

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the background of the research about racism and mimicry, identification of the problem, purpose and significance of the research and definition of key terms.

1.1. Background of the Research

The word of race, commonly, found on anthropology and biology studies as a term that refers to physical appearance of a person. This term also is used to determine classification of human being according to physical appearance. Then, this term, along with time is used to designate the identity of certain group of people. Macionis gives explanation about definition of race in a book *Sociology* written by him that race is “Socially constructed category of people who share biologically transmitted traits that members of a society consider important. People may classify one another racially based on physical characteristic such as skin color, facial features, hair texture, and body shapes” (362). From this explanation known that race is categorized by physical characteristic.

The physical appearance is also connected to characteristic, behavior, even it is related to cultural. Bobo in *Race, Racism and Discrimination: Bridging Problems, Methods and theory in Social Psychology Research* said that the cores of race and racism are driven by culture and history. This idea also is in line with Rattansi in *Racism: A Very Short Introduction*, he reveals that the idea of human biological characteristics such as skin color, shape of nose, type of hair and size of skull were associated with in ingrained cultural and behavioral traits was well established (13). These differences lead to the subordination of members of various

groups based on their ethnicity. Paula S. Rothenberg states in her book *Race, Class, and Gender* in the United States that:

One of the first things we notice about people when we met them (along with their) sex is their race. We utilize race to provide clues about who a person is. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorize someone who is, for example, racially “mixed” or of an ethnic or racial group with which we are not familiar. Such an encounter becomes a source of discomfort and momentarily a crisis of racial meaning. (14).

Then, Loomba adds that race has thus functioned as one of the most powerful and yet markers of human identity, hard to explain and identify and even harder to maintain (121). Race becomes important when it brings any influence in human life. Since these differences naturally lead to racism, one of race phenomena in human life is racism which negative sense. Racism is defined by Martin N. Marger in his book, *Race and Ethnic Relations*, as “the belief that humans are subdivided into distinct heredity groups that are innately different in their social behavior and mental capacities and that can therefore be ranked as superior and inferior...” (27).

Jones also explained about racism as a belief in the superiority of one’s own race over another, and the behavioral enactment that maintain those superior and inferior (qtd in Martha and Katherine, 3). In *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, Bill Ashcroft had defined “Racism can be defined as a way of thinking that considers a group’s unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basic distinguishes between superior and inferior and racial group (199). Samovar also reveals that “Researcher employing this perspective approach race as a socially construct term related to issues power” (156). Based on the quotation above, there is a point about a belief superior and inferior among race created by biological

appearance. Race is social construct arising from efforts to categorize people into different groups. These categories divided people into group based solely on physical appearances.

Racism, in this point, is the belief in the inherent superiority and particular race. The suffering impact of racism phenomena, in point of fact, addressed to the black people. The thought about black people as inferior and white is as superior is a concept of race considered by white people idea. Then, that idea is used to make a difference among races refers to physical appearance as a standard to verify superiority and Inferiority. It can conclude that skin color is one of the most sign to differ white people and black people. The other points are cultural and civilization attribute. From the time when the white people hold the progression in science and knowledge, it asserts the culture of white people is better than the black people one. Boehmer in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* said that “Race classification, therefore, could be used to explain not only biological variety but the superiority or inferiority of different cultural types ranged on scale of evolutionary progress” (84)

The point is clear enough that some group tend to think of themselves as the superior one and often racism is used “to legitimate the unequal distribution of the society’s resources, specifically, various forms of wealth, prestige and power”(Marger, 27). White-skinned people of European origin view themselves as innately superior in “intelligence, temperament and other primary attitudes, beliefs and behavioral traits” (Marger, 28). This is made worse by the fact that their number is bigger than that of the native. The fact that the White thinks that they are superior legitimates them to use their power to oppress the minority. All the problems about the presumed superiority of some groups and the inferiority of others lead to ethnocentrism that is the tendency to judge other groups by the standards and values of one’s own. This produces a view of one’s own group as superior to others. The ways of one’s own group (in group) become “correct” and “natural”, and

the ways of other groups (out-groups) are seen as “odd”, “immoral”, or “unnatural”... (Marger, 15). In addition, once a group is defined as inferior, the superiors tend to label it as defective or substandard in various ways. Thus the inferior are often considered uncivilized and the White think they need to civilize them.

