

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the background of the research starting from the definition of the research topic, providing information about opportunities for research problems for further research and the reasons for choosing the topic to be studied by the researcher. Then there are research questions related to the problem under the research topic. In addition, there are research objectives and research implications that provide the objectives and benefits of this research. Like previous studies, this study aims to find material for comparison and seek inspiration.

1.1 Research Background

Slavery has been described in many novels. *The Color Purple* novel tells about slavery in Africa-America experienced by black people, the story tells of two sisters who seek freedom from slavery, also in *The Mercy* novel tells about the slavery experienced by Florens, a black slave girl who was oppressed by white people. Of the two novels, they only tell the story of their slavery and only a few can be freed but in *The Underground Railroad* novel presents it in a different way, this novel is one of the Best books of the Year: The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, The Boston Globe, The Seattle Times, HuffPost, Esquire, Minneapolis Star Tribune. From these awards we know that this novel is a novel that has its own characteristics because it tells about slavery in which there is abolitionism which is a movement to abolish the slavery system. Because basically slavery is not something that can be justified. What's interesting about this book, where there is one particular page that contains information on rewards for runaway slaves. This is a kind of marker that the story has entered the next chapter. Many of the quotes in this novel are about struggle, suffering, freedom, or even shackles. One of them is quoted below. "Freedom has nothing to do with chains or how much space you have." Whitehead (2016: 192).

The story of Cora in *The Underground Railroad* makes the writer think back to the cruelty of slavery in the world. But the content in the novel makes the writer interested in the main character, namely Cora. Cora's struggles in the novel *The Underground Railroad* are definitely inspiring. Although this is fiction, the message conveyed by the author feels real. That in any difficult situation, hope and struggle should never be extinguished. The reason the author chooses Colson Whitehead is because he is a reliable writer, in the work he creates, he manages to make the readers think that all the problems that a person experiences will definitely be resolved. Many moral messages reach the reader after reading the story written by Whitehead because most of the novels he makes are noisy about social issues that have existed and have occurred in the world, so the depiction is very fitting if it is adjusted to the conditions felt by mankind.

Slavery in general corresponded with coercion, broadly speaking of social, economic, and even sexual activity. Slavery can also be interpreted as the forced control of human life by other humans for certain purposes. The slaves who became victims of slavery were those who were never given a wage or salary, even though they worked almost 24 hours a day. What's sad is that they are often treated inhumanely so that they shackle their human rights as human beings. American slavery of black people. The United States is one of the great countries in the world that used to enslave many people, especially black people. History on its website writes that in the 17th and 18th centuries there were many Africans abducted to become slaves in America. The slaves were exploited as manual laborers, servants, and laborers to cultivate tobacco and cotton plantations. Although there are many voices that have emerged to abolish slavery, in fact slavery in that era has become a legacy that is difficult to abolish.

The slavery system in America itself was pioneered by the British in 1619. Although accurate figures are not available, scientists and historians believe that in the 18th century there were 7 million black people who were enslaved by America in order to create a new world order. In the 1800s several anti-slave movements began to be echoed in America. In fact, many of these slaves carried out resistance and political

movements from underground. At its peak, on December 18, 1865, the United States government passed a law that abolished the slavery system in America.

North America is a denser, richer, and more industrialized region, and North America has become a major metropolitan area. Keagan (in Herdiawan, 2019). Therefore, this area has always been the main destination for black refugees from South America. Furthermore, American society also has a moral advantage over slavery because it rejects slavery. However, in order to escape safely from plantations in South America, black people had to find a way or route they could take to travel to North America; this line is known as "The Underground Railroad". According to Harvey and Goudvis (in Herdiawan, 2019) subway is an organized group of people who work with simplicity and courage against slavery and help black people achieve freedom. The people involved in this organization or movement were runaway former slaves and all who sympathized with black people.

Arch Colson Chipp Whitehead, born November 6, 1969 in New York City, New York, USA. An American writer best known for his groundbreaking novels that examine social issues, including racism, and often contain fantastical elements. He is the first author to win a Pulitzer Prize for consecutive books: the historical novels *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and *The Nickel Boys* (2019). In his book, Whitehead explores issues related to race, gender, and social progress.

In *The Irish Time* written by Eileen Battersby Saturday, October 1, 2016. Eileen Battersby says Colson Whitehead's gripping slavery epic should be read by everyone. *The Underground Railroad* is familiar, but different. This exploration of America's most inhumane racist crime is handled with a consistent and oddly intoxicating stylistic spirit. The same goes for the novel itself, an epic adventure played by Cora, which is decidedly secretly and unforgettable.

