

**STEPPING UP EFFORT TO ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE NOVEL
GRACELAND (2004) BY CHRIS ABANI**

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements
to Obtain Strata I (S1) Degree*



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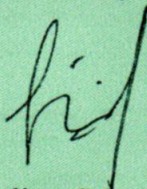
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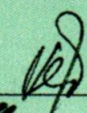
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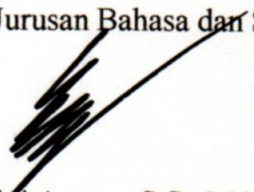
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ABSTRACT

Fitriani, Ilma. 2019. *Stepping up Effort to Enlightenment in the Novel Graceland by Chris Abani (2004). Thesis.* English Department. Faculty Languages and Arts. Universitas Negeri Padang.

This thesis is the analysis of a novel which written by Chris Abani entitled *Graceland* (2004). It explores the issue of step up efforts to enlightenment which reflected by the main character. It is also intended to find out the contribution of fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting in revealing the issue of efforts to enlightenment. This analysis is related to the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud that is supported by the text-based and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows about the way the main character effort to enlightenment in dealing with any situation in his life by build self-awareness, gaining thinking skill and having vocational skill.

Key words: *stepping up, effort, enlightenment*

ABSTRAK

Fitriani, Ilma. 2019. *Stepping up Effort to Enlightenment in the Novel Graceland by Chris Abani (2004). Skripsi* . Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris . Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Skripsi ini adalah sebuah analisis dari Novel *Graceland* (2004) oleh Chris Abani. Analisis ini mengungkapkan isu *stepping up efforts to enlightenment* yang direfleksikan oleh karakter utama. Selain itu analisis ini juga ditujukan untuk menemukan sejauh mana elemen fiksi seperti karakter, plot (konflik), dan *setting* dalam usaha meraih impian. Analisis ini menggunakan konsep Sigmund Freud tentang *life instinct*, serta didukung oleh interpretasi berdasarkan teks dan konteks dalam novel. Hasil dari analisis ini adalah karakter utama dalam novel tersebut memiliki 3 cara untuk meraih mimpinya, yakni: membangun rasa percaya diri, meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir, serta memiliki keahlian.

Kata Kunci: *meningkatkan , usaha, pencerahan*

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The Writer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background of the Problem	1
1.2 Stepping up Effort to Enlightenment	5
1.3 A Brief Description of Author's Biography	5
1.4 <i>Graceland</i> (2004)	8
1.5 Problem of the Study	9
1.6 Purpose of the Study	9
1.7 Previous Study	10
1.8 Theoretical Framework	13
1.9 Methodology	17
CHAPTER II: DISCUSSION	
2.1 Building the Self-Awareness.....	18
2.2 Gaining Thinking Skill	21
2.3 Having Vocational Skill	25
CHAPTER III: CONCLUSION	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY	30

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Humans naturally are the same because they are born with the same dignity, degree, rights and obligations. They cannot choose to be born as a part of a particular race or ethnicity. In fact, people make a difference between themselves. This difference emerges due to the feeling of being superior to others. This feeling may appear because of their status, level, and so on. People who are born in a good financial and relational condition may find the better and easier ways in achieving their goals, while the others must face the harder ways and give more sacrifice to step up their effort to reach the enlightenment. There are a lot of processes to get the better stage. Stepping up effort to enlightenment is the way to get the self-actualization to get the education and the chance like other people.

People have their own coping mechanism to survive from many obstacles in order to step up the effort to enlightenment. According to Merriam-Webster (2019) *stepping up* means to increase, augment, or advance especially by one or more steps. Someone can step up effort to enlightenment when they are aware of the potency in themselves. Indeed, the support of the family and the availability of the facilities are also the major matters to reach the dreams.

In reaching the dream, people must have some essential life skills needed to make it come true. According to World Health Organization (WHO), the life skills are the crucial skills for adaptation and behave positively, which then enable people to conquer the life challenges effectively. WHO divides the life skills into

5 groups; they are self-awareness (personal skill), social skill, thinking skill, academic skill, and vocational skill. Thus, stepping up effort to enlightenment in this study refers to the effort of the main character in *Graceland* (2004) to reach his dream by using his life skills.

