

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the opening part that introduces the background, identification of the problem, the scope of the problem, questions of the study, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and sequence of chapters.

1.1. Background of Study

Women with all their dynamics seem to be a never-ending source of inspiration. Women's lives are always considered unique so they always become 'topic' in various aspects of life (Mubin, 2008). For women themselves, this uniqueness does not always mean something pleasant because in many ways they feel injustice (Suriani, 2017). Women who want to find their existence are sometimes seen a form of 'resistance' by some people who are still surrounded by patriarchy.

This patriarchy belief leads to the phenomenon where men think they are more important than women. They often think that they could easily use and control women as they wanted to. This causes women to be placed in a subordinate or inferior position. The limitations of women's roles by patriarchy culture make women shackled and subjected to discriminatory treatment.

Historical and cultural aspects place women as those who are subjugated through patriarchal power relation, both personally and through tribal or cultural arrangements. Thus, this illustration comes to the conclusion that women are seen as objects by their opposite gender who think themselves as the superior one. This phenomenon is known as the objectification.

Objectification can be described as "*an act of treating a person, or sometimes an animal as an object or a thing*" (Arluke, 1988). If there are still people who are consciously and/or unconsciously seen women as an object, women will continue to experience another misery. It is reasonable because objectification can lead to- and perhaps enables- women's oppression, ranging from discrimination on employment and sexual violence to the trivialization of women's work and achievement (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification involves the activity of lowering a person to the status of an object. Objectification involves the process of degrading human's value in society and comparison to other human being (Quran & Anwar, 2020). According to Nussbaum (1999) objectification is making person into a thing, treating as a thing, when he or she is actually something that is really not a thing. Generally, it is used as pejorative term, connoting a way of speaking, thinking, and acting that the person find morally or socially objectionable, usually, though not always, in sexual realm. As the time goes by, women fight and demand their right and freedom to be treated equally and not being an object. As what Catherine Mackinnon cited "*Objectification exists to the end of male pleasure*" (MacKinnon, 1989). Objectification can be conclude as considering she or he as a thing, and objectification

is not always about sexuality but also a way that implies a way of thinking; acting when it does not fit a culture.

In this research, the researcher wants to use a novel by Alice Walker entitled *Possessing The Secret of Joy*. The novel follows Tashi Evelyn Johnson, a character introduced in Walker's earlier work, *The Color Purple*. Tashi was saved by Christian missionaries from female genital mutilation. This novel mirrors the tribalism of African Culture.

After she marries Adam, they move to United State of America (USA). As an African tribal woman, she is trapped between different cultures and Tashi tries to find her identity as she has adopted the cultures and she feels disconnected from her cultures as a tribal woman. As she has been caught between two cultures and has been thinking her true identity, she decides to restore her identity by doing female circumcision. Tashi believes that this female circumcision can restore her identity as it is portrayed as an identity of the African culture.

The novel deeply explores the practice of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), exploring it as both a cultural ritual and a deeply violent, harmful tradition. The act itself often depicted in the novel as a way for communities to control women, repress their sexuality, and limit their autonomy. In the communities where FGM is practiced, it is considered a necessary step for a woman to be deemed "properly" female, and any woman who has not undergone the procedure is seen as an outcast or lesser. This cultural practice involves the literal cutting and mutilation of a woman's genitalia, and its purpose is to control female sexuality and autonomy. Tashi's sense objectification extends beyond her cultural experience of FGM into her relationships, particularly with her husband, Adam. He tries to help Tashi by taking her to a psychiatrist, actually he loves Tashi deeply but struggles to understand the depth of her trauma.

Possessing The Secret of Joy is also a meditation on the global issues of women's rights, the consequences of cultural practices that harm women, and the possibilities of healing and reclaiming personal agency. Alice Walker uses her intricate narrative to challenge readers to confront the reality of female suffering and to complete possibility of breaking cycles of violence, both physical and psychological. This novel is deeply emotional and, at time, unsettling in its portrayal of the horrors of FGM.

