

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Literary works contain any thoughts, ideas, experiences and imagination of the author. The reader can be entertained every time they read a story that is full of useful information. Literary work is not only used as something to entertain but also as something to educate. Through literary works, the reader gets information about the man, the world and life (Sumardjo and Saini, 1986:2). Literature indeed reflects the society, its good values and its bad values. Literature, as an imitation of human action, often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in the society. Thus, literature is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a corrective mirror in which members of the society can look at themselves and find the need for positive change. Through literary works in the form of a novel, we can learn about human lives of a certain people, for example the life experience of black people.

In this research, the writer is interested to analyze Ralph Ellison's literary work entitled Invisible Man. Ralph Ellison as the author of the novel has described clearly the condition of Black People of America in 1930's such as discrimination in education, labor system and social community. In doing this analysis, the writer provides description of the discrimination toward the young black man in the novel, and then compare with the social condition at that time.

In analyzing the novel, the writer uses the sociological approach and sociology of literature theory that is proposed by Alan Swingewood. The writer assumes that both sociology of literature theory and sociological approach is suitable for the analysis. The main part of the novel takes place in 1930, a time when the discrimination toward Black People in America was still very strongly raised.

The reason why the writer chooses Ralph Ellison is because his effort in marginalized African-American society to get equality from the other people. He had witnessed a wide diversity of black American communities in America, and he realized that his personal perspective will resonate with black Americans and Mainstream America both. The product of his efforts is a novel in which his protagonist's journey brings the reader right down into the personal experience of a young intellectual black American (Mahoney, 2015).

As one knows slavery and marginalize is happened to African-American society since colonial era and slavery era. US slavery was a peculiarly capitalist and particularly inhumane institution: people as property, no rights as human beings. Slave labor was a fundamental element of 18th and 19th century economy: Black slaves built much of the economic power of the nation, built the capital (Olivier, 2012:1). The writer disagrees with marginalizing activity which is shown in the novel or even in the real world, so with this research the writer want to show marginalize activities such as discrimination that happen to the main character clearly.

The writer choses Invisible Man novel to be analyzed because the novel shown about how difficult a person to be identify by the others in his society that also happened in the writer life experience. By describing one man's lifelong struggle to establish a sense of identity as a black man in white America, Ellison illustrated the powerful social and political forces that conspire to keep black Americans "in their place," denying them the "inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" guaranteed to all Americans (Washington, 2010). In other words the novel itself has similarity with the writer life experience which makes the novel become interesting to be analyzed.

The writer hopes that after doing this research, he can get some values about life and also could help the reader to obtain more information about the life experiences of black people through literary works such as novels. The main character of this novel is a young black man. Black people are having the discrimination by white people, as also happened to the writer. He has darker skin from the others and it led him to some kinds of discrimination since he was a kid. His friends used to call him with insulting nickname instead of his real name. In this research the writer focuses to the discrimination toward a Young Black Man itself. Therefore, in this research the writer gives his title: **The Slander On A Young Black Man As Reflected In Ellison's, Invisible Man; A Study Of American Discrimination On 1930s**

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The main problem in the novel is the discrimination of the Black People that happened to the main character “The Narrator”. At this time, the black people still get discriminated by the white people such as in verbal and action. Discrimination always started by something that one call as depression. The problems of the Great Depression affected virtual in every group of Americans. By 1932, approximately half of Africans Americans were out of work. In some Northern cities, whites called for blacks to be fired from any jobs as long as there were whites out of work. Racial violence again became more common, especially in the South.

In this novel the writer finds discrimination to a young black man in America that happened around early 1930s in form of slander. Slander means defamation by oral utterance rather than by writing, pictures, etc (Webster, 1983:848). In short slander means accusing someone for something he/she did not do. The main character itself has public speaking skills which lead him to get a scholarship from state college for Negroes. But he got spelled after giving vodka to a lecture while the vodka itself asked by the lecture. And after that he works at a paint factory. He mixer paint with random thinner which caused the paint has a bad mixture. The boss claim that he already told the main character which thinner should be used, actually he did not. Because of that accident he was fired from the paint factory and joined to a social community where he becomes one of the leaders in it, unfortunately it turns out that the organization betrays him. By seeing the problem above, the writer finds out how

discrimination of the black people in American society as reflected in Invisible Man. Here, the writer analyzes the work that states literary as reflection of social condition of the society.

1.3 Scope of the Research.

There are some interesting problems to be analyzed in this Ralph Ellison's work. Nevertheless in this research, the writer focuses on the point of the discrimination on a young black man by American society in many aspects. To limit his scope of analysis, the writer poses some research question as in the following:

1. What are the discriminations in education toward Black People in America as Reflected in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man?
2. What are the discriminations to labor toward Black People in America as Reflected in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man?
3. What are the discriminations in social life toward Black People in America as Reflected in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man?
4. What is Ralph Ellison want to tell to the readers' through his novel Invisible Man?

