

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

Literary works have been one of the sources of enjoyment, which serves to refine our minds and expand our sense of life. Through literary works, human can find understanding, because they present “the depiction of imagined experience [which] can provide authentic insights” (Perrine, 1999). More importantly, this “imagined experience” that the literary works depict reflects the actual issue in our real life so that it provides insights that may help us dealing with the reality.

Literary works can illustrate various issues in human life, and that includes the illustration of historical events or social conditions at a particular time and place at the time. To make such works based on actual condition is of course not easy. But there are writers who are proven to be able to publish great novels in this area. One of them is Toni Morrison.

Toni Morrison is a black woman writer whose works are representing the discriminated black people in society American society. Morrison is a novelist whose works are very popular and fairly appreciated in literary sphere. She was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 1996, The Pearl Buck Award in 1994, The Title Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in 1994, and Distinguished Writer Award from The American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1978.

One of Morrison’s most significant works is The Bluest Eye which was first published in 1970. The Bluest Eye is Morrison's first novel and was written while Morrison was teaching at Howard University and raising her two sons on her own. The story is about a year in the life of a young black girl, named Pecola, in Lorain, Ohio, in the years following the Great

Depression. Pecola is a troubled young girl with a hard life, whose parents are constantly fighting, both physically and verbally. Pecola is continually being told and reminded of what an ugly girl she is, thus fueling her desire to be white with blue eyes. Throughout the novel, it is revealed that not only Pecola but also her parents had a life full of hatred and hardships. Her mother, Pauline, feels alive and happy only when she is working for a rich white family. Her father, Cholly, is a drunk man who was left with his aunt when he was young and ran away to find his father, who wanted nothing to do with him.

The Bluest Eye is an interesting novel which highlights the issue of racial discrimination, reflecting the condition of African-American community in Northern America during 1940s. In this novel, the hard life of black people and the racial discrimination practiced is described very tragically and clearly by Toni Morrison. Other than its amusing side as a literary work, the writer believes that this novel has its own insights which may help to widen its readers understanding about life. However, in order to reach such understanding from any literary work, a particular mode of approach is needed.

In order to gain the insights that the novel The Bluest Eye contains, the writer believes that Sociological Approach is the most suitable mode to be used. It is mainly because the novel itself is made based on the actual condition that Morrison experienced as a black woman in African-American society. By applying Sociological Approach, the writer wants to compare and show the correlation between the depiction Morrison made in the novel The Bluest Eye and the reality in Northern America in 1940s. hence, the writer proposes to conduct a research entitle **The Portrait of Racial Discrimination toward African American People in Northern America Reflected in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye.**

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

In novel The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, the writer sees that the main issue is the racial discrimination suffered by the black people. Although it happens to all of Black people in general, the writer will mostly focus on some of characters. The writer wants to find out how the discrimination of Black People in Northern America as reflected in The Bluest Eye. The writer focuses her analysis on racial discrimination into three aspects, they are discrimination in social life, in education and in economy. This is happen toward Black people in the novel. One of them is Pecola's character, where she gets discrimination all of aspects like in social life, school and from her parents. She gets discrimination in social life when she go to candy shop to buy candy Marry Jane, but she is ignored by the shopkeeper, because she is come from Black community. In the school she also gets discrimination from her friends and from her teacher. Beside Pecola's character, it is also happens toward another characters in the novel, they are Cholly Breedlove, Pauline Breedlove, Frieda MacTeer, and many others. They gets discrimination from White people because they come from Black community and different with them.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

The novel is actually describing some of characters who always face racial discrimination. Therefore, the writer tries to find the interesting points to be analyzed and limits the research into what kinds of racial discrimination portray in The Bluest Eye.

1.4 The Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to reveal the facts of the problem that faced by Black People during 1940s in The Bluest Eye. Moreover, this research is limited to the problems on the racial discrimination in Black people's life during 1940s and its reflection in Morrison's The Bluest Eye. So, the writer wants to compare the historical facts in Northern America with

the condition in the novel. It was a contradictory condition with human rights, because basically all of people have same rights, whatever they have black skin or white skin.

1.5 Review of Previous Studies

In order to make a legitimate research, reviewing previous related studies is necessary so that it can be shown that this research is not imitating another research which already exists. In that sense, the writer found some studies which deal with the same issue, which will be reviewed in this subchapter. The first study is a thesis of English Department's Student of Andalas University which uses the same novel but different approach. It is entitled The Impact of Racial Discrimination Toward Development of Pecola Breedlove's Personality in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, by Retno Fani (2007). In her analysis, Fani applies psychological approach. She explains how the first character gets discrimination because of her skin color and the discrimination has a bad impact toward development herself. The first character gets discrimination because at the time skin color is the lowest position in society. She discusses the condition which is full of racial discrimination at the time, but she discusses about it just a little. So in this thesis Retno Fani focuses on the bad impact of racial discrimination toward development of the main character, Pecola.

The second review is a thesis from a student in Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University. It is entitled Belunggu Belunggu Patriaki: Sebuah Pemikiran Feminisme Psikoanalisis Toni Morrison dalam *The Bluest Eye*, written by Eka Harisma Wardani (2009). She applies psycho-feminist theory. In this thesis she only said that theory as generally like definition of feminist, definition of psycho. In this thesis Eka also states that Western standards of beauty and demonstrates that the concept of beauty. Besides that she also explains how the

women want to have light skin because with her skin they can do anything and all of people will be proud of her. It have relationship with psychological theory, because when the women want to have light skin, unconsciously her desire work and it make the women effort to get light skin.

