

THE MISERY OF BEING TRAGIC MULATTO
AS SEEN IN *THE HOUSE BEHIND THE CEDARS*
BY CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT

Thesis

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ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa tentang kehidupan sosial dari kelompok orang-orang berdarah Afro-Amerika yang hidup di Negara bagian Carolina, Amerika Serikat. Mereka – yang lebih dikenal dengan sebutan mulatto – mendapatkan perlakuan yang tidak adil dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat disebabkan berkembangnya isu-isu rasialisme yang selalu menyudutkan posisi orang-orang keturunan kulit hitam tersebut. Selain menganalisa tentang isu rasialisme yang terjadi di Carolina, penulis juga memaparkan dampak negatif dari rasialisme yang diderita oleh orang-orang berdarah Afro-Amerika di Carolina, Amerika Serikat.

Dalam thesis ini, penulis menggunakan teori mimesis yang akan membandingkan antara kejadian-kejadian yang benar-benar terjadi dengan apa yang ditemukan didalam novel. Pendekatan sosiologi digunakan untuk mengetahui aspek-aspek dan sisi sosial yang terdapat dalam novel *The House Behind The Cedars*. Metode kualitatif yang dijabarkan secara deskriptif digunakan penulis dalam menganalisa data karena data yang dianalisa dan hasil analisisnya berbentuk kata-kata yang berisi kutipan-kutipan untuk mengisi materi analisa..

Setelah menganalisa novel ini, penulis menyimpulkan bahwa terjadinya sebuah diskriminasi rasialisme bukan hanya dilandaskan atas dasar warna kulit, tetapi juga terhadap darah keturunan yang mengalir dalam tubuh seseorang. Selain itu, kasus-kasus rasialisme ini hanya membawa dampak negatif terhadap kaum yang didiskriminasikan; baik dalam segi politik, ekonomi, karir, maupun pendidikan..

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Literature is close in relationship with human life because it reflects the social condition of the society generally. The reality in society is often shown in literary works, especially in the novel. One of the aspects of life that can be portrayed by novel is a social condition at a certain time and place. By writing the novel, the writer can convey the ideas to the reader about the phenomena that exist in society. Actually, there are some novels that portray social condition of the real life. Here, the writer had chosen *The House Behind the Cedars* by Charles Waddell Chesnut as the novel that will be analyzed, which represents the racial condition of mulatto life in Carolina society in the late nineteenth century.

The House Behind the Cedars contains the racial issues which intimidate the colored people in Carolina society in the late 19th century toward the Negroid race. This novel is the reflection of situation happened in Carolina at that time since it was written during that period of time. As the evidence, Chesnut puts some injustice treatments toward the black heritage people in his novel which were really happened in his time. The writer will prove this evidence in the analysis chapter later on.

In this thesis, the writer focuses on the discrimination toward the main character of the novel who is a half-blood Negro, or more popular known as mulatto. As a mulatto, Rena Walden – the main character of the novel – should face the reality that she would never get involve into White society as long as she has the black heritage running in her blood, even though she has the White people's complexion. The problem is getting more interesting since she should stop loving someone, and does not deserve to get love from her fiancée George Tryon who is the White person just because the worsening of racial issues in that area.

Basically, this novel is interesting to be analyzed for some reasons. First, the writer finds out that the author – Charles Waddell Chesnutt – is regarded as one of the most accomplished late 19th century American writers of fiction, and was one of the best known and critically acclaimed African-American writers of his day. There is valuable information as stated by Art Taylor in <http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A17123> published at January 30th 2002; Chesnutt was the first author who used fiction to present the voice and the concerns of his race to a wider white audience. He was the first African-American novelist whose fiction published in *The Atlantic Monthly* (1887) and was celebrated as the first Negro Novelist in United States for works including *The House Behind The Cedars* (1900) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901). In 1928, Charles Waddell Chesnutt was awarded the Springarn Medal by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in recognition of his literary achievements.

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Second, the novel reflects racism upon mulatto's life in American society, especially in Carolina State. Besides, this novel also portrays the insight of life and social customs of American society toward the mulatto itself.

By using this novel, the writer analyzes the racial discrimination toward mulatto in California society in the late 19th century by seeing the relationship between racial status and social condition as reflected in *The House Behind The Cedars* by Charles Waddell Chesnutt. The writer hopes after doing this research, he can get some values and lessons about life and also for those who want to understand the racial condition of mulatto life in Carolina society in the late 19th century.

For all of those reasons, the writer would like to develop his topic in a title: **THE MISERY OF BEING TRAGIC MULATTO AS SEEN IN *THE HOUSE BEHIND THE CEDARS* BY CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT.**

1.2. Identification of the Problem

In this research, the writer analyzes the social condition in America in the late 19th century. The writer focuses on the racial discrimination of the mulatto's life in Carolina society in the late 19th century by seeing the relationship between racial status and social condition, which is reflected in *The House Behind the Cedars*. The writer also analyzes the reflection of author's life in the novel since Charles Waddell Chesnutt himself is a mulatto.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After analyzing *The House Behind The Cedars*, the writer understands the racial situation described by Charles Waddell Chesnutt which has the reflection to the real condition in American society. So this novel fulfills the requirement to be analyzed with sociological criticism as the mirror of society.

Racial problem has brought a significant problem between the Anglo-Saxon race and the Negroid race in America. It has been caused by the unequal status between those two races which create the unjustified social environment among them. Automatically, it gives some impacts to the living condition of the society. The Black people are the victims of the White Man's superiority in this case. They are treated unfair in such society like that and regarded as the lowest level people in the society.

This racial case encourages Chesnutt to make a literary work that describes his social concern about the phenomena which happened in his society. Through literary work, he delivers his concern and critics dealing with racial issues toward the mulatto.

Chesnutt's novel *The House Behind the Cedars*, advocates that a person's race is determined by one's environment and society. It is through the portrayal of the two main characters John Warwick and Rena Walden's life that Chesnutt

clearly illustrated the consequences encountered by the two young mulattoes as a result of crossing the color line and trying to 'pass as whites' in Clarence, South Carolina.

In short, Chesnut's fiction was heavily based in factual arguments and current social issues of his time that were intertwined into his works, such as in his novel, *The House Behind the Cedars*. John Warwick successfully passed as a white person in Clarence, South Carolina, while Rena Walden failed because her black heritage established in Patesville surfaced to kill her "white" life as Rena Warwick. Therefore, through the symbolic representations of two siblings, John Warwick and Rena Walden, Chesnut clearly demonstrated that 'whiteness' is determined by one's social environment.

Finally, the writer concludes that the racialism which happened in America only gives the bad impacts to the living condition of the colored people, especially mulatto in this case, in Carolina society. The racialism is not only determined by the color skins, but also the by the blood line which is inherited from their ancestors. By applying Allan Swingewood's Sociological Approach that considers a literary work as a mirror of society, the writer believes that *The House Behind the Cedars* is a portrait of the mulatto's life in Carolina society.

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