



**THE TRAGIC WORLDVIEW IN HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S  
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN**

**THESIS**

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**FACULTY OF LETTERS**

**JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

**2015**



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**THESIS**

presented to the English Department,  
Faculty of Letters, Jember University,  
as one of requirements to obtain  
the award of Sarjana Sastra Degree  
in English Studies

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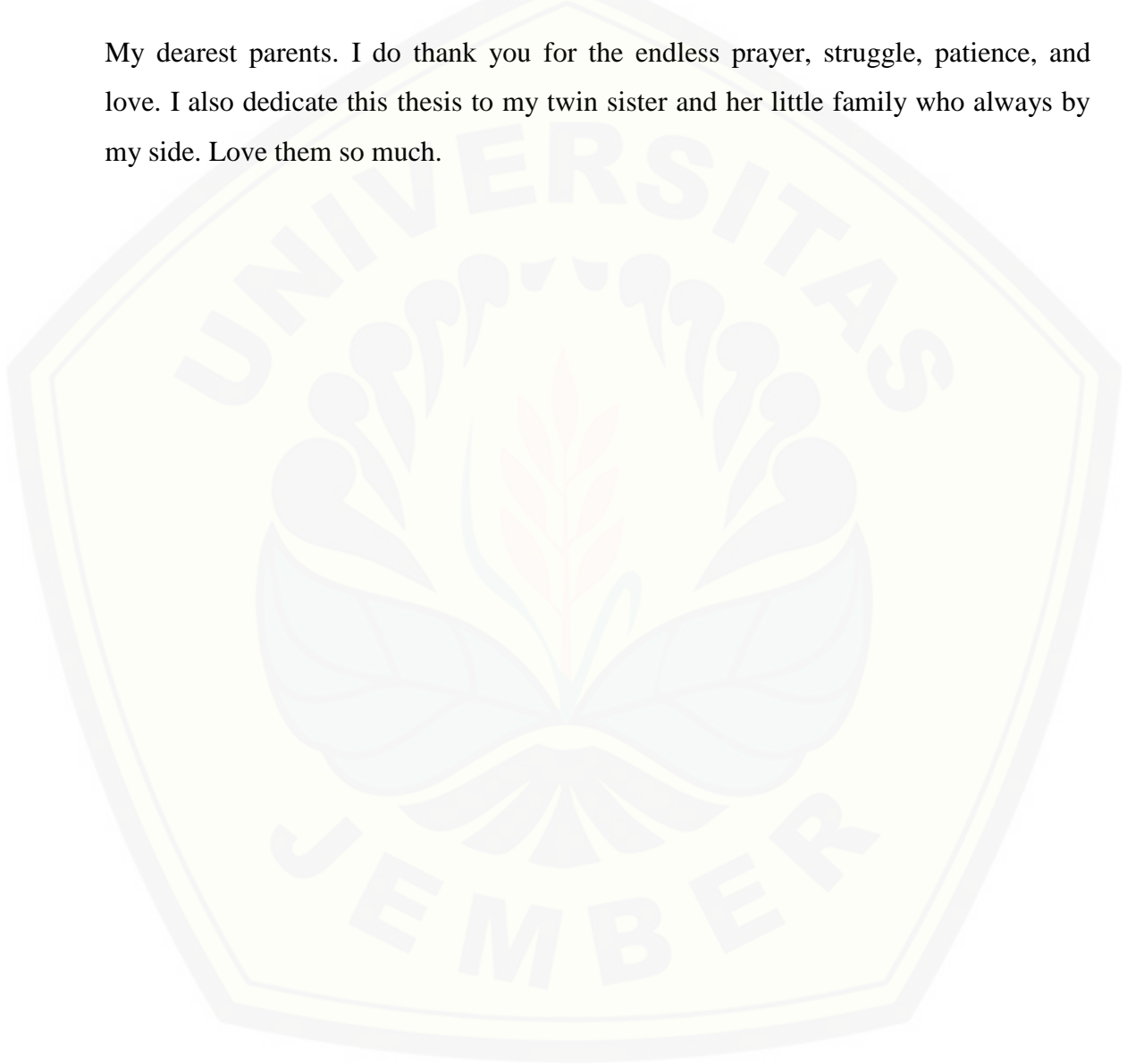
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## DEDICATION

