

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the background of the research, identification of the problem, The Identification of the Problem, review of related literature, research questions, the scope of the research, and objectives of the study.

1.1. Background of The Research

Black Women have long experienced discrimination based on race and gender. Since ancient times, black women have faced discrimination based on race, followed by stereotypes based on gender, but their struggle cannot be considered a failure; in fact, their struggle has become an inspiration for women to defend their rights. “The situation for black women was one of double jeopardy. They were oppressed both as black and as women” (Chafe 338). It shows that black women have to face a callous life and must fight stronger to defend their rights and obligations as human beings who are oppressed racially, namely being part of black people, and gendered, namely women. In America, African American women were not considered human beings and had no human rights. They were considered immature, slaves, limbs or appendages, a black side and conduit of white male desire, rather than emotional and intellectual creatures. All of this stems from the American history of slavery, which dates back to the early 1800s. Since the 1960s, the civil rights movement has acknowledged and accepted black women’s presence as human beings. African-American women’s place in American society remains awful. It may be difficult to believe that white women continue to have lesser status than males in modern countries such as America. Black women are at the bottom due to racial and gender prejudice. In the fight against discrimination, white and black women are not constantly at odds or disparaging other women (Muhni 98).

“Wanita kulit hitam Amerika, yang sekarang lazim disebut wanita Afrika-Amerika, telah mengalami perjalanan yang jauh dan berliku liku, penuh kepahitan dan kepedihan untuk sampai pada kedudukannya yang sekarang. Kedudukan wanita Afrika-Amerika dalam strata

masyarakat Amerika masih sangat menyedihkan, Mungkin agak sulit diterima fakta bahwa kedudukan wanita kulit putih di negara semaju Amerika masih berada di bawah pria. Kemudian, pria Afrika-Amerika di bawah keduanya dan wanita kulit hitam di bawah prianya sehingga dapat dikatakan bahwa kedudukan wanita kulit hitam di strata paling bawah karena harus menghadapi diskriminasi ras maupun gender.” (Muhni 98-99)

“Black American women, also known as African-American women, have had a long and winding road filled with bitterness and pain to get to where they are today. The status of African-American women in American society remains deplorable. It may be difficult to accept that white women in developed countries like America still have a lower status than men. Then there are African-American men under both and black women under men, so black women are in the lowest strata because they face racial and gender discrimination.” (Muhni 98-99)

White and black women have long lived side by side, yet their destinies are often different in terms of rights, security, comfort, beauty standards, and even negative reputation. White and black women are not always at conflict with or insulting other women in the battle against discrimination and gender inequality; the struggle hand in hand between black and white women also occurred during the enslavement era in the United States of America. The researcher realizes that white women’s attitudes toward blacks and black women’s attitudes toward white women are intertwined. Women and blackness are a connection between black women and white women who have differing perspectives on one other as “women” regarding their gender, motherhood, attractiveness, or suffering. Furthermore, the correlation between women and blackness may be observed through the fight between black and white women for women’s rights, particularly black women of the period. The researcher also refers to the solidarity or unity of white and black women combating injustice, regardless of skin color or socioeconomic standing. It may be observed in the battle of white women who assisted black women in gaining equality. It may be

seen in the fight of white women who accompanied black women in achieving their right to life.

Stowe is an influential anti-slavery activist who believes that slavery is an immoral and horrible action against human beings. Harriet Beecher Stowe's work highlights slavery, including whippings, beatings, and forced sexual relations. Stowe was the world's most famous writer in 1860. (Dewi and Indriani, 2019). Stowe was a well-known American researcher for her work *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe was the bravest novelist, exposing slavery and racial discrimination in her works in 1952. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe raised the issue of racism and slavery, which was a sensitive issue, wanted to tell a more comprehensive read about the evils of racial discrimination and the evil of slavery so that his novel could enter Europe. Stowe can explain the themes raised on a broader level by including her concerns about slavery to white readers. Stowe played on her readers' emotions of uneasiness and sorrow over the practice of slavery, particularly those of Northern white women who might aid with the Abolitionist cause, by exposing them to supposedly genuine people suffering from the injustice of slavery. It is evident even in how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written. Stowe addresses her readers directly, pushing them to contemplate slavery from the perspective of the enslaved people. It is a sentimental novel, and it is written by, for, and about women. It expresses and is responsible for the values of its time.

There are several reasons why the researcher is interested in researching the Woman and Blackness in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Firstly, the researcher knows that Women and Blackness issues are still a big issue nowadays, which is still very relevant to be discussed occasionally. To make it distinctive, the researcher examines women's blackness from the perspective of other readers, which the researcher considers a fresh idea. Second, the researcher wants to detail the lives of the women and black people depicted in the story. The researcher attempts to discover the women and blackness concerns represented in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with the cooperation of the readers.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Readers aim to create meaning in their heads when reading. Readers must understand the novel's portrayals of women and blackness. In this research, the problems of women and blackness are based not only on gender but also on the stigma experienced by black women or white women during the slavery era, including issues of attractiveness or parenthood, along with women's rights at the period in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While reading, which requires the reader to construct their meaning about women and blackness from the story, some aspects occur in the minds of readers when they comprehend a literary work, and some impacts influence the readers' feelings while understanding the literary works mentioned in this study. Consequently, the reader must try to create sense and understand the meaning of woman and blackness while reading. This opinion and understanding do not rule out the possibility of the same point the reader is attempting to express in their perspective. So, the researcher wants to know the factors and the respondents' understanding of the issue of women and blackness after they try to create meaning in their respective ways.