Feminism addresses female genital mutilation (FGM) as a significant human rights violation and a manifestation of gender inequality. FGM can be understood as a form of objectification of women in several ways. Objectification refers to the treatment of a person as an object or a thing, often stripping them of their agency, autonomy, and individuality. FGM exemplifies the objectification of women by controlling their bodies, reducing their identities to societal expectations, and stripping them of agency and autonomy. Addressing FGM requires not only legal and medical interventions but also a cultural shift that empowers women and challenges the patriarchal norms that sustain such practices. Feminist advocacy plays a crucial role in this effort, promoting the rights and dignity of women in a worldwide.

To emphasize the portrayal of women suffering from objectification and how their responds to objectification in *Possessing The Secret of Joy*. This research applies one of feminist concepts that is Theory of Objectification by Martha Nussbaum (1999). Nussbaum in *Sex & Social Justice* has identified seven notion that involved in the idea of objectification. These notions conclude, Instrumentality, Denial of Autonomy, Inertness, Fungibility, Violability, Ownership, Denial of Subjectivity.

Through this analysis, the researcher hope we all know the profound impact of objectification on women's lives, especially in the context of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM is a example of how cultural traditions can perpetuate the objectification of women, stripping women of their autonomy and subjectivity while making them as targets for physical and psychological violence. In addition, the researcher hope this research can contribute to the discourse on gender equality and inspire action against the objectification of women, especially in relation to harmful practices such as FGM.

1.2. Identification of Problem

After reading Alice Walker's *Possessing The Secret of Joy*, the researcher finds and identifies some problems in the story:

1. Tashi's struggle with identity
2. Portrayal of objectification
3. Cultural taboos and emotional distance
4. Recognition of patriarchal influence
5. Resistance of objectification
6. Feminist issue on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

1.3. Scope of Problem

The title of this research is *The Objectification in Alice Walker's Possessing The Secret of Joy*. The researcher focuses form of objectification and responds the characters toward objectification in this novel. The theory that the researcher uses in this research is Theory of Objectification by Martha Nussbaum.

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the background of the analysis above, the researcher formulates two questions as follows:

1. What are the forms of objectification on women portrayed in the novel?
2. How the characters' response toward objectification in the novel?

1.5. Objectives of Study

There are two main goals to achieve through this research:

1. To find out the forms of objectification in Alice Walker's *Possessing The Secret of Joy*.
2. To reveal responses from certain characters toward objectification in Alice Walker's *Possessing The Secret of Joy*.

1.6. Significance of Study

This research is expected to provide benefits to the readers, both the theoretical and practical.

1. Theoretical Significance
In this research expands literary studies in feminism and gender, especially on objectification.
2. Practical Significance
This research contributes to broader discourses on objectification of women and cultural oppression, especially Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In addition, this research can be used for policy recommendation that support the protection of Women's rights and Education on Reproductive Health and Human Rights. This is important to encourage positive social change in communities that still maintain harmful practices.

1.7. Sequence of Chapters

This writing is divided into five chapters. Chapter One is an introduction that covers the study background. It explains the study background, identification of the problem, the scope of problem, research question, objectives of writing, the significance of the study, and sequence of the chapter. Then, chapter Two is a literature review. This chapter explains the previous studies and more detailed explanation of the approach used by the writer. That, Chapter Three is about the research methodology. This chapter explains methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and the writing procedure. Chapter Four will discuss the result of the discussion from the previous chapter. Chapter Five is a summary of all points in each chapter and ends with conclusions and suggestions for the author in future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review and evaluate the content of the previous study and also to explain the theoretical background.

2.1. Previous Study

A study needs some relevant research to support the implementation further research. Some data can be obtained from the relevant or near the research conducted previously. There are several previous studies such as theses and journals that support this research.

The first is Mankotya, Kaur, and Anand (2018) with research title *Trauma and Psychological Loss: A Feminist Study of Alice Walker's Possessing The Secret of Joy*. The article focuses on show how the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) causes profound psychological and physical trauma to women, and how this relates to trauma theory. The journal uses a qualitative analysis method with a feminist approach alongside trauma theory by Cathy Caruth to explore the profound oppression and trauma experienced by Tashi as a representation of the woman who experience FGM. The finding of this article show that FGM not only damages women's physical health, but also causes long-term psychological disorders, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which prevents them from enjoying healthy sexual life and relationship.