*Profoundly dedicated to:*

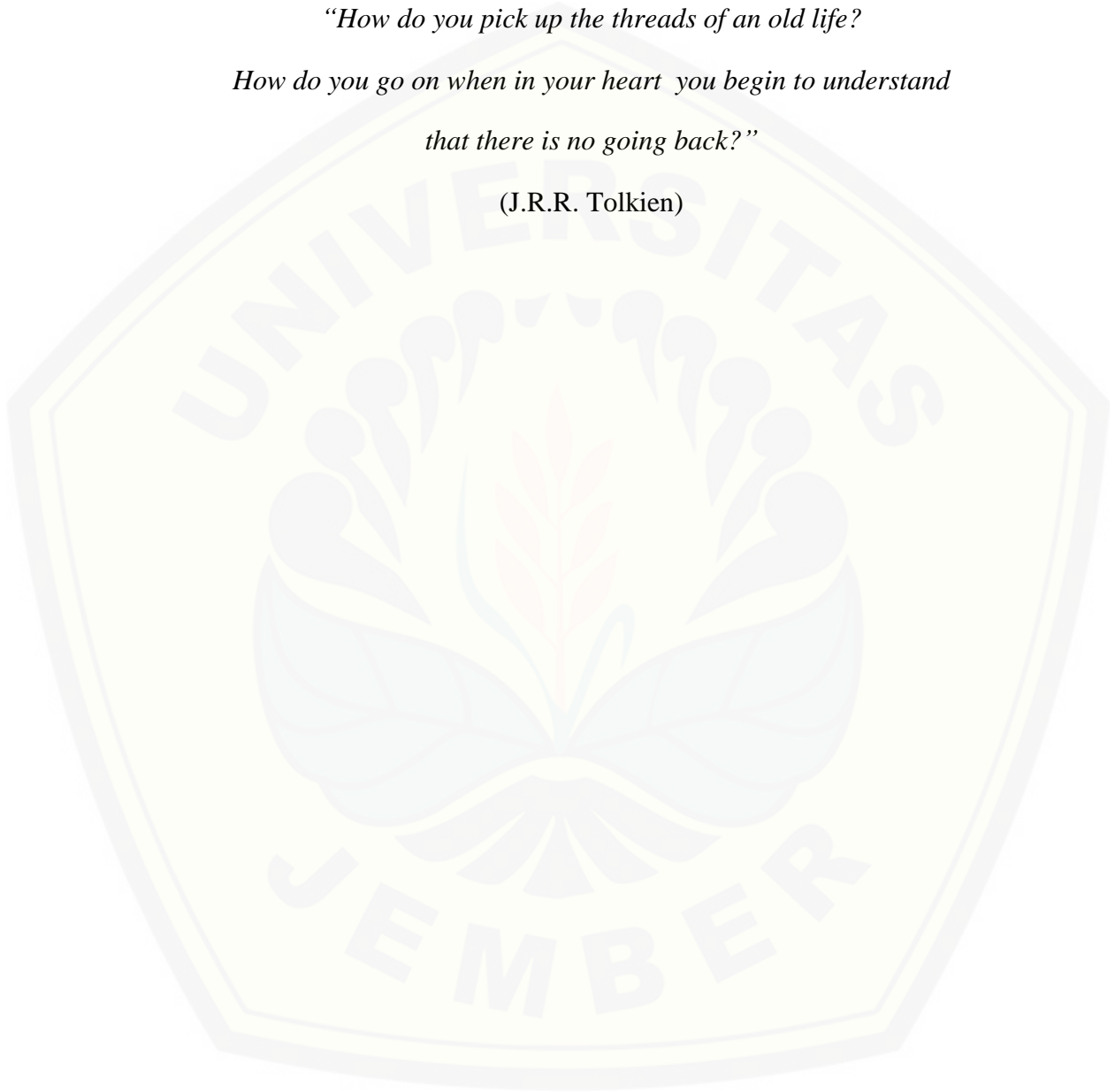
My dearest parents. I do thank you for the endless prayer, struggle, patience, and love. I also dedicate this thesis to my twin sister and her little family who always by my side. Love them so much.



