made him blind to them and their efforts. It distorted his understanding of the other members of the white race.

Jan, Mary and Bigger drank too much and ate chicken in the Ernie's Kitchen Shack, an inn for the coloured people in the Indiana Avenue. While they were dinning, Jan inquired Bigger of his early days. Bigger told him about his father who was killed in a riot when he was but a kid in the South. He said he didn't know how he felt about it. Actually Bigger felt too much of it but he was playing the pretending games. He was telling a lie. His relationship with Jan and Mary reveals some of his personality traits. Never in his life Bigger spoke the truth before the whites. He always kept something hidden in the dark recesses of his mind. Moreover, when he spoke to them, to a large extent, he forgot his petty personal things and was acutely conscious of his whole black race.

While speaking, Bigger always used words like 'Yessuh' and 'Nawsuh' therefore Jan disliked it. He warned Bigger not to say 'Sir' to him. Jan thought that he was no better than Bigger. However, it was highly impossible for Bigger to follow it.

How on earth could he learn not
to say yessuh and yessum to white people
in one night when he had been saying
it all life long ?²⁸

On the other hand, Bigger didn't feel safe and secure in their company. He always felt left to the ground.

The Murder of Miss Mary Dalton, the only daughter of the millionaire Mr. Henry Dalton is the most important dramatic

scene in this novel. It is the key stone of the whole dramatic structure of the novel. The preceding incident paves the way for the violent action so it is an important one. After the dinner, Bigger drove the car to the Washington Park. He saw Jan and Mary drinking and kissing in the back seat. It was almost past one at midnight when Jan parted with Mary. From their conversation Bigger understood that she was leaving for Dextroit next morning and they were to meet before her departure.

Mary now got into the front seat. Bigger was driving to her house. 'Mary slumped down in the seat and sighed. Her legs sprawled, wide apart. The car rolled along . Bigger's head was spinning.'²⁹ When they reached home she was almost dizzy and drowsy. ' She was trying to get up from the seat but she couldn't. Then she stretched her hands out for Bigger requesting, "Here; gimme a lift, I'm wobbly". Now 'she was resting on the small of her back and her dress was pulled up so far that he could see where her stockings ended on her thighs. He stood looking at her for a moment.'³⁰

Mary looked at him and said, "Help me, Bigger I'm stuck." 'He helped her and his hands felt the softness of her body... Her hair was in his face, filling him with its scent.'³¹ Now they were going to her room by the backway. He was helping her.

He led her slowly up the narrow stairs to the kitchen door his hands circling her waist and the tips of his fingers feeling the soft swelling of her breasts. Each second she was leaning more heavily against him, her arms about his neck. He pushed the door in took the step inside and stopped, waiting and listening. He felt her hair brush his lips. His skin glowed warm and his muscles flexed; he looked at her face in the dim light, his senses drunk with the odor of her hair and skin.³²

The murder scene starts just after his entry in the room. Mary was fully unconscious. She was mumbling something. Her body was still in his arms.

He tried to stand her on her feet and found her weak as jelly. He held her in his arms again listening in the darkness... She was much smaller than Bessie, his girl, but much softer. Her face was buried in his shoulder, his arms tightened about her... Her lips, faintly moist in the hazy bluelight, were parted and he saw the furtive glints of her white teeth. Her eyes were closed. He stared at her dim face, her forehead capped with curly black hair. He eased his hand, his fingers spread wide, up the centre of her back and her face came forward him and her lips touched his, like something he had imagined. He stood on her feet and she swayed against him. He lifted her and laid her on her bed. Something urged him to leave at once, but he leaned over her, excited, looking at her face in the dim light, not wanting to take his hands from her breasts. She tossed and mumbled sleepily. He tightened his fingers on her breasts, kissing her again, feeling her move toward him. He was aware of her body now; his lips trembled. Then he stiffened. The door behind him had creaked.³³

The novelist vividly paints the scene to throw light on the peculiar mentality of the hero. In the darkness Bigger was alone with Mary who was almost unconscious and helpless. He was seized by the powerful sexual desire. It had maddened him. However he couldn't satisfy his hunger as he had heard of the creaking of the door. Mary's blind mother, Mrs. Dalton, was standing like a ghost by the door. Suddenly a thought of knocking her down out of sight came to his mind. But it was just a thought. Bigger was really perplexed. He had to act against his will. There was thus an interruption in the fulfilment of his sexual desire. As a result of it he becomes terribly restless and mentally distorted.