The second is Aisyah Quran and Anwar (2020) in their research entitled *Women Objectification in The Testaments by Margaret Atwood (2019)*. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal the objectification of women in the novel, which refers to the various ways men objectify and dehumanize women. This analysis used a text-based interpretation method based on the theory of female objectification by Martha Nussbaum and added by Rae Langton. This study uses physical devices such as characters, plots, settings to reveal this issue. The result of the study reveals the way man objectify women is done two ways; they are choice restriction and religion distortion.

The third is Tania Intan (2021) with her research title *Objektifikasi dan Relisiensi Perempuan Dalam Novel Perempuan Bayangan by Netty Virgiantini*. This study aims to reveal objectification and resilience experienced by the female character, Ningrum in the novel *Perempuan Bayangan* by Netty Virgiantini. The method used in this is descriptive qualitative, with a feminist literary criticism approach and theory objectification by Martha Nussbaum. The result of this study show that Ningrum experiences various forms of objectification, both from her parents, prospective in-laws, her husband, and arwah Utari, who expect her to be a replacement. Despite

facing stressful situation, Ningrum shows resilience through active actions and verbal responses, which reflect resistance to the objectification she experiences. This study confirms that although women are often positioned as objects, they have the ability to fight and defend their identities.

The fourth is Daneshvari and Sadjadi (2024) with the title *Womanist Resilience and Butlerian Agency in Possessing the Secret of Joy*. This study aims to explore the importance of establishing a clear identity as a crucial step in the Tashi's life, the protagonists in the novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* by Alice Walker, who is a victim of genital mutilation. The method used in this study include a literature analysis approach by adopting Alice Walker's theory of womanism and Judith Butler's concept of agency. The result of this study indicate that Tashi's act of rebellion, supported by collective action against FGM, contributed to the restoration of her agency and identity. This study confirm that healthy interactions between individuals and collectives are key to achieving social and political transformation, and highlights the womanist aspiration held by Tashi and other characters in this novel as a hope for restoring the voice and agency of black women.

All previous studies highlight the issue of objectification of women, either directly or indirectly, in different contexts. The study of Mankotya et al. and other studies use relevant theories in analyzing women's experiences, although the theories used, such as trauma theory and objectification theory. In addition, all studies use qualitative methods to explore the theme raised, although with different approaches.

There are differences in the focus of the research. The study of Mankotya et al. research focuses on psychological trauma due to FGM, while this study focuses on objectification and character responses in the novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* using a structuralism approach and theory of objectification by Martha Nussbaum. Other studies, such as by Aisyah Amilatul Quran and Tania Intan, also focus on female characters, but use different novels. In addition, research from several previous studies uses Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, Alice Walker's womanism theory, and Judith Butler's agency theory.

In general, previous studies that discuss the novel *Possessing The Secret of Joy* by Alice Walker have not discussed objectification in the novel. In this study, the researcher tries to analyse the objectification depicted and also the characters response to objectification in *Possessing The Secret of Joy* by Alice Walker using objectification by Martha Nussbaum with structuralism approach.

2.2. Theoretical Background

2.2.1. Structuralism

The structuralism approach at first appeared in France and became popular in 1950. The structural approach was originally pioneered by Russian formalist. The

structuralism approach is an approach used to analyze literary works that build on the work itself. This approach tries to describe the interrelationship and function of each element of literary work as a structural unity which together produces a total meaning (Teeuw, 1984). Another opinion, Pradopo (2001) states, "*Structural theory is the assumption that in itself, a literary work is something autonomous which is understood as a unified whole with its intertwined building elements*". Nurgiyantoro (2005) in (Abubakar, 2020) explains that there are four steps to applying the structuralism approach, as follows:

1. Identify the intrinsic element which conveys the literary work completely and clearly including theme, character, setting, and plot.
2. Analyse the elements which have been identified do it is understood the theme, character, setting, and plot of the literary work.
3. Describe the function of each elements so it is understood the theme, character, setting, and plot of the literary work.
4. Connect each elements so it is understood the theme, character, setting, plot of the literary work.