Stepping up effort to enlightenment is not easy. There are many efforts that should be done. According to Merriam-Webster (2019) *effort* is defined as something produced by exertion or trying; the total work done to achieve a particular end. *Enlightenment* is a movement, a feeling when people are wanted to change, and feel having strength in their journey. Of Stepping up effort to enlightenment refers to a condition when someone must to achieve their dreams of better life. They have to survive while facing the problems to realize their dreams.

In this analysis, the background of this novel is in Ghetto, Nigeria. Although Nigeria has many natural resources, the economic condition still unstable. however it has the significant social gap which makes some people live in a very high class condition while the others live in ghetto with bad economy condition. This condition is emerged because of England which has colonized Nigeria. Beside that the condition also becomes worse because civil war that leads the citizens to become more suffer. Many Nigerians died because of the hunger. Not all of the citizens in the Nigeria have the same chance to get the education. Some people must do the harder effort and do more sacrifice to reach their dreams and come out from the bad life.

There are some people who have lack of support of the family and also availability of the facilities but they prove that they can reach their dream by stepping up their effort to get the enlightenment. This condition emerges by several reasons, however the most common is caused by financial reason which leads to the lack of chance and support. Instead of giving up on the condition where they were born, they choose to keep their dream alive and work hard to make it come true.

Oprah Winfrey, an African American inspiring woman who had a tragic childhood. She was born in a poor and broken home family. She got lack of attention and affection. She also got the sexual harassment when she was a child. However, she proves that she can be an announcer since she was a teenager caused of her strong desire to be successful.

The other example is David Steward, he is an African American businessman. He was a scavenger. He lived in a bad economic condition. Besides that he also faced the discrimination and racism that make him difficult to reach his success. However, he proves that he can be successful even though he faced many difficulties.

There are several elements one should have in stepping up effort to enlightenment. First, self-awareness, everyone has to be aware in themselves to make something or to do something for their life. According to Silvia and Duval (2001:2), self-awareness is one's attention at a given time can either be directed toward one's self. It means that people can think about what they are thinking about something, doing something, and experiencing. People who

awareness know what will they do; use their mind to solve their problems. Second, knowledge is the important element in the act to achieve a goal. It is something leads someone to open the new path in life. According to Linda Zagzebski (2018:3) knowledge is expressing the relationship between the subject and the truth proposition. A truth claim becomes knowledge when your state of belief makes cognitive contact with reality. Propositional knowledge, that can be known or believed, is her focus due to simplicity. The criteria required for belief is to have a thought, followed by augmentation with experience. And the last one is skills. A skill is an ability to perform an activity in a competent manner. Skills can be classified into three main types: Transferable/Functional, Personal Traits/Attitudes, and Knowledge-based. According to Cambridge dictionary (2019), skill is a particular ability that you develop through training and experience and that is useful for a job.

The story of the successful people who had unlucky condition when they were children also can be found in the literary works. Those kinds of people have been inspiring other people to write the novel, poem, and other literary works. One of the literary works is the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani.

This study analyzes the issue of stepping up the effort to enlightenment which refers to the action of a Nigerian boy who is born in a poor family. He has the unique ways in stepping up his effort in order to reach his dreams to be a dancer which is interesting to be discussed. His strong commitment plays the big role in conquering the challenges to make his dream comes true. Through the main character, the novel makes people realize that the most important thing to reach the dream is the big effort to not giving up which come from them.

1.2 Stepping Up Effort to Enlightenment

There are three keywords need to be explained in this study: *Stepping up*, *effort*, and *enlightenment*. According to Merriam-Webster (2019) *stepping up* means to increase, augment, or advance especially by one or more steps, while based on Collins dictionary (2019), stepping up means to increase or raise by stages; accelerate. Then, according to Merriam-Webster (2019) *effort* is defined as something produced by exertion or trying; the total work done to achieve a particular end. While *enlightenment* based on Merriam-Webster (2019) is defined as the act or means of enlightening; the state of being enlightened.