The problem of race or racism is the central issue in post-colonial. According to Aschroft, the writer *The Empire Writes Back*, “Associated with the issue of indigenous minorities is the question of race. Race has always been an issue in postcolonial studies but it has been a prickly one because post-colonial theory usually strives for a more complex view of colonial relations than can be provided in most views of racial difference” (206). The folly of racist thinking is that it is not only cruel but also constructed on false premises. Guido Bollafiet all, points out that racism emerges from prejudice which is supported with power. He states “An element of that is the issue of power and there has been a proposition that racism can be understood as prejudice plus power. This view maintains that prejudice is widespread and commonplace, but not only some have the capacity or power to act upon their prejudices to produce discriminatory outcome” (228). Cashmore in *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relation* illustrates prejudice as ideology which influences the relationship between groups of people. He explains prejudice “As learned belief and values that lead an individual or group of individual or group of individuals to be biased for or against members of particular group prior to actual experience of those group” (288). Prejudice has strongly relation to stereotype. The act of prejudice is followed by stereotype. Both prejudice and stereotype also always attribute to colored skin, particularly Black people. Additionally, these treatments are the part of racism. Frederickson explains that racism is one of the most influential issues in the world; it becomes a major international problem in the beginning of twenty first century (39).

What is sad but true about racism is that it seems to have been present throughout the world for thousand years. Racial problem rises throughout the world, including in United

State of America. In the history of United State, it is stated that black people have been particularly being the victim of racial discrimination problem, either individually or institutionally. They are often in inequality and low status, and become the object of racial discrimination done by the white people. This racial discrimination toward the black people occurs in many times and places and it also has taken long time period. It is done by the white people or other people who are not included to the black people, originally or culturally (In Encyclopedia Americana, 545a). United State of America which is used to be popular as a new world has been attracting many races to taste the beauty of this country. Unfortunately, the black race as one of races that came to this country did not arrive as citizen but as the slaves of white Americans. Afterwards, even the slavery was abolished in two hundred years ago in fact the black people are still threatened racist by American society, even during right act movement in 1960s.

This racial expression presents in many forms for example media, movie and literary such as fiction. Racism is one of issues that author usually adds intentionally or unintentionally in their works. The content of racism also appears in a novel written by Sue Monk Kidd. Sue Monk Kidd as the white woman author tries to raise the problem of racism in South Carolina, United State of America in 1960s. Translated into more than twenty-three languages and enthusiastically received by critics, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) tells the story of a motherless fourteen year old, raised by a cruel father, who desperately searches for clues to unlock her mother's past. Lily wants to help to create her own identity. Lily, the major character, then, lives with her caregiver who is black-American. In Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, racial problem is dragged in the story. The setting is in South Carolina 1960s, the years when civil right act Africa-America established, which addressed to prohibit racial discrimination toward Afro-America and recover their vote. This movement appears for liberation from the oppression done by white American. Yet, the racial

discrimination still emerges albeit Civil Right Act has voted. There are many forms of racism delineated in this novel. Some forms of racism exist in the story. The reflection of racism can be seen in Black Community that represent in the novel through character. Character of Lily's father as white people, brings racial prejudice and stereotyped. He makes prejudice toward Rosaleen, a black-people who being caregiver and worked for cook and clean in his house. Definitely there are several of racism delineates in it. And while most of the literary criticism has been positive, some has not. Racial conflict –one of Kidd's most important issues- is certainly the memoir of her, when she was in that time. Then, early in the novel, Lily's caregiver, Rosaleen is beaten by three racists. Later, the subtle racism depicted by character August who is also beaten by white men and unjustly arrested. Then, beekeeper May's condition is caused by her twin's suicide, a desperate act prompted by racial discrimination. Racial conflict causes not only physical pain but emotional turmoil, and Lily is forced to examine her own ideas about race –in this case her stereotype as white people toward black people- when she finds herself become attracted to Zack, a black men, while living in the home with four black women. The 'mimicry' also found in the characters of black-American in the novel. Actually, it appears as relationship between colonizers and colonized. Racism is a part of colonizing. Definitely, it will impact to the colonized, as mimicry in the Black people who are actually as victim of racism.