Based on the whole explanation above, the writer can be conclude that the structuralism approach is an approach in the science of literature that works by analyzing the structuralism elements that build literary works from within are character, plot, setting, and theme, that mostly reflect the real world. Therefore, the structural approach places significant attention solely on intrinsic aspects. The structural approach attempts to analyze the literary work objectively. Structuralism focuses on intrinsic elements of literary works, such as character, setting, plot, and theme.

A. Character

A character is a person, animal, creature, or thing in a story. The author uses the character to perform activities, tell a conversation, and move the story along the plot. Each author has their own way of making characters. A few like to consider approximately what their character would look like while others do not like to share in this and simply focus on their traits and behaviors character (a central character), man who takes part in most of events in the story, usually the occasion caused change of attitude toward the character or people's change of attitude as a reader.

Richard Gill (1995) in *Mastering English Literature* writes that "*a character is a person in literary work and characterization is the way in which the character is created.*" This is important to distinguish between character and characterization. Another opinion was presented by Kenney (1966) "*character is an imagined person who fills up the story. A character is obviously relevant too us.*" Character are never detached from characterization. Characterization is a physical image and the nature of a character in the story.

According to (Koesnoseobroto, 1988), characters can be divided into two categories such as major character and minor character.

a. Major Character

The major character can be at the center of the story. He/she is the most in history. Storylines usually focus on the character from start to finish. Therefore, the study emphasizes the character's experience.

b. Minor Character

The minor characters will appear in certain areas that are only needed as the background for the main character. Those roles are less important than the protagonist's role, but cannot be ignored.

So, the character has some role to clarify the story and can show the expression of the literary works. The character is a extremely important thing in understanding the story.

B. Plot

Plot is a sequence of event in a story that has casual relationship in which the plot is built by the characters in the novel. The plot structure is the beginning, middle, and the end of the story. According to Abrams (1990) stated that the other of a unified plot, Aristotle pointed out, is continuous sequence of beginning, middle, and end. The beginning initiates the main action in a way which makes us look forward to something to follow; and the end follows from what has gone but requires nothing more; we feel satisfied that the plot is complete.

In general, the elements of the plot usually start from the introduction of the story of exposition, the increase in problems or rising action, the climax to which the conflict heats up and the resolution of the problem. Nurgiyantoro, (2010) in Fathanah (2021) suggests that a prose (novel) must move from beginning, through the middle to the end. Plot elements are generally divided into five parts as follows:

a. Exposition

Exposition is a literary device used to introduce background information, context, and essential details about the characters, setting, and events in a story.

b. Rising Action

The rising action is the series of events that build tension and develop the conflict in a story. It follows the exposition and introduces complications that challenge the protagonist. The rising action is crucial for developing the story's themes and deepening the audience's investment in the characters and their journeys.

c. Climax

The climax is the turning point of the story, where the tension reaches its highest point. It typically the most exciting or emotionally charged part of the

narrative, and it serves as a pivotal moment that leads to the resolution of the conflict.

d. **Falling Action**

The falling action occurs after climax and involves the event that follow turning point. It provides a sense of closure as the story begins to wind down.

e. **Resolution**

The resolution is the final part of the story, where the conflicts are resolved, and the narrative comes to a close. It ties up loose ends, reveals the outcomes for the characters, and often reflects on the themes of the story. The resolution provides a sense of completion and can leave the reader with a lasting impression or insight.

From the explanation above, the writer concludes that the events make up the story called plots. It include the main event of the story and how the character and its problem change over time. All events that occur are organized in chronological order from one event to another.

C. Setting

The setting in literary works refers to the time and place in which a story unfolds. It encompasses various elements, including the geographical location, historical period, cultural context, and the social environment in which the character exist. The setting plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative, influencing characters' actions, and establishing the mood and tone of the story.