**MOTTO**

*“How do you pick up the threads of an old life?  
How do you go on when in your heart you begin to understand  
that there is no going back?”*

(J.R.R. Tolkien)



**DECLARATION**

I hereby state that the thesis entitled *The Tragic Worldview in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin* is an original piece of writing. I certify that the analysis and the research described in this thesis have not already been submitted for any other degree or any publications. I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, December, 21<sup>th</sup> 2015

The writer,

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**Jember, December, 21<sup>th</sup> 2015**

**Suci Rahmaningtyas**

## SUMMARY

**The Tragic Worldview in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin***; Suci Rahmaningtyas, 080110191042; 2015 English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University.

America in nineteenth century was a country with a lot of contradictions. The society adopted freedom and also legalizes slavery. Those contradictions were born in social conditions between the North and the South states. People in the North who were against slavery believed that people in the South constructed the conspiracy to expand slavery. This happened because people in the South needed a new land for planting cotton. With the expansion, the system will automatically expand slavery due to the addition of new states. In other words, slavery will be more spreaded out and many slaves become a victim of the system.

There is a fugitive slave law that frees anyone to catch the runaway slave. That law makes many slaves be caught and punished. That condition does not make some slaves give up to fight for their independence. However, there are some slaves who do the opposite things. There are people who surrendered to the situation and blame their fate. There is also someone who has a tragic mind like what happen in Uncle Tom. He does not accept the situation of slavery, but he still stay to face it with his faith to the God. Uncle Tom believes that God will guide and save him. Even that hope never happen to him.

Considering that phenomenon, this study applies the Genetic structuralism theory which tries to find the worldview that appears in the novel. The result of this thesis shows that struggle of Uncle Tom's tragic views which expressed by Stowe's thought as a collective subject, and also the human fact and worldview that appears at that time. Slavery system made several slaves who does not believe in God existence



finally give up and doing nothing for their future. While the other slaves who has a faith to God are have a strength to runaway and gain their independence.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* describes clearly the suffering of black people in America as a slave. I found the existence of homologies from some parts of the story in the novel as a super-structure and the human facts that occurred in the 1850s as the infra-structure. Harriet Beecher Stowe was able to capture and express the worldview of social class, so that the novel becomes the media to raise awareness of individuals in social class member at that time.

Keywords: *Slavery, Genetic Structuralism, Fugitive Slave Law.*

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of Study

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe published in 1852. This novel describes clearly the suffering of black people in America as a slave. Starting from the story of Uncle Tom, who lives with his wife and three children in a plantation which belongs to Mr. Shelby in Kentucky. Mr. Shelby's family is a picture of a white man who civilized in treating their slaves. They provide proper shelter, food, and good treatment. Mrs. Shelby is also a picture of a loving mother. She never distinguishes her family and her slaves. In fact she already regards her servants as part of the family. With religious values, Mrs. Shelby even weds one of his slaves named Eliza in her home. She promises to liberate her slaves in the future.

However, there is a commotion in their peaceful home. Mr. Shelby makes decisions which are entirely illogical for his wife and son. He has agreed with a slave trader to sell Uncle Tom and Harry, son of Eliza who is still four years old. Mr. Shelby has no other choice but to sell them both to pay the debt. In those countries, slave is like property that can be bought and sold, and it is legal. Uncle Tom and Harry had become the property of the slaver trader, Mr. Haley.

Eliza knows about the trading. She plans to run away with her child. The same night, she packs up her clothes and immediately tells Uncle Tom and his family about Mr. Shelby's plan. The news becomes lightning that strikes Uncle Tom's cabin which peaceful, likewise the hearts of his family. In contrast to the decision of Eliza, Uncle Tom decides not to flee. He is a calm figure and has a strong faith. He believes that God has a plan behind this tragedy. He also believes that Mr. Shelby's decision is the best one, rather than he sells the entire slaves. Uncle Tom thinks, they will be safe in the Shelby's family.

