

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the background of research, statement of the problems, research objectives, research significance, previous studies, definition of key terms, and organization of the writing.

1.1 Research Background

In a literary work, women characters are often depicted as weak, submissive, and oppressed. In contrast to male characters who are often depicted on the contrary, such as strong, mighty, and powerful. In addition, in a literary work women characters are expressed by an author regarding all the problems of life in society and how they deal with these problems until finally the image of a woman is found. Besides being described by the author in a literary work, the image of women is also a stereotype in society (Wardani & Rina, 2020). Women characters are often depicted as characters who experience injustice, both in the public and domestic spheres. This injustice is caused by gender differences.

The stereotype in society is that women are weak, poor, and sensitive figures, while men are strong and powerful figures. This causes women to experience gender inequality and causes women's space to be limited. Therefore, literary works as a reflection of people's lives often depict women as secondary characters while men are the central characters. Regarding this, Nurfaidah (2016) said that, the discussion of women in literature is often based on legal, economic, political, or social injustice. However, not a few women have the awareness to get gender equality. Such as the main character of black women in the film *Hidden Figures* by Theodore Melfi.

Film has a social and cultural message contained in the narrative, and it is same with written literature. Film with its dynamic nature automatically makes it one of the cultural agents - like other literary genres - that conveys symbolic messages from a culture, but with visual language as an addition to the delivery technique (Sudarisman, 2016). Like prose, films are also loaded with narrative

elements, such as characters, plots, settings, and others. These narrative elements are the same as elements in a literary text or prose, for example, a novel which has intrinsic elements such as characters and characterizations, settings, and others. However, unlike these literary genres, films have a distinctive language, namely visual language.

In addition, if examined properly, a film not only functions as a spectacle, but also contains a message and contains social ideas that describe people's lives, its like a literary text. This is as depicted in Theodore Melfi's film *Hidden Figures*. A film that depicts the lives of three black women. *Hidden Figures* is a 2016 film produced by 20th Century Fox and directed by Theodore Melfi and also as screenwriter. This film is based on the true events behind the success of the first National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) mission to outer space. This film tells the story of women who become NASA's staff and they have an important role in NASA's history. NASA has found talent in a group of African-American women who are geniuses in mathematics.

Katherine Johnson, the main character in this film, is a single mother with three children. Her brilliant ability in mathematics made her chosen to be included in the Space Task Group at NASA which has a mission to bring humans around Earth's orbit. Although proud, working in the Space Task Group is not an easy thing for Katherine who is a black woman while her co-workers are all white people. That is makes it difficult for her to be accepted by her group. Apart from Katherine, the two black women are Dorothy Vaughan as NASA supervisor and mathematician and Mary Jackson as NASA engineer. The three women figures are fighting for their rights at NASA.

The film *Hidden Figures* illustrates how racial discrimination occurs among black people, especially black women. After its release in 2016, and a wide release in 2017, the film received numerous nominations and received many awards, one of which is as Best Movie at the Academy Awards. That is what makes writer interested in making the *Hidden Figures* film as a subject of research. In addition, this film is based on true events that occurred and were not known to the general

public. Many people do not know who is behind NASA's success in sending astronauts into space for the first time. Most of people only know the person who first went into space and the institution that sent it, without knowing who the figure behind the success of the mission is. Because of that, the writer interested to studying the film because the film shows the discriminations experienced by the main women characters. So it is necessary to analyze to find out what discrimination is in the film, and how they struggle in dealing with such discrimination.

Although the main character in *Hidden Figures* is the figure behind the success of NASA's mission in sending humans into space, they as black women still experience racial discrimination regardless of their dedication to the success of NASA's mission. In the film, there are three main black women characters who are described as experiencing racial discrimination. The discrimination is in the form of position restrictions, even the existing infrastructure in the workplace. As stated by Malik (2017) that there is segregation or racial separation, especially with black people. The form of separation is carried out on social facilities and infrastructure such as seats on buses, public toilets, seats in cinemas, educational facilities, churches, etc. This is the same as shown in the film *Hidden Figures*, where black employees are separated from white people, including the three main black women characters who have very important roles in NASA.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to analyze how the main women characters is imaged in Theodore Melfi's film *Hidden Figures* because in the film the women main characters is depicted as black citizen so that they experience racial discrimination. In addition, because they are women who work in the public sector, they experience gender discrimination due to societal stereotypes that women should not work in the public sphere, especially if they are black women. Therefore, this research is important to do to find out how women are imaged in the film as well as to find out what forms of racial and gender discrimination are experienced by the main women characters in Theodore Melfi's film *Hidden Figures*.

1.2 Statements of Problem

Based on the explanation in the background of the research, the main women character in the *Hidden Figures* is described as a character who is under the authority of the male character and experiences racial discrimination. Therefore, the problem identified in this research are:

1. How many images of women main characters are constructed in the film *Hidden Figures*?
2. How do images of women main characters influence on their struggle in the film *Hidden Figures*?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the background and problem of the research that has been explained, the purpose of this study is to find out how the image of a women is shown in the film *Hidden Figures* and also to describe how the image of women main characters in the film *Hidden Figures* affect their struggle.

1.4 Research Significances

The significance of this research is as follows:

1. The results of this study are expected to be used as a contribution of information for students who will conduct research with the object of research in the form of a film. In addition, this research is expected to increase students' knowledge and understanding, especially regarding the film *Hidden Figures*.
2. The results of this study are expected to be additional knowledge for women about the image of women
3. The results of this study can provide a scientific contribution for students who are involved in the audio-visual world so that later they can make a film that is not only a spectacle, but can be a guide that has human values and struggles.

