

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Literary work, as a piece of art, becomes the tool for the authors to deliver their imagination, messages, and opinion to society. The writer believes that literary works have its function not only to entertain the readers but also to teach good morals; to respect each other, to be a kind-hearted person, and to be more humane to other living creature in this earth. There are a lot of literary works that provide lessons for the readers. One of them is a novel written by Anthony Doerr entitled *All the Light We Cannot See* that was published by Scribner in 2014 and won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. It was also a finalist for the 2015 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction.

All the Light We Cannot See is a contemporary literature that illustrates the survival story of blind French girl named Marie Laure and an orphan German boy named Werner Pfenig. Werner has a young sister named Jutta. Both of them live at the orphanage. Werner becomes a master at fixing radios and he is invited to join the military academy with the Nazi Germans due to his mastery of communication technology. Werner travels through Russia with the Germans until he arrives at Saint-Malo and meets Marie Laure. Marie Laure lives with her father in Paris and at the age of six, she went blind. Her father helps her recognize the buildings near her house so

that she could memorize them with her fingers. When the Nazi German occupies Paris, Marie and her father go to Saint-Malo on the Brittany coast, where she meets her great uncle named Etienne and her uncle housemaid, Madame Manec. At this moment the sisterhood between Madame Manec and Marie Laure to survive against the conflict during World War II begins. *All the Light We Cannot See* gives the imagination for the readers about the difficult situation that the society faced in France during the war. The society, as illustrated in the novel, keeps on believing in hope and, even in the dark situation, keeps looking for the light.

In *All the Light We Cannot See*, the writer assumes that Anthony Doerr puts the female characters as strong creatures. Doerr beautifully illustrates the sisterhood among the female characters and how they try to survive against the war. He wants to strengthen the ability of woman in making a better society. Marie Laure and Madame Manec are the perfect examples of women's movement against the difficult situation during the war in Saint-Malo. Madame Manec is the one who develops a resistance club with her relatives named 'Old Ladies' Resistance Club 'and spreads the message written 'Free French Now 'on a piece of banknote so the world might notice and take part to help them. So that, the writer decides to study deeply on those strong female characters.

Marie is a blind young girl who faces so many struggles. She has lost everyone she loves the most but she keeps being strong, keeps learning to be independent, and gets up from that situation because Madame Manec helps her to

never be afraid of doing the right things. This kind of sisterhood the writer believes, reflects the real situation in Germany and France during World War II. Therefore, the writer chooses to entitled this research “The Impacts on Sisterhood for Women’s Survival during World War II as Depicted in *All the Light We Cannot See*” by Anthony Doerr.

Over the past decades, women always become the center of the public attention particularly on their capability in taking an important role for serving the society. Women are often illustrated as the inferior than men, especially during the war. Women were prosecuted for not doing men’s job and were forced to follow men’s command. Women could not always do the things that make them happy, as what happened during World War II; women were supposed to be quiet and just follow the instruction of men. During World War II in Nazi Germany, women were not allowed to get involved in the government. Girls were supposed to stay at home and give birth to as many German children as possible. They could not make any decisions because of the men’s control. Women in Nazi Germany were second class citizens to men. Not encouraged to seek outside employment or higher education. They were expected to be permissive and devote themselves to a greater cause; the future of their country (Budzynski 9).

As time passes, women have shown a great movement in order to get peace and comfortable life. In response to the conflict of war, women have a number of strategies available to them, including becoming politically active to help resolve

the conflict through nonviolent resistance, engaging in violence in support of the conflict as combatants, even becoming suicide bombers or being refugees or internally displaced persons (Kaufman and Williams 2). Thus the writer is challenged to discuss *All the Light We Cannot See* objectively believing that the work is an awesome contemporary piece of art because this novel has won several prizes as mentioned before. Having identified the impacts of sisterhood on women's survival in the war portrayed in the novel, the writer uses feminist literary theory for this research. Hopefully, this research can give a new contribution for the student's research in English Department, Andalas University.