In this analysis, *stepping up effort to enlightenment* refers to the actions done by the character, a teenager named Elvis who is trying to get out of the ghettos of Lagos, Nigeria. He struggles to escape the orbit of his troubled family and make a better life for himself. On the other hand, he must live on the harsh environment. The protagonist is stepping up effort to enlightenment by using his life skills such as building the self-awareness. The protagonist knows his own potency and desire; gaining the thinking skill. The protagonist be critical thinking and have own principle; and having the vocational skill. The protagonist is an experienced dancer and the protagonist impersonator

1.3 A Brief Description of Author's Biography

Chris Abani is a novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter and playwright. He was born on 27 December 1966 in Afikpo, Nigeria, to an English mother, Daphne, and a Nigerian Igbo father, Michael. In 1968, young Chris, his mother and four siblings fled Nigeria to escape the Biafran War (1967-1970). They lived in

England for three years, and subsequently returned to their home country, where Michael had stayed behind to work as a Red Cross official. Chris Abani would later recreate this important episode of his family history in *Daphne's Lot* (2003), an epic poem retracing his mother's life and also evoking, among other things, his troubled relationship with his violent father.

According to Daria Tunca in his article entitled *The Chris Abani Bibliography* (2014), Abani holds a B.A. in English and Literary Studies from Imo State University, Nigeria; an M.A. in Gender and Culture from Birkbeck College, University of London, an M.A. in English from the University of Southern California; and a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature from the University of Southern California. Abani started writing stories when he was six, had his first piece of short fiction published when he was ten, and wrote his first novel, a thriller entitled *Masters of the Board* (1984), at the age of sixteen. Literary works that he had such as novels, short stories, and poetries. These the titles of Abani's literary works in novels, *Masters of the Board* (Delta, 1985), *GraceLand* (FSG, 2004/Picador 2005), *The Virgin of Flames* (Penguin, 2007), and *The Secret History of Las Vegas* (Penguin, 2014). His short stories are *Becoming Abigail* (Akashic Books, 2006) and *Song For Night* (Akashic Books, 2007). His poetries are *Kalakuta Republic* (Saqi, 2001), *Daphne's Lot* (Red Hen Press, 2003), *Dog Woman* (Red Hen Press, 2004), *Hands Washing Water* (Copper Canyon Press, 2006), *There are no names for red* (Red Hen Press, 2010), *Feed me the sun* (Peepal Tree Press, 2010), *Sanctificum* (Copper Canyon Press, 2010) and the last one is his essays with titled *The Face* (Restless Books, 2014).

Tunca, in the same article also wrote that there are several honours and Awards those are gotten by Chris Abani. Honors and awards Abani's got on his literary works are PEN USA West Freedom-to-Write Award, US (2001), Prince Claus Awards (2001), Imbongi Yesizwe Poetry International Award, South Africa (2002), Winner, Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award (*GraceLand*, 2005), Winner, Hurston-Wright Legacy Award (*GraceLand*, 2005), Silver Medal, California Book Award for Fiction (*GraceLand*, 2005), Finalist, *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction (*GraceLand*, 2005), Finalist, Commonwealth Writers Prize, Best Books (Africa Region)(*GraceLand*, 2005), Shortlisted for International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (*GraceLand* 2006), Winner, PEN/Beyond Margins Award for *Song For Night* (2008), Nominated for Lamada Award (*The Virgin of Flames* 2008), 2007 Pushcart Nomination for *Sanctificum* (poetry 2008), and Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction (2009). The literary works that written by Chris Abani told about his experience, stories of struggle, stories of hope: arts, politics, and human right.