Eliza does not want to be separated with her son. She decides to run down the dark forest, to meet the strangers, across the frozen river in Ohio by holding her child

to Canada. Moreover, her husband has previously escaped from his master because he is treated inhumane. They hope to gain independence in Canada, as a free man. The journey to achieve freedom is not easy. Eliza and her husband are overshadowed by the fugitive slave law, which requires anyone to hunt fugitive slaves. It does not discourage the determination of Eliza in keeping her son.

Harriet Beecher Stowe describes all the injustice that occurs in the black race. Physically and spiritually harsh treatments are given to them as if they are inanimate objects, not human. Harriet also illustrates the empathy of the white race who does not agree with the system of slavery. In her novel, she expresses her dismay to the system in her country by the character of Mrs. Shelby;

“This is God’s curse on slavery!—a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!—a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours,—I always felt it was,—I always thought so when I was a girl,—I thought so still more after I joined the church; but I thought I could gild it over,—I thought, by kindness, and care, and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom—fool that I was!” (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 2009: 48).

Life experience teaches Harriet to keep writing, especially when she loses one of her children who are 18 months old, Samuel Charles Stowe, due to cholera which also grasps many lives in the 19th century. That incident makes her feel empathy to many female slaves whose children are taken away and then sold by the master. She feels the pain when mother is separated from their child and sees him go with unpredictable future.

In her writings, Harriet is influenced by her family. She is a white woman who is born in religious and educated family. She is the sixth of eleven children. Her mother, Roxanna Foote Beecher (1775 - 1816), has died when she is five. She gets the role of mother from her eldest sister, Catharine. At that time, Catharine is pioneered education for women. Her youngest sister, Isabella is the founder of the National Woman Suffrage Association. Her seven brothers become ministers. His

father, Lyman Beecher (1775-1863) teaches religion at Sarah Pierce Litchfield Female Academy. Harriet convinced that her purpose in life is to become a writer. Her masterpiece *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is shows the truth about social injustice in the current environment that is human slavery.

In 1858, United States President Abraham Lincoln said( 1994:148); A house divided againts itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. From the statement above, America is a country with a lot of contradictions. The society adopts freedom and also legalizes slavery. Those contradictions are born in social conditions between the North and the South states. People in the North who are against slavery believe that people in the South construct the conspiracy to expand slavery. This happens because people in the South need a new land for planting cotton. With the expansion, the system will automatically expand slavery due to the addition of new states. In other words, slavery will be more spreaded out and many slaves become a victim of the system.

From the explanations above, there are some parts of the story in the novel as a super-structure and the human facts that occur in the 1850s as the infra-structure; I find the existence of homologue between them. Goldmann also states;

“Genetic structuralism has represented a total change of orientation – its basic hypothesis being precisely that the collective character of literary creation derives from the fact that the structures of the world of the work are homologues with the mental structures of certain social groups or is in intelligible relation with them, whereas on the level of content, that is to say, of the creation of the imaginary worlds governed by these structures, the writer has total freedom (1975:159).”

The homologies will be discussed sharper within the theoretical framework of genetic structuralism as a worldview. This is interesting to discuss that Harriet Beecher Stowe is able to capture and express the worldview of social class and that the novel becomes the media to raise awareness of individuals in social class member at that time.

## 1.2 The Problems to Discuss

I would like to analyze the expression of world view in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Therefore Genetic structuralism theory is applied to analyze it. The problems formulations are divided into three points :

1. How is the binary opposition upon slavery represented in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?
2. What is the worldview constructed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?
3. How is the condition of American slavery in 19th century?