I.2. The Identification of the Problem

All the Light We Cannot See offers the writer to explore more about sisterhood for women's survival during World War II in Germany and France as reflected in several characters in the novel. All of the female characters hope to get a better life and they believe that they deserve to be free. It is illustrated in several female characters named Marie, Madame Manec, Jutta, Madame Ruelle, and Madame Blanchard. All of them keep on believing in hope that something great is about to happen and the world should be in peace not in war.

The problem occurs when the society is afraid to be themselves and they are afraid to get their right to be free from the war. The society and women are scared to

deliver their opinion because they are under pressure and under the control of Nazi Germany. Because of that struggle, the women build their sisterhood in order to strengthen each other, making the society stronger, braver, and confident.

In *All the Light We Cannot See*, the sisterhood has an important impact on the society and for the characters themselves. The portrayal of sisterhood among the female characters in the novel is so powerful and meaningful. Therefore, the writer wants to analyze how the sisterhood could make society braver, stronger, and more confident against the situation during World War II in France and Germany.

1.3. The Scope of the Research

In analyzing *All the Light We Cannot See*, the writer focuses on the impacts on sisterhood for women in the society and the way they build their sisterhood against the Nazi Germany and the difficult situations in World War II. Furthermore, the writer compares the story of the novel with the real contributions of German and French Women to the society during the Second World War.

1.4. Research Questions

There are several issues related to the impact of sisterhood for the society during the war, which occurs in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr. The writer confines her attention to the intrinsic and extrinsic elements and focuses on the feminist issue in several female characters who build their sisterhood in order to

create a better situation for the country and try to take actions to contribute in the war for the society in general. The questions to answer are:

1. How do the female characters build their sisterhood in the novel entitled *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr?
2. What are the impacts of sisterhood for the female characters and to the society as depicted in the novel?

1.5. The Objectives of Research

The research is aimed to analyze the impact of sisterhood on women's survival during World War II as reflected in the novel. This research also tries to elaborate about the female character's position and contribution in the society during the war. The writer assumes that Doerr depicts female characters in the novel as strong, smart, and an independent creature. Another goal is to reveal the real sisterhood of women in Germany and France during World War II and the impact it brought to the society in general.

1.6. Methods of the Research

In conducting the research, the writer follows three steps. Those three steps are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting the result of the analysis. In the first step, collecting the data, the writer applies library research method. The research needs two kinds of data: the primary and secondary data. For the primary data to be analyzed, the writer uses *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr. In order to

support the research, the writer finds the secondary data which consists of articles from the journals, books, and other sources related to the topic of the research.

The next step is analyzing the data by applying feminist theory by Josephine Donovan. The writer uses some articles, books, and other sources that deal with the extrinsic approach. The writer focuses on the concepts of feminist criticism by Josephine Donovan about the “image of woman”. Image of woman theory, according to Josephine Donovan (1989), is how a male author puts a stereotype toward the female characters in the novel whether they have a good or bad characteristic.

The last step is presenting the result of the research. In presenting the result of the research, the descriptive method will be applied since the research is a qualitative one. In an article by Hossein entitled *Qualitative and Descriptive Research: data type versus data analysis* (2015), descriptive research is describing a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Descriptive research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Qualitative research often involves a rich collection of data from various sources to gain a deeper understanding of individual participants, including their opinions, perspective, and attitudes (129). The data are collected in words rather than number. Then, the writer combines the article with this research in order to understand how to analyze that topic properly

1.7. Reviews of the Related Studies

The writer takes a review and some articles from some experts who discuss *All the Light We Cannot See*. From these studies, the writer concludes that this novel is trying to strengthen the female characters as superior and strong creatures who prefer to live in peace and make a contribution for the society to feel braver, stronger, and confident. The writer finds other two theses from a different university that discuss the same novel but the focuses are different. The first thesis discusses the impact of the radio for the society and the second one discusses the superiority of male characters than female in the novel. Both theses helps the writer to elaborate more about the factors that make them decide to build a resistance action and make a contribution to a better society.

