

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The issues of psychological conflicts are often used by many authors in their literary works. According to Nurhamidah, Purwanto, and Ekaningsih (2019) in their article, a novelist may manifest him or herself through the main character in the novel that he or she is mostly proud of (195). *Boyhood* and *Youth* are the examples of literary works that represent the actual psychological issues in real life through the story and the characters. These two books are fictional autobiographies by J. M. Coetzee and will also be the object of this research. The first book, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* was published in 1997. The second book, *Youth: Scenes from Provincial Life II* was published in 2002. These two books are the part of a trilogy *Boyhood, Youth, and Summertime*. Fictional autobiography is literary work which the author is made as not identical with the narrator in delivering the actual events (Tlusty 182). As fictional autobiographies, *Boyhood* and *Youth* were made as the representation of J. M. Coetzee's actual life and actual situation at that time.

The fact that these two novels are classified into fictional autobiographies does not make the writer apply expressive approach to this research. Objective approach, however, seems to be more challenging because the issue of psychological problems can be seen generally as problems faced by real people. Some literary works can be called as a depiction of the actual issues in real life including some

psychological issues. These psychological issues have some variety on how and why it happens or is used on literary works. It all depends on the author himself, the intention, and the actual situation of that time which the author wanted to present on his or her works.

Psychological issues have become a serious problem in human's life. Michaud and Fombonne (2005) explain that psychological issues have increased on the last decades and it leads into some changes in some environmental (family, schools, works), low educational quality, health problems, and other social aspects (835). Based on this statement we can also know the reason why many authors use these psychological issues as the topics on their works especially on this contemporary era, related to the current situation wherein psychological issues has become a serious matter in society.

Psychological issues or also commonly called as a mental health issues that can lead a person into some dangerous decisions, actions and behaviors. These issues can occur on every stages of human's life start from their childhood, adolescence, and adult stage. According to Zaky (2017), adolescence is an important stage in human's life. Teenagers need a guidance, care, and love from their parents in this stage (1). Based on this statement, it is important for the reader to understand about every issue that probably occurs on the process of the person's personality development that is represented through literary work. In this context, I will analyze the main character, John, in the novels *Boyhood* and *Youth* by J.M. Coetzee to understand the psychological issues, which are alienation and identity crisis, on his childhood,

adolescence and adult stage. The novel *Boyhood* and *Youth* are chosen as the object of this research because these two novels are describing three stages of John's life started from his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Alienation and identity crisis are chosen as the topic of this research because these issues are the most possible to occurs in real life. The analysis of the two novels is continued by analyzing the three stages of John's personality development using Erikson's theory to identify the identity crisis and Melvin Seeman's theory to identify the alienation. Michaud and Fombonne (2005) also state that these issues often occur as the normal process of self-development to find the true identity of someone. Therefore, considering that psychological problems are serious matters that often used as the main issue in literary work, the writer proposes a research entitled: Identity Crisis and Alienation in J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* and *Youth*.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

Boyhood and *Youth* are known as fictional autobiographies that present the experiences of John as the main character who faces some conflicts in his life. John as a teenager is struggling to understand the term 'normal' in the society and family. It cause conflicts between him and his parents that he decides to leave his house. As an adult, John always has problems about his relationship some women he is trying to get close with. He also has problems to socialize with his neighbors, teachers, and work mates. Based on these facts from the story, John seems to have an unhealthy personality, which, the writer believes are the result of the failure in his personality development process.

This research focuses on analyzing each stage of John's life from his childhood to his adulthood. This is done by identifying the psychological conflicts of John to find the evidence of psychological issues, identity crisis and alienation, in the two novels *Boyhood* and *Youth*.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

J. M. Coetzee as a famous contemporary writer has many literary works that worth to be discussed on a research. *Youth* and *Boyhood* are two famous Coetzee's work as fictionalize autobiographies. The research about alienation and identity crisis on Coetzee's novels *Boyhood* and *Youth* are rarely done by other scholars. The writer can only find one of previous study that discussed alienation and identity crisis on J. M. Coetzee's works. Shinde KL (2016) in the article "Alienation an Identity Crisis in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" focuses on analyzing the experiences and psychology of the main character Lucy and Lurie. The study is conducted by analyzing some main conflicts on the story such as racism, sexual assault, robbery, vandalism, and social-politic condition. These conflicts were believed as the main factors that affecting the character's psychology and lead them into alienation and identity crisis. It also concludes that society and social condition take the most important role in affecting the psychology of the characters. The result of this study convinces the writer that John's personality in the novel *Boyhood* and *Youth* is also influenced by the society and society condition which make him a troubled person.