## 1.3 The Goal of Study

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is known as the sociological literature at that time. Written criticism of Harriet Beecher Stowe in disposition of every character in the novel is very clear mentioning the system of slavery that occurred in the country. The conflicts in each character was voicing about justice for black people to be free from slavery system. That is why this topic interesting to me, because I want to describe the society who oppose slavery at that time. Through genetic structuralism theory, my goal of study are about:

1. To describe the binary oppositions among Whites and Blacks which appears in the novel to find out to whom they are standing for.
2. To explain the worldview which depicted in the novel.
3. To explain the homologous thing between Stowe's thought and the condition of America in 19th century.

## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 The Previous Research

The previous research is the prior thing to support this thesis. It serves supporting references for further study. There are two researches about this topic. They are *The Characters' Different Attitudes Towards Slavery in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin* written in 2010 by Lia Agustina at English Department, University of Jember. The second is a thesis entitled *The Collision of Ideology and Worldview in Slipknot's Selected Lyrics: An Analysis on Genetic Structuralism* that wrote in 2014 by Arief Kurniawan at English Department, University of Jember.

In her thesis, Agustina (2010) tells about the characters' different attitudes in relation to the existence of legal slavery. In addition, psychological approach is used in this study. Besides, *Allport's Trait Theory* and *Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory* are employed to analyze the characters in the novel. Agustina uses *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for her object study.

The second is Kurniawan's thesis entitled *The Collision of Ideology and Worldview in Slipknot's Selected Lyrics: An Analysis on Genetic Structuralism* that written in 2014. He describes the collision between the artis' ideology and the listener worldview that emerged as the manifestation of long process within genetic structuralism. He tried to understand the lyric from its implied meaning that is generated from long history process, not only from literal meaning of the word. Kurniawan uses genetic structuralism theory. The theory is similar with mine.

The thing which makes this research different with those previous researches is I didn't use psychological theory to analyze it. I use Genetic Structuralism. Therefore, it will be more complicated because the research discuss social structure, in the novel and also from society, not only focused on every characters. Secondly,



even the theory with Kurniawan's research is same but the way to analyze it is totally different.

## 2.2 Lucien Goldman's Genetic Structuralism

Lucien Goldmann was a Marxist from France, who applied genetic structuralism. Genetic structuralism is a combination of structuralism and Marxism. Moreover, it also tries to find the genetic factors of all human activities. Goldmann in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* states that;

“All human behaviour is an attempt to give a *meaningful response* to a particular situation and tends, therefore, to create a balance between the subject of action and the object on which it bears, the environment (1977: 156).”

From the statement above can be concluded that in order to determine a structure of a literary work, it is very important to know the aspects of social structure and also to understand the idea of reality in it. To know all of structures in it, there are some basic concepts that build it. That is a human fact, collective subject, worldview, and tragic worldview.

### a. Human Fact

Genetic structuralisms assume that literature is a fact of human intention. The human fact is all the result of human activity or behavior whether verbal or physical, which is trying to understand the science. The human facts are divided into two, Individual Facts and Social Facts. Individual Facts is just a libidinal behavior, without involving the role of social history. While Social Fact has an impact on the social, economic or political in the community that may impact on the occurrence of a history. According to Goldmann in *Method in the Sociology of Literature* (1981: 40), the purpose of seeking the meaning of the human fact itself grow as a response of the individual or collective subject to the conditions that exist within and surround their

areas, the construction of an experiment of the subject to change the existing situation in order to match the aspirations of the subject.

In other word, these facts has a structure, meaning and purpose which are to respond the situation that happend in 19th century. Stowe tries to respond the human facts and change the existing situation in order to match her aspirations throught her novel.

#### **b. Collective Subject**

Collective subject is the subject of collective activity or behavior that forms social relations, economic, and political. It means that great cultural work is the product of trans-individual subject or collective because it has an influence in the social history in its entirety.

Stowe capture social relations, economic and political which are happening around her during 1832 to 1850s, that the exploitation of man by another increasingly unavoidable due to economic demands. According to Goldmann via Faruk (2010: 63), the trans-individual subject is the subject of great literature because such a literary work is the result of the activity which the object is the universe and human groups.