The first major book that the writer found to support this research is a book by Kathryn J. Atwood (2011) entitled *Women Heroes of World War II*. The book tells about women's contribution in World War II and the resistance action that the women do to fight against the cruelty of Nazi Germans. The book also provides the women heroes in Germany and French who help the society especially the Jews from Hitler. As the main research of this thesis, the writer focuses her attention on women contributions for the society in Germany and France. The book explains how the women heroes during the war fight against the Nazis very clearly. This book is very helpful for the writer to finish this thesis. The book also explains the beginning of World War II and why it ended.

The writer has found a thesis of a student from Tomas Bata University in Zlin named Barbora Dilova (2017) entitled “The Second World War and Technological Progress in Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*: A Thematic Analysis”. The thesis discusses the technology during World War II and her focus is more into the importance of radio during the war for society. She also stated that technology is used as a connecting element, as it unites people also from different countries (25). The thesis helps the writer to observe more about the connection between female characters in the novel with the radio and the impact of radio for the society especially for the female characters to build their sisterhood during World War II.

The writer also found a thesis of a student from Yogyakarta State University named Egie Danarko entitled “Gender Narratives in Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*: Women in an American War Literature”. The thesis discusses the male domination in the story and he focuses on the power of men to contribute to the society. He mentions that the men are more superior in the novel than the women. This thesis has a different perspective with the writer but this thesis gives the writer some ideas and new knowledge about the differences between the male and female characters contribution for the society during the Second World War.

An article by Carly Budzynski which was published in 2012 by McIntyre Library entitled “In and Out of the Kitchen: Women’s Resistance in Nazi Germany”. The article concerns the history of women’s resistance during World War II in Nazi Germany. The article says that women in Nazi Germany were supposed to give

birth to a child and were not allowed to get involved in any political things. The article also explains the way women did the rebellion during the war. The target of resistance can also range from one individual to an entire group or nation with goals of achievement varying as well. Some acts of the opposition are physical, such as working slowly, faking sickness, or wearing particular kinds of clothing. This article really helps the writer to get a new idea to finish this research because women's resistance also happens in the novel and it is relatable.

A book written by Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams with the title *Women at War, Women Building Peace: Challenging Gender Norms* explains more about women's response to situations of conflict and war. The book tries to explain the power of women during the war and on page 5, Kaufman and Williams mention that women are everywhere in the world, they are not invisible, and they are affected by wars and conflict. They are also affected by peace. This book is good for the writer in order to understand more about women's movement during the conflict of war and understand more about women's resistance in general.

The writer found one article that discusses about the same literary work with different focus. The article entitled *Novel negotiation* which is written by Rebecca Hollander-Blumoff. She criticizes about the way Anthony Doerr arranges the story and excludes the story of the Jewish people who were killed during World War II. She tells a little bit about the story that happened in the novel between Marie and Werner as the two main characters. She writes that Marie Laure is a good resistance

fighter. The story of Marie and Werner reaches her only intellectually, but not emotionally. Hollander writes that empathy is really important in literary work in order to understand the message and the meaning (Hollander 68).

Another article found is entitled “White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War” which discusses women’s power. The Article was written by Nicoletta F Gullace. Gullace gives several explanations about the female patriotism and how a woman can be a leader. In the article, Gullace wants to make an assumption that a woman can also be a soldier and a woman is not as weak as what a man thinks they are. There are a lot of revolutions of women too during World War II in the article. This is really helpful for the writer to analyze the women’s involvement in the war in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr.

In an article written by Shilpi Goel entitled “feminist literary criticism”, she mentions if feminist literary criticism is the rebellion of the female consciousness against the male images of female identity and experience. The concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female consciousness, often in reaction to male paradigms for female experience. It is an ideology that opposes the political, economical and cultural relegation of women to positions of inferiority (Goel 403). This article helps the writer to comprehend more about the definition of feminist theory and knows about several theorists of feminist such as Virginia Wolf, Kate Miller, Cherry Register, and Elaine Showalter. This article mentions about the waves of feminist criticism and really helps the reader to get the

new information about feminist theory. The achievement of female suffrage in Europe proves that people judgment toward a woman is wrong. The article identifies the main factors accounting for women's earlier or later achievement of suffrage in different European nations and, exploring the connection between women's access to voting rights and to civil and social rights. It seems that the author wants to deliver about woman's right and how the woman can be involved in politics in Europe (Ruth 12).