The narrative in the novel is a series of riots against people who are considered objects by their white owners. Whitehead's handling of the material we know, or think we know, from reading the life stories of social reformers and slavery is so ingenious that every insult, cruel beating, murder of a white man. This is an excellent novel, a

rich and confident work that deserves to be acquired, both for its literary value and for moral purposes.

In connection with the above issue, *The Underground Railroad* (2016) is a novel by Colson Whitehead which shows Cora's struggles as a black man trying to escape from a plantation in South America. He made an escape through *The Underground Railroad* and traveled to North America. During her travels, Cora witnessed and experienced discrimination caused by white supremacist practices practiced on southern American plantations. This is illustrated by the precautions taken by white people against black people who fled. On the other hand.

Angela Y. Davis (1981: 8) in *Women, Race and Class* says that, "The bell rings at morning and they have half an hour to get ready. Men and women started together and women had to work. as often as men "and perform their duties as men".

From the quote above it can be seen that in a cotton, tobacco, corn and sugar plantation, women work alongside men. Women have to do the same work as men and women have multiple jobs. Women as individuals who belong to them, and how they are recognized as human beings too. The main characteristic of them is that they are commodities.

The slave system defined Black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned. "The slave woman was first a fulltime worker for her owner, and only incidentally a wife, mother and homemaker." Davis (1981: 9).

In her quote, Davis explained that women slaves were treated as goods by the foreman, who else if not white people. It was also explained that there was no difference between men slaves and women slaves in the division of labor. All the slaves worked very hard, they had to obey whatever the foreman wanted.

Slaves were produced to fulfill the need for work. Black people exploit because they are considered to have a strong physical and body resistance and are also considered very effective and do not require high costs for treatment.

The condition of women slaves in the United States is so deplorable because apart from being forced to work they also do not get a proper place to live. Angela Y. Davis (1981:9) In her book entitled *Women, Race and Class* says that, "We have old huts made of pillars and some of the cracks are covered with mud and moss, and some of them are not. We didn't have a good bed, just scaffolding nailed to the wall from posts and a tattered old bed thrown over it. It was a hard sleep indeed, but it also felt good to our tired bones after a hard day in the field. I took care of the kids when I was little and tried to clean the house as Old Miss ordered. Then as soon as I was ten, Old Master, he said, "Give this nigger to that patch of cotton."

Women slaves were produced to make a lot of money for their employers. The black population is increasing and will certainly produce more cotton from each plantation. The white people unite slaves in the fields so that they can give birth to more other bodies.

Women slaves are not only used as property for forced labor but also women slave bodies can be used as objects of property to satisfy the desires of their masters. The bodies of women slaves are used as sex objects for white race employers, besides that women slaves are required to have offspring so that the development of slaves is more numerous and taller and of course slaves produced from other slaves will become new slaves without any buying and selling process carried out by white people.

The women slaves could only surrender so that she would not be punished for refusing to invite their masters viciously, they continued to follow the wishes of the white race without overreacting. This was done so that the slave girl could survive the punishment she would experience when she refused the invitation, so whether they like it or not and like it or not they have to follow the orders of their masters. They do this by compulsion for the safety of their lives.

Slaves were produced to fulfill the need for work. Black people exploit because they are considered to have a strong physical and body resistance and are also considered very effective and do not require high costs for treatment. Through the novel *The Underground Railroad*, readers can have illustrations of slave life and much more.

Information about the state of America at that time and learn and recognize people with similar cases in real life. Through this novel we can also know that the slave effect is terrible. This novel was published in 2016 by a black American novelist named Colson Whitehead.

In connection with the issues above, the writer is interested in analyzing literary works and the writer finds the phenomenon of slavery that occurs in the novel *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. The author will analyze how the main character, Cora, represents women's slavery in the novel *The Underground Railroad*. In this study, *The Underground Railroad* was used as the object of research and Cora as the research subject. Representation is a process in which an object is captured by the five senses, so that it makes sense to be processed, the result of which is a concept/idea that will be transmitted/expressed with language. In short, representation is the process of reinterpreting an object/phenomenon/reality whose meaning will depend on how one expresses it through language. Representation connects concepts in our minds by using language that allows us to interpret real objects, people or events and the imaginary world of objects, people, things and events.

This thesis will discuss how Cora represents the depiction of slaves in the midst of her escape. Cora's willingness to do the best for the people she considers her family, her desire to love and be loved or affirmed, and also her reaction to the racist judgments of white society against black people that makes the writer feel this is important to study and participate in solving the problems experienced by Cora.

1.2 Statement of Problem

It has been explained above that based on the background, the author decided that the main focus to be answered are the two questions below:

1. How is women slaves represented in the novel *The Underground Railroad*?
2. How is the struggle of women slaves against slavery in the novel *The Underground Railroad*?