1.3. Review of Related Literature

This review discusses articles related to women and blackness or the Reader-response approach in literature. The researcher reviews six works of literature about the topic and theories used in this research. Finally, the researcher's related literature is used as a source of information or reference for the research that the researcher conducts, helping the researcher's research improve.

First, in Risma Kartika Dewi and Martha Indriani's study, they discuss how racial discrimination is described, the factors that cause racial discrimination, and the impact of racial discrimination in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Dewi and Indriani's (2019) research found that racial discrimination occurs because the white race is more dominant than the black race. This research also discusses the power possessed by whites who are over black. The description of the problem of racial discrimination is explained in detail by describing the advantages possessed by

blacks and the disadvantages experienced by blacks. Overall, Dewi and Indriani's study demonstrate the proofs of racial discrimination based on white people's act, behavior, and speech which refer to bad thing. There are also good white people or masters. However, most masters or white masters are immoral and cruel people.

In Denik Fajar Darmawanti's study (2012), she reveals how the novel's researcher, Alice Walker, describes the suffering felt by African-American women in *The Color Purple*. She examines the equality of men and women. Darmawanti compares men and women in four areas, namely, woman's position, woman's function, woman's rights, and women's participation, as described in the novel *The Color Purple*. "Walker wants to express that African- American women face many problems in their life. They are subjected unfairly by whites and African- American men in their society. This condition makes women suffer physically and spiritually. Through this novel, Walker not only gives African- American woman's voice but also inspires them with a path to struggle and emancipate their life to get freedom." (Darmawanti, 2012). Overall, Darmawanti's study demonstrates: First, the structural analysis of the novel shows that Alice Walker wants to express her idea about how African- American women are suffered in their society caused by whites and black men. Second, based on Feminist Approach, the conclusion is that it is African – American women's suffering in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* novel. Walker creates that unfair treatment will always result in rebellion. Third, this novel presents the social construction that women who have suffering and pains in their lives can transform their lives into better life.

Krumholz (2008), in her essay "Blackness and Art in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*," focuses on examining how Toni Morrison, the novel's researcher, interprets the lives of oppressed black people. Krumholz also discusses the reader's interpretation of the novel after the readers finish reading the novel. Krumholz wants to show readers how Morrison explained black people's lives so that the readers could experience and create their interpretation. Morrison confronts readers with blackness in *Tar Baby*. She shows how blackness has been manufactured to support racial ideologies and inequities. Krumholz forces readers to consider their

interests in blackness constructions. Morrison takes readers back to themselves, as she does with her novel endings.

Putu Diah Kanserina wrote the article “Reader Response Analysis in *Gone With the Wind* novel by Margaret Mitchell.” In this work, Kanserina discusses the analysis of the main character in Margaret Mitchell’s novel *Gone With the Wind*, with the concern of What factor, if any, is responsible for the primary characters’ plight in *Gone With the Wind* based on reader response analysis. Several conclusions were reached as a result of the research. There is also information that represents the personalities of the main characters. First, several factors were identified, such as love, marriage, and patriotism. Second, the researchers and colleagues do not learn about the wars in the eighteenth century but learn about appreciating others. Kanserina states in the article that we should also have a “give and take” attitude toward our relationships. Overall, Kanserina’s study stated that we should respect the institution of marriage. We must appreciate our partner. If we don’t love our partner, true love will not exist.

In Trisnawati’s study, she provides research on how the understanding of a literary work’ meaning and interpretation is composed by the readers—the students; how the students could function themselves as active readers who successfully manage to interpret the literary work based on their responses and how finally this particular group of readers could finally agree on the particular interpretation. In Trisnawati’s (2016) research, she found that if teaching literature is to accommodate the students’ role in making interpretation, it is supposed to place them as the active readers to interpret and shape the meaning of that particular literary work; it is not preaching or directing them into a specific meaning decided previously. Students, as active readers, must be given the opportunity and space to develop their opinion and argumentation to shape and define what a particular text means to them. Therefore, by understanding and applying reader-response theory in teaching and learning literature in the classroom, at the same time, teachers could have a different teaching and learning method, e.g., learners-centered learning.

Lastly, In Dixie Lee Spiegel's study, Spiegel provides research on Reader response approaches and the growth of readers. In Spiegel's research, Spiegel found that children involved in reader response approaches do become better responders and better readers; concentrated the study on reader-response theory on the crucial role reader response activities might play in developing readers of all ages. Spiegel believes that reader response strongly influences literary readers, particularly in the school environment. Spiegel also explores the history of reader-response theory to analyze how students relate to the text to create meaning. Overall, Spiegel's study demonstrates the effect of the reader response approach on students in reading literary works.

1.4. Research Questions

The researcher will concentrate on the Woman aspect of social life in the United States throughout the slavery era. The woman's side can be produced from either black or white characters. As a result, the researcher conducted this study by incorporating several respondents. The researcher will base the research on the responses of the readers to the information provided by the researcher on women and Blackness in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this research, there are three questions that the researcher gives to be the limitation of the research.

1. How do readers' response to women and blackness in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?
2. What do the readers understand about women and blackness in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

1.5. Scope of the Research

The research is limited to the reader's responses to the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, focusing on women's lives and blackness in the story. The writer tries to find out the readers' understanding of the topic. The respondent of this research is the English Department student and the readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To reach the intended research goal, this research requires readers' responses. The topic concerning women and blackness will also be provided with a different perspective by the respondents whom the researcher chose to conduct this research.

1.6. Objective of the Research

In this research, there are three objectives to achieve:

1. To know the readers' response to women and blackness in the slavery era in the United States depicted by Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
2. To know the effect and factors that influence the readers in understanding women and blackness in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