4. The results of this study are expected to be used as learning media for the community. And can provide input to film practitioners (film experts or film critics) and Indonesian filmmakers in general. Which later can make films related to human values so that the work produced is of higher quality and useful for many people.



1.5 Previous Study

Many researchers had done studied on the image of women in a literary work. To avoid similarities to the research that had been done by previous researchers, the writer conducted a review of previous studied as literature that will serve as a reference for literature as well as a comparison of the authenticity of this study. Some of them were as follows:

1. Thesis entitled *The Images of Modern Women Portrayed in Tim Story's Taxi Movie* written by Dwinisa (2014). The study discussed women and their changed image in society. Changes included the traditional image of women to their modern image in society. The purpose of that studied is to reveal the image of the modern women depicted in the movie *Taxi*. In the thesis it was said that traditionally it is very clear that a women's place was at home. However, along with the evolution, the women's place was no longer always at home and doing all the housework. Women in this era had also become reliable decision makers for themselves and others. Through the three women characters in the film *Taxi*, women were represented as independent women and did not need male protection. While men's view of women as their sexual objects had not changed, they were now attracted to women not as sexual objects. Through the main women character in the film, the new image of women was very clearly displayed.
2. Journal entitled, *The Image of women in "The Holy women": A Feminism Study* written by Sakinah (2016). In this journal the author described the image of women in the novel *The Holy women* by Qaisra Shahraz. The image of women revealed in the novel *The Holy women*, according to the author, couldn't be separated from issues surrounding women who were under patriarchal power, namely power that tends to place women as victims. The theory used by the author was the feminist theory expressed by Mary Ann Ferguson who saw women femininity as an idealized women (The Submissive Wife) and women as sex objects (The Sex Object).

The resulted found in this study were the idealized image of women, namely women as wives or daughters who can provide happiness and peace for their families, and the image of women as sex objects had showed the existence of politics and patriarchal power.

3. Journal entitled, *Citra Fisik, Psikis, Dan Sosial Tokoh Utama Perempuan Dalam Novel Hujan Dan Teduh Karya Wulan Dewatra* written by Purwahida (2018). This study aimed to determine the physical, psychological, and social image of the main women character in the novel *Hujan dan Teduh* by Wulan Dewatra using a feminist literary criticism approach. The resulted of the research found by the author were, based on 120 potential data, the physical, psychological, and social images of the main female characters were found.

Among them were 102 data that showed the physical aspects of the women main character in terms of physical aspects, consisting of: gender, age, body condition, and facial features there were 17 data (16.6%). The image of the main women character was reviewed based on psychological aspects, consisting of: mentality, moral size, being able to distinguish right and wrong, temperament, desires, personal feelings, attitudes, behavior, and level of intelligence, there were 71 data (69.6%). The image of the main women character was reviewed based on social aspects, consisting of: occupation, role in society, education level, outlook on life, beliefs, ideology, nation, ethnicity, and personal life there were 14 data (13.7%).

Based on the research results, the image of the women main character was reviewed based on the psychological aspect, being the most dominant data because the author's focus showed changed in the psychological image of the main character.

4. An ungraduated Thesis entitled, *The Struggles Against Multiple Discrimination in Hidden Figures*, was written by Bertha Pasaribu (2010). In this study, the writer stated that the purpose of the research was first, to describe the characteristics of the main characters in the film *Hidden Figures*. Second, this study aimed to analyze the double discrimination

experienced by the main characters in the movie *Hidden Figures*. Third, this study aimed to reveal the struggle of the main characters in fighting the double discrimination that occurs in the movie *Hidden Figures*. In this study, the writer applied two theories to solve the problem formulation. The first were the theory of character and characteristics by Abrams (1981) and the theory of black feminism by Bell Hooks (2015, 1984).

Based on the data analysis, according to the authors, the film *Hidden Figures* reveals that African-American women face double discrimination (more than two). The double discrimination was categorized as domestic discrimination by black men against black women in the household and institutional discrimination by white men against black women and by white women against black women in the workplace. This studied also showed how African American women respond in the face of double discrimination, the struggle for equality, freedom, and recognition. These struggles was showed in the form of resistance to the system implemented in the institution, acting intelligently and having an unyielding attitude.

Based on the previous study above, the research that discussed the image of women in the film *Hidden Figures* had not been carried out. In general, studied that discussed the image of women used feminist theory. However, the problems faced by the characters were different, so the results of the research were different. The mindset that exists in the character affects how women behave. Women's awareness of being feminine and at the same time realizing that they could be equal to men has emerged so that with various efforts they tried to put themselves on a par in various aspects of life, as experienced by the female character in the film *Hidden Figures*.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

Key terms are taken from the word in the paper of research. These key terms provide to make the reader with the research easier to comprehend the problem of the research. Not only to make the reader easier to comprehend the research but

also had it provided to avoid misunderstanding to comprehend the research. The key terms that the writer uses in this research as follows:

Image of Women: The women image means a personal image of a women or a women's personality.

Discrimination: the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such us race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

Feminist: Feminism is a social movement that fights for women's rights in all fields, be it political, economic, social, and others.

Film: A medium for conveying various messages to the wider community through the medium of stories, and can also be interpreted as a medium of artistic expression for artists and filmmakers to express their ideas and their story ideas.