Graceland (2004) is a novel that inspired by Chris Abani's poetry *Kalakuta Republic* (2000) and his memories of his experiences in person. It is about *the underground world of the slums of Lagos, Nigeria which explores the kidnapping of children for their organs, vigilante justice, civil war, incest, and Elvis-impersonation is not a world-weary and embittered man*. In this novel Abani reveal According to Daria Tunca (2014):

“Abani's memories of his experiences in prison constitute the focus of his first collection of poetry, *Kalakuta Republic* (2000), which depicts events of

extreme violence and provides haunting reflections on human nature, survival, dignity and redemption. In this regard, the volume anticipates some of the most prominent themes running through the writer's later work, including his novel *GraceLand* (2004), which features sixteen-year-old Elvis Oke, an Elvis Presley impersonator who tries to eke a living in Lagos. The narrative, often described as a *Bildungsroman*, alternates between the protagonist's past and present, and portrays his ambiguous sexuality and the moral choices that he repeatedly faces in the violent environment of Nigeria's largest city”

The quotation above confirms that *Graceland* is a novel about effort to face to live in the violent environment. It is also related with his poetry which title *Kalakuta Republic* (2000), between both of these works reveals about the situation to get better life.

1.4 *Graceland* (2004)

The novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani shows the issue of stepping up effort to enlightenment. In this analysis, *stepping up effort to enlightenment* refers to the actions done by the character, a teenager named Elvis who is trying to get out of the ghettos of Lagos, Nigeria. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2019) *ghetto* means a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure. He struggles to escape the orbit of his troubled family and make a better life for himself. On the other hand, he must live on the harsh environment. The protagonist is stepping up effort to enlightenment; try to break down in all of bad condition in three ways: building the self-awareness; gaining the thinking skill; and having the vocational skill.

First, the main character is stepping up effort to enlightenment by building the self-awareness. The protagonist knows his own potency and desire. He has a dream to be a dancer, but he finds many struggles to reach his dreams due to his limitation. The limitations are such as the lack of support, the unsupported environment, and the financial problems. However, He does all of his effort to reach his dream and to become someone who is accepted in the society.

Second, the protagonist is stepping up effort to enlightenment by gaining the thinking skill. The protagonist tries to break down his problem with his knowledge. He tries to solve problem that he faced, he is to be critical thinking when there is new issue, and he have own principle for his own life. This is also supported by his interest in reading. He uses the thinking skill to survive his life without his parents. He did the entire job to get money based on his knowledge that he have when his mother still alive and used his skill to support to break down the suffering.

Third, the protagonist is stepping up effort to enlightenment by having vocational skills. The character is an experienced dancer and the protagonist impersonator who is desperate to carve out a better life for him, and he frequently performs on the streets to earn money. The main character is responsive to everything the related to dance. He always keeps training himself to increase his dance skill. The protagonist uses his dance skill to get money for his needs.

1.5 Problem of the Study

Stepping up effort to enlightenment emerged as an important issue in novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. Thus, there are some research questions that

give contribution to reveal the issue of stepping up effort to enlightenment in this novel. Those are:

1. How far does protagonist in novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani expose the issue about stepping up efforts to enlightenment?
2. To what extent do the character, setting, and plot (conflict) in novel *Graceland* (2004) reveal the issue of stepping up efforts to enlightenment?

1.6 Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed to seek how far the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abanis exposes the issue of stepping up to enlightenment. Hereafter, this study is going to investigate to what extent the character, setting, plot (conflict) in novel *Graceland* supports the issue of protagonist efforts to reach the enlightenment.

1.7 Previous Study

The analysis of *Graceland* (2004) that focuses on analyzing about steeping up effort to enlightenment has not been found yet. However, there are some studies that related to this analysis and give contribution and inspiration in analyzing this novel. First, the article entitled *Cross Roads of the Living and the Dead: Necropolitics and Market Logic in Chris Abani's Graceland* by Christopher Joshua Dunn (2017). Second, the article entitled *The Nigerian Coming-of-Age Novel as a Globalization Device: a Reading of Chris Abani's Graceland* (2011) by Sita Maria Kattanek. The last article entitled *Navigating the Lagos Cityscape in Chris Abani's Graceland* by Christoper E.W Ouma (2012).