There are some previous studies related to racism and postcolonial criticism on graduated paper in Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University. First, is Raizal Arifin with the title "Conflict between West and East in John Buchan's *Green Matle*" in 2007. He used descriptive postcolonial approach in analyzing conflict between English Representative West and Turkey as representative as the East. Second, is Kamal Bayu with the title "*Racial Discrimination in The Grass is Singing Novel by Doris Lessing*" in 2011.

Finally, it is necessary for the researcher to do a literary criticism on the Whites racism towards Black Americans reflected in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* to get a deeply understanding about Whites racism faced by Black Americans in America in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* and to open our mind that racism is an ancient problem that still appears in many aspects in social life. So, it is still important to discuss about racism. To construct this research, the writer would like to analyze it by using postcolonial approach.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The Secret Life of Bees is one of great novels written by Sue Monk Kidd represents racism White toward Black Americans. In this research, the writer focused on the delineation of racism White toward Black-American in the novel *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. In accordance with the research topic, the researcher wants to conduct an analysis on White's racism faced by Black Americans, exactly in South Carolina United States in 1960s include the mimicry as the effect of racism on the Black characters found in *The Secret Life of Bees*. The writer would like to focus this research in the novel written by Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*. This study applies postcolonial approach, and also uses concept of mimicry from Bhaba.

Based on the background of problem that has been explained above, the discourse of this study is about novel *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. In this research, the writer wants to analyze racism depiction in the novel.

In limiting the discussion, the writer concentrates on the following questions such as follow:

1. What are the forms of racism presented in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*?
2. How does the process of mimicry disclose the effect of racism?

1. 3. Purpose and Significance of Research

1.3.1. Purpose of the Research

Based on the explanation above, there are three purposes of this research, those are:

1. To find out the forms of racism in the time when the novel told the story, which has background accident in America in 1960s when Civil Right Acts emerge. It means this research is going to find out the forms of racism in that time.
2. To explore how the process of mimicry which emerges in characters Black-American is able to show the effect of racism.

1.3.2. Significance of the Research

Significance of Research of this research is useful to be reference for the students in Department of English who want to analyze the same problem. This research also provides the literary society and other people as a unity who wants to get the further analyzes about racism. This research is not only present the informative writing of the racism but also to enrich information about Contemporary American Literature and Popular Literature. The other is also to find out the forms of racism in America in certain time; to build awareness about West perspective in determining identity and image of the colored people, then to recognize the process of mimicry as the effect of racial discourse.

Furthermore, for the reader, this research hopefully can give the inspiration for the literary society especially the student in Department of English to consider with the novel which describes the social phenomenon in the world because it is the interesting issue to be analyzed. The writer also hopes this research enrich

information for everyone who is interested to study about the racism or excited in analyzing literature based on Postcolonial approach.

1. 4. Definition of Key Terms

To prevent missinterpretation the terms that applied in this research, the writer has the explanation on the terms that require to be explained are:

1. Race

The word of race, commonly, is found on anthropology and biology studies as a term that refers to physical appearance of a person. This term also is used to determine classification of human being according to physical appearance such as skin color, eyes, color, etc. Then, this term, along with time is used to designate the identity of certain group of people, nationality, ethnicity, and identity.

2. Racism

Racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race. It denies the basic equality of humankind and correlates ability with physical composition. Thus, it assumes that success or failure in any society endeavor will depend upon genetic endowment rather than environment and access to opportunity (Leone, 1).

3. Black American

Black people it is also called Negroids (African) and Mongoloids (Asian). The people who are called as black people usually have darker skin. This is one of people's identity based on their race, it can mean the real condition of people who has the black genes. Black American is a black people especially for African who has black skin and lives in America.

4. Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism (or often post colonialism) is deal with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms such as the post-colonial state, 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization (Ashcroft, 186).