Using J. M. Coetzee's *Youth* and *Boyhood* as the main object of the research have been done by some scholars in their research. Claudia (2021) uses the novel *Youth* by J. M. Coetzee as the main object in her research, entitled "J.M. Coetzee's *Youth*: The Study of Anxiety and Defense Mechanism". This research also uses psychoanalytical criticism on the analysis process and Sigmund Freud's personality theory as the specific theory. This research aims to find out what are the types of defense mechanism that the main character, John, uses to overcome his anxiety problems in the story. This research is really is an evidence that John has faced many psychological conflicts whether within himself or with the society which later influence his personality development.

Rahmi (2015) has conducted a research about psychology on J. M. Coetzee's novels *Boyhood*, *Youth*, and *Summertime* in an undergraduate thesis entitled "Oedipus Complex Syndrome in Mother's Fixation as Reflected in J. M. Coetzee's Trilogy (*Boyhood*, *Youth*, and *Summertime*)". This research identifies the indication of Oedipus complex of the main character, John, in the novels. The psychology of the main character in every psychological development stages is the focus in this research. The analysis of John personality development from childhood to adulthood in these three novels confirmed Rahmi that John is actually suffered from Oedipus complex. This research provides information that John has serious psychological problems as the result of the failure in some personality development that he ends up having issues of Oedipus complex.

In relation to the theories that will be applied on this research, there are Sigmund Freud's personality theory, Seeman's theory of alienation, and Erikson's theory of identity crisis, some research by other scholars have been found. Ambadar (2016) applied Seeman's theory of alienation to analyze the characters in his thesis entitled "Alienation in Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*", which focuses on the character in the short story. The theory of alienation by Seeman was applied to reveal how the alienation is portrayed on the story. By also applying the five categories of alienation by Seeman (powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement), this study aims to provide information about the experiences of the character that result in alienation.

Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) is applying Erikson's theory on identity crisis in studying Trisha Ashley's books in their article "Self-Identity Crisis in Trisha Ashley's *Every Woman for Herself*". Main character of the story is the main object of the research in this study. Psychological approach was used to analyze the character's psychology. The main objective of this research is to find out how the identity crisis was represented in the novel *Every Woman for Herself*. In order to do it, this study using Erik Erikson's theory and idea about identity crisis. The analysis was done by identifying the characteristics, causes, and impacts of identity crisis from the character in the novel. This research is helpful for the writer to understand the way in applying Erikson's theory in analyzing character's identity in literary work.

1.4 Research Questions

The main problem in this research is how identity crisis and alienation issues of the main character, John, represented on J. M. Coetzee's novels. These following questions will be answered on this research:

- 1.4.1 How is identity crisis of the main character, John, presented through the personality development in both novels?
- 1.4.2 The failure of John's personality development seems to bring John to alienation. How does the psychological perspective confirm John's alienation?

1.5 Scope of the Research

J. M. Coetzee's famous works have already been discussed by many scholars in variation of issues and discussions. It is important to make the limitation or scope of this research in order to provide actual and clear information. This research is only focusing on analyzing the psychological conflicts of the main character, John, either it is internal or external conflicts. Furthermore, this research discusses how the psychological conflicts lead to identity crisis and alienation as portrayed in the novels *Boyhood* and *Youth*.

1.6 Objectives of the Research

Apart from the general objective of this research which is to enrich the research on literature from psychological perspective, this research is aimed at

providing answers on how failure in personality development of someone in dealing with society can result in some psychological issues alienation and identity crisis. This is done by taking John as the object of analysis of this research.