Nurgiyanto (2010) in Fathanah (2021) divides the setting into three main elements, namely the following:

- a. The setting of place, which describes the location of the events of the story take place, which can include named places or identifiable settings.
- b. The setting of time relates to the problem of when events occur told in a work of fiction. The time element used by the author in this story is for example factual time, that has to do with historical events.
- c. Social background, it explaining things that have to do with the work of fiction such as living habits, customs, tradition, and social behaviors that characterize the characters' lives and influence their interactions within the story.

Overall, the setting is essential for shaping characters' actions, establishing the mood and tone, and driving the plot, making it vital element in the construction of any narrative.

D. Theme

The theme is the central idea, message, or underlying meaning that the author explores throughout the narrative. It reflects the broader concepts and issues that the story addresses, often providing insight into human nature, society, morality, or the human experience. According to Stanton (1965) states that:

A centra; meaning of this sort corresponds to what, in a story, we call the “theme” or “central idea”. Like the central meaning of our experience, the theme of a story is both particular and universal in its value; it lends force and unity to the events described, and it tells us something about life in general. A theme may take the form of generalization about life, a generalization that may or may not imply a moral judgment.

According to (Sudjiman, 1988) about the definition of theme is “*Gagasan, ide, atau pikiran utama yang mendasari suatu karya sastra.*” Theme is the central ide that becomes the foundation of the story. Finding theme in the story is based of guidance of the story itself. Theme is many aspects is ‘dependent’ to the presence or absence of certain situation, conflict, and event, includes other various elements of intrinsic, because those things must supporting the clear theme which conveyed by the author (Nurgiyantoro, 2010).

The writer understand that the theme is a crucial element of literature that encapsulates the core ideas and messages of a work. It enriches the narrative, enhances character development, and invites readers to engage with the text on a deeper level. Understanding the theme can lead to a more profound appreciation of the work and its relevance to the human experience.

2.2.2. Theory of Objectification by Martha Nussbaum

Objectification involves the activity of lowering a person to the status of an object. Also, involves the process of degrading human’s value in society and comparison to other human being. Objectification has been experienced by women for a long time and this causes women to lose the rights they should have in order to move safely and comfortably in both domestic and public (Asyrah, 2022).

Langton states when it comes to the objectification of women, women become submissive and object-like because of men’s desire and beliefs. Men desire women to this way, and, if they have power, they force women to become this way (Quran and Anwar, 2020). This objectification can dehumanize women, reducing them to mere objects of desire.

The objectification of women is often rooted in a view of women as mere objects, which can be manipulated and controlled according to prevailing social norms. In the context of female circumcision, this practice can be seen as an extreme form of objectification, where the female body is treated not as a whole and independent

entity, but as a subject that must be adjusted to certain standards that have been set by culture or society.

Female circumcision, which is often carried out without women's consent and/or without women knowing the reasons behind the circumcision itself, reflects control over women's bodies and sexuality. This practice not only violates human rights, but also reinforces a culture of objectification that discredits women's roles and values in society (Nussbaum 1999).

In analyzing the problem of objectification, this study uses several concepts put forward by Martha Nussbaum in her book entitled *Sex and Social Justice* (1999). According to Nussbaum, a person is subjected to objectification when he or she is seen and/or treated in one or more of the seven classification of objectification, namely:

- Instrumentality: when a person is treated as a tool for another's ends.
- Denial of Autonomy: when a person is seen as lacking autonomy or unable to make his or her own choices.
- Inertness: when a person is treated as lacking agency or lacking activity.
- Fungibility: when a person is treated as an object or thing that can be exchanged.
- Violability: when a person is treated as lacking integrity and can be violated (when a person is seen as something that can be broken, damaged, destroyed, etc).
- Ownership: when a person is treated as something that can be owned, bought, or sold.
- Denial of Subjectivity: when a person is denied their subjectivity or their experiences and feelings are ignored.

This study analyzes the problem of objectification through the framework established by Nussbaum (1999). Nussbaum identifies seven classifications of objectification that illustrate how individuals can be dehumanized and treated as mere objects. Each of these categories highlights different ways in which a person can be viewed and treated in a manner that undermines their dignity and humanity, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing objectification in social contexts.