The first article is done by Christopher Joshua Dunn (2017), entitled *Cross Roads of the Living and the Dead: Necropolitics and Market Logic in Chris Abani's Graceland*. The writer also analyzes the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. He is using the Foucault theory about power and knowledge. Beside that this article is also supported by the theory necropolitics by Mbembe (2003) who were firstly wrote about necropolitics. Joshua Dunn writes about the necropolitics play the big roles in building the setting of the novel. The necropolitics is shown as a primarily use of social and political power to dictate how some people may live and how some must die. This politics is inseparable with the violence. The result of the analysis is that the low class Nigerians in 1980s were the victims of the finacialized necropolitics of their own country.

The article above gives the representation about the political situation in Nigeria based on the setting of the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. The article depicts that the Nigerians were like zombies who lived but they could not determine what they wanted to be due to the political deviation. The main character shows the effort for stepping up to enlightenment to getting out of this harsh environment.

The second article is entitled *The Nigerian Coming-of-Age Novel as a Globalization Device: a Reading of Chris Abani's Graceland* (2011) by Sita Maria Kattanek. This article focused on the theory of mimicry and simulation by Homi K. Baba. She wrote that Elvis, the main character is the victim of western colonial culture. She wrote that the protagonist is performing the "mimicry and simulation" due to the impact to England colonization. The result of this analysis is the Nigerians are the colonial culture victims which lead them to be floating.

The article above contributes to give more understanding about the setting of the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. This article shows that the main character is living in an unstable country. The unstable condition of that country can be seen through their economics, language, and refashioning the discourse in a heteroglossic image. In economics, the Nigerians are living in poverty and economic exploitation. In Nigeria, English has become the official language which makes them lose their identity. Besides that, the Nigerians face the lost identity their own culture and ideology.

The third article is entitled *Navigating the Lagos cityscape in Chris Abani's "Graceland"* by Christopher E.W Ouma. This article is focusing on analyzing the character and setting to reveal the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. Christopher E.W Ouma shows that Abani reveals condition of the Lagos city in the postcolonialism. The main character witnesses the heartbreaking situation such as squalor, filth, hunger, begging, sexual molestation and assault. The result of this analysis is that the childhood in the Lagos cityscape is not showing the real condition of the Lagos city. The contribution of the article above is giving the comprehension of the city condition.

The studies above give contribution and inspiration to the topic stepping up effort to enlightenment to reveal the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. Unlike the previous studies above which is discussion about post colonials theory and necropolitics theory, this study is using the psychoanalysis to analyze this novel which is focusing on the character, setting and plot to reveal the issue of stepping up effort to enlightenment.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of the novel deals with the concept of life instinct and self-awareness. The concept of the life instinct in this analysis is related to the psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud's journal *Eros-Thantos: A Modification of Freudian Instinct Theory in the Light of Torah Teaching* (1974). Freud's basic thoughts retain a strong hold on the shaping of views regarding the theory of the human mind. His theory is psychopathologies that results in mental illness within the human mind are about human desires. Moreover, Solomon states that human desires are related to human instincts. Those instincts are divided into two kinds of instincts which are life instinct (*Eros*) and death instinct (*Thanatos*). Furthermore, Solomon (1974) states:

“Conceived as demands by the body upon the mind, the instincts were eventually grouped by Freud under two rubrics, life and death. The former he named, in the philosophic tradition, *Eros*, for the Greek god of love. Though he never formally gave a name to the death instinct, other writers have dubbed it *Thanatos*, for the Greek mythological personification of death” (page 90)

The quotation above, explains that the instinct are divided into two: life instinct (*Eros*) and death instinct (*Thanatos*). *Eros* is related to love, cooperation, and other pro social actions. While *Thanatos* is the opposite of *Eros*, it is more primitive, it is expressed as aggression and violence.

Moreover, life instinct (*Eros*) is associated with positive emotions of love and social behaviour, cooperation, collaboration, and other behaviour that support harmonious societies. Life instinct thus appears as basic needs for health, safety, and through sexual drives. It seeks both to preserve and to create life. While *Thanatos* is associated with negative emotions such as fear, hate, and anger which

lead to anti-social acts from bullying even to murder as projection of the death drive.