1.3 Research Purpose

The research objectives are related to the research problem and tend to answer the problem. Based on the problems above, the answers to these questions as the purpose of the analysis are:

1. To find out how the depiction of women slaves is represented in the novel *The Underground Railroad*.
2. To find out how the struggle of women slaves against slavery in the novel *The Underground Railroad*.

1.4 Research Significances

Theoretically, research on the novel *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead is expected to increase knowledge about analytical studies of English literature, especially research using representation theory. This research can also develop an appreciation of literary works about the analysis of how Cora as the main character represents slavery in the novel. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to expand the repertoire of science, especially in the field of literary psychology to prove that the novel is not only an entertainment material, but also can sharpen literary knowledge.

Practically, this research is expected to be used as a material for comparison with previous studies, especially regarding the analysis of the representation of women slaves in the novel *The Underground Railroad*. This research is also expected to help readers understand how Cora's depiction of slavery as the main character in Colson Whitehead's novel *The Undergroud Railroad* can define herself in the midst of the oppression she experienced. Finally, this research can also be considered by students to give birth to new ideas and can also provide knowledge about the phenomena of reality in life.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This study uses the novel *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead as the object of research. In this research, the researcher uses several theories and approaches. This study uses uses Stuart Hall's representation theory. The main

understanding of representation theory is the use of language to convey something important (meaningful) to others. Representation is the most important part of the process by which meaning is created and exchanged among group members in a culture (culture). Representation is an explanation of the concept that is in our minds by using language as an analysis material. Stuart Hall clearly defines representation as the process of creating meaning by using language (Hall, 1997). However, this term is not limited to verbal or written language only. It is more to represent or represent something. The representation in this study is intended to describe or reenact an event that has occurred in the novel *The Underground Railroad*. In this novel the author represents the slavery that occurred in the novel *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead.

The researchers will also use structural approach that combines analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic approach is focused on the elements in the novel while the extrinsic approach is used to analyze the social aspects in the novel. The structure of the fictional story consists of two building elements, namely intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements in a fictional story are divided into events, plot/plot, characters and characterizations, background/settings, point of view, and others, all of which of course are also imaginary (Nurgiyantoro, 1998:4).

To be able to analyze further about the location of the problem and the findings of the answer, the author uses both approaches and theories so that they are continuous in finding answers to existing problems. To analyze a person's character, of course, the author must know the social conditions, and other elements such as plot, setting and other things that happened at that time so that a structural approach consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic elements can help find answers to the problems experienced by the main character Cora.

1.6 Previous Studies

The first previous study used the same object but differed in the use of theory, in this study uses metaphorical theory conceptual framework from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson with the title "Metaphorical Expression in Cora's Pursuit of Freedom

from Racism and Slavery in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*". Written by Ria Destya Ningrum (2019). This study will analyze the metaphor in the novel *The Underground Railroad*. In addition, this study uses metaphorical theory conceptual framework from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The result of this study indicate that there are metaphorical expressions that appear when Cora as the main character runs away from plantation with the aim of seeking freedom. There are two types of metaphor used by Ningrum. Among them are conventional metaphors and new metaphor. Besides that, Ningrum also uses a sociological approach by using the concept of slavery and racism.

The second previous study examined women's oppression but with different objects, in this study using the theory of mimetic. *Representasi Penindasan Perempuan dalam novel Tanah Tabu Novel by Anandita S. Thayf*. Written by Sophia (2018). This study uses a mimetic approach (Sociology of Letters). The data source in this research is the novel *Tanah Tabu* by Anandita S. Thayf. This research was conducted through three procedures, namely preparation, implementation, and completion. Based on these processes, several forms of oppression of women and forms of indirect message delivery can be found. In the novel *Tanah Tabu* by Anandita, S. Thayf, there are forms of oppression of patriarchal discrimination and forms of indirect message delivery.

The third previous research also discusses the characters in the novel entitled *Toni Morrison's A Mercy: The Black Women's Reactions Toward The White's Treatments in The 17th Century*. Victoria Sulistyningrum (2012). This thesis discusses the reaction of black slave women in the environment of white people in the seventeenth century. The first problem discussed is about the characteristics of Florence as the main character. Second, the treatment of white people against black people in the seventeenth century. Third, find historical reflections in the characters of Florence and the treatment of white people to the reaction of Florence in the seventeenth century. Sulistyningrum conducted research in the library to analyze this story. Sulistyningrum uses a historical approach, social and cultural as the focus of

the analysis. The topic discussed was the reaction of a black slave girl to the treatment of a white man.