Mrs. Dalton then uttered Mary's name softly. She was eager to speak with her daughter. What swallowed Bigger was a terrible frenzy now. Frightened as he was while looking at Mary and her mother. He couldn't find out a suitable solution to the dilemma. A Negro boy was caught in the net of two white ladies. One had inspired in him the sexual desire while the other appeared in the guise of death. Bigger's whole life had taught him to fear the white reality. In addition to it, due to Mrs. Dalton's parental figure his senses froze, his sexual desire faded away.

When Mrs. Dalton was coming to Mary's bed, the fear of the whites leapt over Bigger to tear him into pieces. He thought

that he had no existence in the white world. Neither could he satisfy his desire nor could he escape from the white reality. He was helplessly struggling for a wayout; and at last his mind resolved the problem.

Frantically, he caught a corner of the pillow and brought it to her lips... he caught the pillow and covered her entire face with it firmly. Mary's body surged upward and he pushed downward upon the pillow with all his weight, determined that she must not move or make any sound that would betray him... Again Mary's body heaved and he held the pillow in a grip that took all of his strength. For a long time he felt the sharp pain of her fingernails biting into his wrists... Then suddenly her fingernails did not bite into his wrists. Mary's fingers loosened...

Her body was still.³⁴

It is plain that Bigger didn't plan to kill Mary. He simply didn't want Mrs. Dalton find him in Mary's room and since Mary was trying to say something, he feared and had smothered her. Although the novelist tries to interpret this murder fully in the light of the 'fear for the whites' it is not the only cause of it. Bigger's perverted sexual desire plays an important role in the murder scene. He was already intoxicated with the liquor. In addition to it, the 'libido energy' had made him blind for a moment. However, it couldn't achieve its end, because it was thwarted and overtaken by another mighty force : the fear of death that had appeared before him in the form of the white blur-Mrs. Dalton. It was so powerful that he lost his sexual desire

and struggled for existence in the white world. Anyhow he had to live, escape from death that was hovering over him all the time.

If the strong sexual desire is perverted, it destorts the activities of man. One seems simply to be puppet in the hands of the libido or unconscious energy; and so was Bigger. Therefore what he did was a blunder, a cruel crime in the eyes of society. Sexual desire and the fear for death had ruined him.

Bigger's violence seems to be rooted in his perverted sexual instincts. He then cuts off Mary's head and throws her body into the roaring furnace. He takes every care not to leave the trace of his act behind. He then goes to his house as if nothing exceptional had happened to him. He fell sound asleep after a few minutes. Next morning, when he woke up, he tried to look as innocent as possible. But his family members read the new impressions in his glances and in his face. Then he went to the Dalton house. As the Dalton family was alarmed with Mary's disappearance, everyone asked him about Mary, but he flatly told a lie that he did know nothing except she was to leave for Dextroit that day and he therefore was waiting for her. It was his plan to throw the deed into Jan's face. He had to face an emotional crisis. He had to cling fast to his false statements and escape from the situation.

Bigger became restless. He badly needed Bessie. He met her and tried to get rid of the mental tension in her arms-in the sexual intercourse but he couldn't. All of a sudden, his cunning mind thought of one more deed : getting money from the Daltons by sending a kidnap note. He wrote it and forged it in the name of the communist party by signing as 'reds'. He drew below it the symbol of the party-the picture of a sickle and a hammer. He prepared his master plan of getting money. Bessie was forced to involve in it. He showed Bessie a place, the barren apartment where from she was to signal the car carrying ten thousand dollars as the ransom money according to his plan.

Bigger then came to the Dalton house; dropped the note and awaited. Soon the kidnap note became an open secret. Britten, the private investigator attached to Dalton's office, came with his men. Then came the newspapermen.