#### **c. Worldview**

Worldview is defined as the total understanding of the world with all its complexity and wholeness, it is the result of the capture of reality which becomes opinion of social class. Worldview is true consciousness of reality. An effort of human on the specific historical moments to understand the world as a whole which is then manifested in literature and philosophy. Goldmann states about world view or world vision in *The Hidden God* that;

“What I have called a ‘world vision’ is a convenient term for the whole complex ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in

most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups (1977: 17).”

Worldview according to Goldmann (1977) can only be captured in literatures that discuss social issues. The real awareness that can only appear clearly in a crisis situation or can only be captured by particular individuals, among other creators of works of great cultural, including literary works.

In this case, Stowe captures the crisis situation of human trading which is very awful. Especially, the fugitive slave law which seemed to indicate the characteristic of human bestiality. This happens because there are oppositions between the South and North who is opposing the slave trade. The consequences, there are conflicts of social groups depicted in the civilians (white and black people).

#### **d. Tragic Worldview**

According to Goldmann (1977: 62), tragic worldview contains of three elements, view of God, view of the world, and view of man, which relate to each other. He also states that;

“The nature of the tragic mind can be characterised by two factors: the complete and exact understanding of the new world created by rasionalistic individualism, together with all invalueble and scientifically valid acquisitions which this offered to the human intellect; and, at the same time, the complete refusal to accept this world as the only one in which man could live, move and have his being (1977: 33).”

The three elements which have been mentioned above can be found in the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Uncle Tom is shown as someone who has a tragic worldview. As a religious figure he tries to resist the world, slavery, but he could not refuse at the same time the world itself. To discuss this point deeper, it will be explained in the discussion section.

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METODOLOGY

### 3.1 Type of Research

The type of research conducted is library research. Library research is a research conducted to gather the information related to the topic of this thesis. The information gathered by reading the written material from the library and internet.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The primary source of the data is the novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The secondary sources are textbooks and articles related to the Genetic Structuralism and historical background of America.

The steps of data collection are:

1. The sources related to the theory of genetic structuralism are collected to analyze the structure of novel and structure of society.
2. The sources related to biography of Harriet Betcher Stowe is obtained information what class she is.
3. The historical background of America in 19th century is obtained information which forms the structure of society at that time.

### 3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis

Data processing is to sort the data based on the type of data. In this method, I choose and finds out the information which is needed for the analysis to answer the problems to discuss. In processing the data, it is divided into some categories to begin the research. Firstly, it finds out the topic from the novel. Slavery that was depicted in the novel tells mostly about the problems of black people in their life.

Secondly, genetic structuralism is a theory which analyzes the structure that constructs the worldview. According to Cohen who argued in *The Wager of Lucien*

Goldmann, that the subject of historical and cultural creation is plurality of individuals with common structures of consciousness (1994:140).

To analyze The Tragic Worldview in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Faruk in *Pengantar Sosiologi Sastra* states that; Genetic Structuralism uses the dialectic method that harmonizes the part and overall to form a structure with maximum coherence, especially patterned structure of binary opposition (2012:169)."

In the other words, dialectical method establishes the absence of an absolute starting point. Each individual fact or ideas have meaning only if they are placed in the entire part of analysis. That is why I divide three steps of analysis:

1. Explaining the depiction of oppositions in the novel.

The first thing I do to know what the opposition are reflected in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is to classify every existing oppositions. For example among white men who defended slavery and who anti-slavery. Also in opposition blacks accept the system and those who rebelled. From some of the classifications, it will be found the characters in the novel that had a view of their class. The classifications can provide an understanding about the binary oppositions in the overall story and easily understand the next analysis.

2. Analyzing the tragic worldview.

The way to analyze the tragic worldview in the novel is only describing the actions and the behaviours of Uncle Tom who has tragic mind according to Goldmann's theory.

3. Explaining the condition of America in 19th century.

Explaining the condition of America in 19th century is necessary to be explained since the theory of genetic structuralism must include the real conditions in its explanation and analysis. The conditions of America explain are absolutely related to the discussion to the research such as fugitive slave law, the abolishment, and everything related to the American slavery in 19th century.