The protagonist in this analysis is a Nigerian teenager who has good life instincts. Although he is a very young guy, he has positive emotion. It can be seen through the way he denies the stimulus to do the negative thing like marijuana. He strictly refuses that invitation even though he knows well that it can make money instantly.

Self-awareness also plays the important role in creating the good life instinct (eros). According to Crisp and Turner (2010), self-awareness is a psychological state in which people aware of their traits, feelings, and behavior. Self-awareness also can be defined as the realization of oneself as an individual entity. They add that self-awareness as a state of radical self-honesty regarding by human values, priorities, and identities. It is needed to increase human self-actualization.

People who have self-awareness will be able to choose the best choice for their life. People who develop self-awareness will be more realize of themselves as human being. It gives human clear perceptions of their personality including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and emotions. By developing the self-awareness, people will know their ability and the potency in them. In this analysis, the protagonist has the self-awareness. He is aware about his ability. He wants to prove that even though he was born in a poor family but he can reach his dream to be a dancer. Even though he has no chance to learn the dance from the professional, he keeps learning it by watching a dancing class.

The analysis of this novel is supported by text and context based interpretation. Text based interpretation is done by exposing the fictional devices of the text itself. Guerin (2005:64) says that this approach focuses on the analysis and the interpretation of the text itself. Meanwhile, context based interpretation means that the analysis of the novel is not only focused on the text itself, but also involved the phenomenon that really happens in the real world. The most influential movement is literary history which is divided literary phenomenon into its period, describes the text and examines their mutual influence.

The process of analyzing the novel uses fictional devices. The first fictional device is the analysis of the character in novel *Graceland* (2004) that becomes the crucial thing in revealing the topic. Abrams (2009:420) says characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it- and from what they do-the action. The characters are portrayed through speech, description, and commentary. Meanwhile, according to Corner (2009:79) character may defined as verbal representation of human being. In literary works, the characters help reader to understand and catch the meaning of the works. The principal of the characters are not enough about the good side and bad side. In addition, reading about characters in literature, look beyond circumstance and appearance, and determine what these things show about character. In this novel, the character shows the strong commitment and self-confidence. He steps up his effort by keep working hard and persevering. He keeps learning to dance until he

runs out of his energy. He also earns his own money by working as a dancer.

The second device which is used in this analysis is plot. Plot is sequence of events for the things that happen in the story. Guerin (2005:8) states that plot is conflict. There are two kinds of conflicts. They are internal conflict which occurs within a character and external conflict which occurs between two or more characters or a character and environment. In this analysis, the main character faces internal and external conflicts. The external conflicts of the main character lead into the internal conflicts. The internal conflicts that faced by the protagonist is the lack of support from the family to reach his dream. While the external conflict emerges when he lost his mother, beside that he also does not have a supportive father. Furthermore, the main character lives in a bad environment which many criminal cases happen.

The last device is setting. Setting is not only about time and place taken in the story. It is also strongly related to situation, condition, and atmosphere or mood, which refers to an enveloping or presenting emotional texture within a character. According to Barnet and Cain (2003:135) setting includes not only the physical surrounding but a point or several points in time. The background against which we see the characters and the happening may be specified. It probably is part of the story's meaning, perhaps providing an ironic contrast or perhaps exerting an influence on the characters. Endriga (2003:85) says that setting has a way of drawing the reader into a piece of literature while facilitating understanding of the characters and their actions. In this analysis, the settings refers to the situation of being looking down, hunger, and difficult.

1.9 Methodology

The analysis of the novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani is done through text and context-based interpretation. It is done analyzing some parts of fictional devices, such as characters, plot (conflict), and setting. These devices connected to each other and give the contribution in revealing the meaning of the novel. Character and setting are used to reveal about the stepping up efforts to enlightenment by analyzing the reaction of the character toward conflicts. Then, setting deals with the situation, circumstances and atmosphere. This analysis is dealing with the psychological theory by Sigmund Freud about life instinct. It gives contribution in process of analyzing by giving help in revealing the meaning.