The third review an essay entitled Racialised beauty: Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye written by Esti Sugiharti. In her essay, she discuss about standard of beauty where in America almost all of people want to have light skin so that they can perfect women and they will get anything with their skin. In opinion of women in there, if they have black skin, they are not interested women and it means they will not loved by man. Beside that they think that if they have black skin, it means they come from lowest class and will separate in society. In her essay she also discuss about hegemony and make the relation with black skin and standard of beauty, but in her essay she more focus on standard beauty in novel *The Bluest Eye* and compare with real condition in America.

The third review is on a thesis entitled The Reflection of Racial Discrimination in Southern America During 1964 in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, written by Helsi Indriani (2010). In analyzing this novel, she uses sociological approach and she applies first perspective by Alan Swingewood. This thesis focuses on discrimination which faced by Southern America society in Law and she also discuss about the rights of human which have unfair between black and white in law. In there she describes that in Southern America the people get unfair treatment in all of aspects especially in law and religion. Black people get discrimination from White people in law because they think that Black people have not the same position and the rights with White people. So Black people always get discrimination in Law and then they also get unfair treatment in religion like in the church. They will be separated between Black people and White people and the church also separated by them between White

people and Black people, where White people have comfortable church and have good facilities than Black people.

Another thesis which use the same theory is Jefri Pranata's The Grover's Corner as reflection of Peterborough on early 1900's and as Anti Capitalist Concept in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (2011). In analyzing this novel he also uses sociological approach and Marxist theory, in sociological approach he applies first perspective by Alan Swingewood. In analyzing this thesis he focus on condition of society at the time and he also addition some of the mind from the society about capitalist and the ways from their still not modernism yet. Where at the time so the all of people try to reject anti capitalist and if capitalist is rejected they will be find the happiness, where they can be live with helped another people, tolerated, greet, chat and many others. So, they try to rejected capitalist at the time to get happiness.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

In analyzing The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, the writer realizes that she needs theory which has relationship with the topic. In getting appropriate analysis of the novel and considering the topic, the writer uses sociological approach by Alan Swingewood. As Swingewood stated in his book The Sociology of Literature:

The sociological study of literature is thus a fairly late arrival, for although there are today well developed sociologies of religion, education, politics, social change, even of such an imprecise area as ideology, there is virtually no established corpus of knowledge called the sociology of literature (13).

From quotation above Swingewood states that sociology of literature is ideology of the society that consist of education, marriage, politics, religion, economy and others that concerns about people attitude. Swingewood argued that sociology in literature is study about social condition in the society over the text.

Sociological approach also has relationship with the author, whether the author launches her/his works by imagination and evidence, as Leo Lowenthal states in The Sociology of Literature by Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson: “We learn both of the nature of society and the ways individuals experienced it, through the fictional characters who see and record not only the reality around them, but their hopes, wishes, dreams, and fantasies (16).” This means sociological approach is an approach to find meaning of imaginary in literary works that learns about the society, social class, love affair, religion and others. Sociological approach can use by the author to deliver what they sees in society and they will be deliver uses with their style.

Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood in their book The Sociology of Literature state that there are three perspectives related to Sociology of Literature. The first perspective is “sociology of literature is a direct reflection of various facets of social structure, family relationship, class conflict and possibly divorce trends and population composition” (13). From quotation the writer conclude that sociology of literature is a reflection of social condition. Sociology tries to analyze literary work as reflected the social condition at the time the work was written.

Second perspective is “the second approach to a literary sociology moves away from the emphasis on the work of literature itself to the production side, and especially to the social situation of the writer” (17). It shows that the writer and his/her work is related each other. Usually the writer will relate her or his work to the patronage and the cost of production.

The last is “one demanding a high level of skills, attempts to trace the ways in which a work of literature is actually received by a particular society at a specific historical movement” (21). It means that how paradigm the reader toward literary work and perspective or paradigm from reader has relationship with the time where readers live.

From three perspective proposed by Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson, the writer deals with the first perspective to analyze this novel, because this novel completely transforms the social and historical situation of the writer's experience to their character. Alan (1972) said in his book: "It is taste of sociology of literature to relate the experience of the writer's imaginary characters and situations to the historical climate from which they derive. He has to transform the private equation of theme and stylistic means into social equation" (14). It means that the story has relationship between experience of the author and characters in the novel. Morrison shows her experience of historical moment and racial discrimination in Northern America during 1940s and she makes her experience into literary work.

1.7 The Methods of the Research

In conducting the research, the writer takes several steps. They are collecting the data, analyzing data and presenting the result of analysis.

1.7.1 Collecting Data

In conducting this research, the writer uses library research. The data divided into two, they are primary and secondary data. The primary data are obtained by reading and understanding the novel, The Bluest Eye by Tony Morrison. In secondary data are finds in books, journals, article which have related with this novel and theory.

1.7.2 Analyzing Data

In analyzing data, the writer begins by reading the novel and quoting some data that are related to the analysis. And then the writer tries to find out the relationship between the content of the novel with the social condition in Northern America in 1940s to get the correlation

between the novel and social condition related to social fact and racial discrimination in Northern America 1940 because in this research the writer uses mimetic approach.

1.7.3 Presenting the Result Analysis

In reporting this analysis, the writer use descriptive method. Descriptive method is present the result by quoting the sentences from the book or novel relevant to the analysis.