Later on one of the reporters discovered the bones and an ear-ring of Mary in the ashes of the furnace. They were all looking at Mary's bones. So it was all over now. Bigger hurried up to his room; leapt from the open window to the snowy ground and ran to Bessie. He wanted to tell her not to go to the old apartment to signal the car as his plan was spoiled. He awakened Bessie and told her all about what had happened. Both were frightened. They decided to run away. But before it they had to hide themselves in some old and abandoned houses. He ordered

Bessie to take the bedding with her. Bigger drank Whiskey and was lost in thinking :

May be they searching at home
now; may be they talking to Ma
and Vera and Buddy.³⁵

He feared the whites. Neither he could leave her behind, nor could he take her with him. He was facing a crucial moment.

On the other hand, poor Bessie who had long been working throughout her life and drinking Whiskey to quell her troubles and sufferings prayed to God; blamed herself for having such a fruitless relationship with Bigger; and foresaw her ruin. They entered a tall-snow covered building whose many black windows gaped widely into the darkness. He always forced her to join him, follow him. Helpless and frightened Bessie followed him dutifully losing herself often times in the fits of frustration. She was weeping bitterly for that was all she could do. Bigger ordered her to spread out the bed. Then he drank and smoked. And even though she was 'inert, unresisting, without response' and though she whispered 'don't don't don't Bigger' he raped her.³⁶

This 'rape on Bessie' is an act of violence. Bigger behaved as a black monster. Sexual attraction no doubt plays a dominant role in the lives of the young people, but at this peculiar moment Bessie was not at all interested in it. And if we look into the matter, it seems that Bigger was not sexually starving; nor was

he hungry for it. Sex was not the driving force behind this act. It was violence disguised in the form of wicked sex. Bigger wanted to challenge the white world but he was weak and inferior to them. He was to defend himself from that moment on he knew. A false sense of superiority engulfed him. The rape on Bessie is not an act of pleasure but the deed that creates a false sense of superiority in Bigger's mind.

Helpless and meek Bessie was lying near him in the dark and cold apartment. His mind fluctuated over the two opposite poles of action : Whether to kill her or not ? A sense of the white blur hovering near , of Mary burning, of Britten, of the law tracking him down , came back ³⁷.

Bigger saw these hallucinations. He was horrified. He waited for some minutes. And when he found Bessie fast asleep, he took a brick and struck her head repeatedly until 'the brick touched the floor'. The murder of Bessie was one more act of violence. He knew his Bessie was weak and afraid of the whites. He suspected that she would tell them everything. So he hated her and his hatred for her had culminated into the act of murder. It is certain that he committed it to save his life.

After the three-day-search and chase in the black belt, the whites caught Bigger and imprisoned him. He was too frightened to have an appetite for food. He was in the prison cell. Jan, Max-

the lawyer who was Jan's friend and Reverend Hammond-the Negro preacher had been there to see him. Max was to plead Bigger's case. Meanwhile arrived Mr. Dalton and Mrs. Dalton. And then followed Bigger's family members and his friends.

His relatives had been there to meet him and if possible help him. To help him was an absurd idea. How could they help him when once entrapped by the all powerful whites ? His mother was weeping and begging the very life for him. She knelt before the Daltons. Yet she had a foolish desire that prompted her to beg for Bigger's life. Vera was weeping; Buddy was curious to know whether his elder brother was really guilty or not; and his three friends were wonder-struck with his horrified deed and his fate. Bigger saw his mother kneeling from Mrs. Dalton to Mr. Dalton. Hers was the last effort to save her son and that was the only way she could try it. However, Bigger knew that it was all useless. The members of the black community were helpless before the whites. He shrank pitifully. Suddenly a false sense of superiority came upon him. Though he was conscious of the mighty white world and the presence of its powerful members who were to rule his and his family member's destiny , he said :

"Aw, Ma, don't you -all worry none
I'll be out of this in no time ...
There ain't nothing, Ma. But I'm
All right."³⁸

Though he knew neither his mother nor he himself could save his life, he tried to defend himself.

At the time of parting, Buddy's words, "don't let them treat you bad, Bigger" roused human spirit in him.³⁹ Now he had a sense of victory and dignity. He had done it. He did what he wanted to. He had challenged the whites.