1.4 Objective studies

The objective of this study is to identify the discrimination to a black man as reflected in the novel. Moreover, it intends to define the discrimination which is detected as social condition on early 1930s in America which related to the novel Invisible Man, so that the discrimination in the novel will be easier to be understood.

1.1 Scientific objective

- This research reveal the slander in education conducted by his lectures shown in the novel
- This research reveal the slander in working field conducted by his boss shown in the novel
- This research reveals the slander in society conducted by his social community “Brotherhood” shown in the novel.

1.2 Social objective

- For the writer this research can be used as a prove that the writer oppose discrimination to black people
- For English department this research could be used to add more scientific writing for English department library to analyze discrimination that happened to African American society
- For literature this research as a prove that discrimination to black people was happened in America in early 1930s

- For the next student this research could encourage them to the research on western literature that discusses African American society.

1.5 The Review of Previous Studies

The writer found other related study to the novel Invisible Man. The first study by Liza Yaszek in the journal entitled “An Afrofuturist Reading of Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man”. In her journal Yaszek discussed about Afrofuturism appropriates the narrative techniques of science fiction to put a black face on the future. Yaszek finds that in the novel, Ellison uses these tropes and references to signify a number of dystopic futures where blackness is technologically managed. As she stated:

The opening and closing scenes of Invisible Man hold forth the possibility of a different relationship between technology, race, and art: by hiding out under New York City and stealing electricity to power his turntables. In doing so, he becomes, however tentatively, the figurehead for a hopeful new Afrofuture. (Yaszek, 2005:1)

In the journal Yaszek conclude that there is Afrofuture seen in Invisible Man novel such as in technology where black people have ability in electricity and also in art as seen when black people can paint the building better than white people. The difference between Yaszek analysis with the writer is the objective of research, Yaszek focus on black people technology in the future while the writer focus on

discrimination to black people in early 1930s as reflected in the novel. Although Yaszek analysis does not have significant relation to the writer analysis but Yaszek analysis enrich the writer knowledge about the novel itself by learning about Afrofuturist reading that helped the writer to understand the novel deeper.

The second study conducted by Jordan Crosby Lee in his thesis entitled “Jazz temporality and narrative: a reading of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*”. In his thesis Lee discussed about the complex relationship between jazz, temporality, and narrative form in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. As he stated:

The relationship between the two is hard to ignore in light of Ellison’s passion for jazz music and his writings on the subject in *Shadow and Act*. *Invisible Man* refers to Louis Armstrong, encounters characters with names similar to jazz musicians. (Lee, 2013:4)

In his thesis Lee concludes that Ellison’s writing has not been a failure, his writing has been an aesthetic composition like that of a Louis Armstrong piece. If we try to pin the text down, it will slip from our grasp in the same way that swings and syncopation elude the jazz listener who tries to capture or stabilize a steady beat. The difference between Lee analysis and the writer is the object of research. Lee uses music jazz shown in the novel as her object analysis while the writer uses society as the object of the analysis. Lee analysis helps the writer to analyze “The Narrator” emotion in *Invisible Man* novel through jazz music. In all of its modes, jazz narrates a people’s emotional reaction to oppression, expresses the artistic abilities of African-

Americans, and provides a voice for those whose voices have been beaten into submission (Therault, 2011).

The third study conducted by Alyssa Sellers in her journal entitled “Destruction as a Necessity for Creation in Ellison’s Invisible Man”. In the journal Sellers discussed about in real world people creates a visual mask over their true identity by being somebody else, and also in Invisible Man the author creates a figure called “invisible man” as proved that the main character has become somebody else.

As she stated:

Through his nameless narrator, Ellison reveals that the only way to liberate oneself from a certain role is by becoming “invisible”; in other words, one must annihilate the socially constructed self to allow room for the true complex self to be created. (Sellers, 2012:2)

In her journal Sellers concludes that Ellison speaks out to all people and against all those who attempt to place restrictive ideologies and roles on others. Using the many aspects of improvisational performance in his novel Invisible Man, he examines the universal human struggle of finding one’s identity while living one’s life in a world built upon socially constructed ideologies and stereotypes and, through his Invisible Man, reveals that the only way to liberate oneself from a certain role is by becoming “invisible,” destroying the socially constructed self to allow for the nothingness needed for the creation of the true, complex and ever-changing self. Sellers analysis help the writer to analyze the main character “The Narrator” about how his reaction

to the society. Sellers conclude that “The Narrator” must become somebody else so he could be blended with the society. The processes that “The Narrator” reacts to the society enrich the writer analysis in understanding “The Narrator” character. The difference between Sellers analysis and the writer is in point of view of the research. Sellers focus in how the society become somebody else in facing the discrimination while the writer focuses on how the society real identity portrayed in the novel.