As Max was on his side even the state's Attorney had to deal with him cautiously. He thought that he had attained a different status or position in his community. Therefore he hated those who preached him total submission to the whites. And the black priest had repeated the stale story of the origin of human beings and their sufferings, the tale of Adam and Eve. He knew his being submissive had nothing to do with his salvation. It was not to solve his problems. He hated his mother too, for she had read the sad tale of her life's sufferings before all of them, and was compelling him to utter the God's name at his last moment. Bigger hated all those who preached him to be humble before the wooden cross and to pray for salvation. He was thinking of killing the Negro priest if he repeated that salvation nonsense once more.

Bigger actually hated weakness, sufferings and the suffering people. He hated his own life. He, in general, hated weakness in the human beings. He might have understood

that the world was not meant for such sufferers. It is basically a self-hatred because he belonged to the weaker section of society. He is thus in the habit of projecting his self-hatred into the others.

Bigger's lawyer Max was curious to know why Bigger killed Mary. Bigger's answer is clear enough to reveal his unconscious mind. Max inquired :

"You say you hated her ?"
 "yeah ; and I ain't sorry she's dead."
 "But what had she done to you ?
 You say you had just met her."

"I don't know. She didn't do nothing to me."
 He paused and ran his hand nervously across his forehead.

"She...It was...Hell, I don't know. She asked me a lot of questions. She acted and talked in a way that made me hate her."

Max continued :

"But, Bigger, this woman was trying to help you !"
 "She didn't act like it."
 "How should she have acted ?"

"Aw, I don't know, Mr. Max. white folks and black folks is strangers. We don't know what each other is thinking. Maybe she was trying to be kind; but she didn't act like it. To me she looked and acted like all other white folks...."

"But she's not blamed for that, Bigger."
 "She's the same color as the rest of 'em,"

he said defensively.⁴⁰

It is clear that he hated Mary only because she was white. At the beginning he failed to answer the question : Why he hated Mary.

Sometimes we act first and then look for an answer to it. It means our unconscious mind performs the act. Bigger is seen grappling with the words or ideas for the explanation of his past deeds. Really he is unaware of the real cause of his action. He acted first and then started scanning the reason behind it. There is no doubt that Bigger's hatred is the racial hatred and it springs from the 'collective unconsciousness' which he inherits.

The last scene of the novel, the scene of the day of his death sentence is of psychological importance. As he was accused of the two murders, death in an 'electric chair' was awaiting him. Max's all efforts to save Bigger were useless. He was nervously standing to say farewell to Bigger. This parting scene is emotional. Bigger was to say good bye not only to Max but also to his life. He was reflecting over his achievements loudly before Max :

"It must have been good ! when
a man kills, it's for something...I
didn't know I was really alive in
this world until I felt things hard
enough to kill for 'em... It's the
truth, Mr. Max. I can say it now,
'cause I'm going to die. I know
what I'm saying real good and I
know how it sounds. But I'm all



right. I feel all right when I look
 at it that way... I'm all right,
 Mr. Max. Just go and tell Ma I was
 all right and not to worry none,
 see ? Tell her I was all right and
 wasn't crying none... I'm all right
 for real, I am. ..
 Tell...Tell Mister...Tell Jan hello...
 Good-bye !"41

Bigger had gained a new sense of life. He was not criminal from his own point of view. He thought he had created a new world of his own by killing the white girl and by arousing the sensible white world against him. He had at least made them think of the black identity, the black problems and the black world. He had proved that a Negro boy was not nothing, he could create the wild conflagration that might swallow the white world. Bigger thus was proud of what he did. He faced death in the electric chair with a kind of superiority that is appreciable.

However, such a superiority is false one. Bigger is not a normal person from the Psychological point of view. An accomplished criminal as he was, he never ruminated over his past mistakes. He was never guilty of his cruel deeds. His activities just after the murder are the symptoms of an abnormal or neurotic person. He failed to adjust with the white world. And what he feels at the end of his life is the reflection of an abnormal person. There is no doubt that Bigger behaved in accordance with the driving forces of his mind.

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