Besides that, in the library of faculty of humanities, the writer also finds a thesis that used the sociology approach to analyze the literary work. Ilham Maizal (2009) who writes a thesis entitled “Discrimination as seen in William Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice”. In his analysis, he focuses on describing the discrimination in Venice during 16th century. He analyzes that the play contains religious, law, social life and economy issues about the discrimination as reflected in the main character in The Merchant of Venice and compares with the historical facts.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the novel, the writer wants to apply Sociological theory proposed by Alan Swingewood. This research is conducted by using mimetic approach. As Abrams states in his book A Glossary of Literary Terms that:

Mimetic criticism view literary work as an imitation, or reflection or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is the “truth” of its representation to the subject

matter that it represents, or should represent. This mode of criticism, which first appeared in Plato and (in a qualified way) in Aristotle, remains characteristic of modern theories of literary realism (1999:51)

The quotation above indicates that literary work might contain the real aspect of the world, through mimetic theory. One knows that literary work is an imitation of reality which uses language as a media of the author to translate his thinking and feeling. The author of the novel Invisible Man applies the experience of the reflection of the lives of black people into a fictional novel. This theory explains that the story of the novel is considered a clone of the lives of black people in America.

George Lukács in Selden (2005:89) states that the novel reflects the reality, not by donating the mere presence to surface but also by giving an overview of the real life a clearer, more complete, and more dynamic. This theory explains that, the novel Invisible Man can be seen as the image of reality that was adapted into a fiction novel photographing social life of black people.

Based on the explanation above, Sociology of Literature theory would be suitable to analyze the novel. According to Alan Swingewood in The Sociology of Literature: “Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists” (1972:11). Based on the quotation above, it could be assumed that if a person wants to analyze the literary work by using sociology of literature theory, he or she has to relate with the situation

in the work with social condition at the time the novel was written. As Swingewood stated in his book The Sociology of Literature:

“The sociological study of literature is thus a fairly late arrival, for although there are today well developed sociologies of religion, education, politics, social change, even of such an imprecise area as ideology, there is virtually no established corpus of knowledge called the sociology of literature.” (1972:13)

Although then it would seem that literature and sociology are not wholly distinct disciplines, but on the contrary they complement each other in our understanding of society, historically they tend to remain apart.

Sociological approach is a general understanding of why and how the problem develops, of how people get affected by them and what are involved in dealing with them. In other words, sociological approach is an approach to find the meaning of imaginary in literary works that learns about the society, social classes, love affair, religion, nature, etc. sociological approach can be used to developed that the author sees within society, which is deliver in his/her own style.

There are three perspectives that proposed by Swingewood in his book The Sociology of Literature:

1. “The most popular perspective adopts the documentary aspect of literature, arguing that it provides a mirror to the age” (1972:13). On this perspective literature is viewed as direct reflection of various

facets of social structure, family relationship, class conflict and population composition.

2. “The second approach to a literary sociology moves away from the emphasis on the work of literature itself to the production side, and especially to the social situation of the writer” (1972:17). From the quotation above it can be conclude that the writer and his work related each other.
3. “A third perspective, one demanding a high level of skills, attempts to trace the ways in which a work of literature is actually received by a particular society at a specific historical moment” (1972:21). The third perspective is concerning with the paradigm of the people to the literary work. This perspective is influenced by the historical event.

According to Swingewood’s three perspectives above, the writer applies the first perspective that views the literary work as social document which have the reflection the work was written. This perspective seems to be possible to be applied in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man. Furthermore, Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man is a suitable object to be analyzed by using sociological approach as a theoretical framework. This work contains the social condition in American society and the issue of discrimination toward Black People society such as in educational system, labor system and social community.

1.7 Method of Research

There are three steps in conducting the analysis of literary work. They are: collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting data.

A. Collecting data.

In conducting the research, the writer uses the library research. There are two kinds of data that the writer applies the primary data and secondary data. For the primary data the writer use the novel Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison. The writer also takes the information from books that support the topic of the research such as books, journals, and essay can be found from internet or official websites.

B. Analyzing data

In analyzing the data, the writer applied the qualitative method to conduct the research by the writer. Here, the writer must read the novel first in order to understand the story and finds out sociological issues that indicate the discrimination toward the Black People in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. The writer can give a note due to important statements, sentences or evens and analyze it by using sociological theory propose by Swingewood.

C. Presenting data

The writer will use descriptive method for presenting the data. Descriptive means the data the data elaborated through words, not in the form of numbers or pictures. Through sociological theory, the writer tries to reveal discrimination toward the Black People such as in educational system, labor system and social community

which are pictured in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man by using the theory of sociology by Alan Swingewood.