1.8. Theoretical Framework

Literary theory tries to shed light on the methods used in the reading of primary text such as the novel. Literary theory has its function as the theoretical and philosophical consciousness of textual studies, constantly reflecting on its own development and methodology (Klarer 77). Literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in a more exact sense of the world. To differentiate newspaper, magazine, legal document, etc. with literary work which consists of prose or fiction, poetry, and drama, literary work includes additional adjective such as "aesthetic" or "artistic" in it in order to entertain the reader (Klarer 1).

In this research of *All the Light We Cannot See*, the writer analyzes the extrinsic element of the novel that is related with the sisterhood or the women's contribution for the society during the World War II in Germany and France. An

extrinsic approach is a method in literary work that concerns with its setting, its environment, and its external causes. Renne Wellek says in his book entitled *Theory of Literature* (1949) the extrinsic approach is not limited to a study of the past but is equally applicable to present-day literature. According to Abrams's book entitled *Orientation of Critical Theories* (1989), mimetic is the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. Mimetic also focuses on the relationship between text and universe (Abrams 2). Extrinsic approach as a part of literary theory could be mimetic because it also discusses the past or the history, the society, and then the writer relates it to the story in the novel.

Feminist literary theory is a part of literary theories which concerns on the context-oriented approach. Context-oriented approach discusses the history, social and political background, literary genre, nationality, or gender. Feminist literary theory begins with the assumption that "gender difference" is an aspect which has been neglected in traditional literary criticism. In order to conduct this research, the writer applies feminist literary criticism. Feminist theory, as written in Josephine Donovan's book *Feminist Theory: the Intellectual Traditions*, has become more specific, paying more attention to differences among women particularly of those race, class, ethnic background, and sexuality (199). The writer uses feminist criticism because this research focuses on the impacts of sisterhood especially in order to survive during World War II in Germany and French. Furthermore, Donovan says that feminist theory provides an image of woman as rational, responsible agent; one

who is able, if given a chance, to take care of herself, to further her own responsibilities (47).

The core of any feminist theory must describe and explain the tenets of the social world experienced by women, apply questions, thoughts, and ideas to improve the social world for women, and consider the intersection of additional demographic variables such as age, race/ethnicity, and social standing (Gundy and Appeler 1-2). The concept of sisterhood as cited from Donovan on Register's *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory* defined as: "the idea of women's literary traditions was itself radical as was the idea that these traditions might provide us information about women's culture that is different from men and literature might also serve such political purposes as "promoting sisterhood" if we conceive of criticism as praxis (xiv).

Donovan mentions that feminist criticism has three subdivisions; (1) the analysis of the "image of women," nearly always as it appears in works by male authors, (2) the examination of existing criticism of female authors, (3) a "perspective" criticism that attempts to set standards for literature that is "good" from a feminist viewpoint (1989 2). From the three subdivisions, the writer uses the first subdivision which is "image of women" because it helps the writer to analyze the image of women in novels written by male authors. The writer decided to look at the "image of women" from feminist approach by Josephine Donovan in order to understand more about how Anthony Doerr depicts women's involvements in World

War II through the novel *All the Light We Cannot See* particularly how they build sisterhood in order to survive from the depressing condition during the war. Feminist theory can be interpreted in a multitude of ways, but the core of any feminist theory must describe and explain the tenets of the social world experienced by women, apply questions, thoughts, and ideas to improve the social world for women, and consider the intersection of additional demographic variables such as age, race/ethnicity, and social standing (Gundy & Kappeler 1-2).

Johnsen writes that there are certain things that good historical fiction should do. First, historical information should be accurate. Second, the historical period must come to life, and lastly, historical detail is given appropriate attention – not too much, not too little (Johnsen 12). In this book, Johnsen also mentions that feminist historiography searches out information about women in the past. It uncovers hidden material, records sometimes surprising facts, and offers new ways of seeing women. She writes that historical fiction offers readers a new way of perceiving history (19). A book by Johnsen E. Rosemary really helps the writer to understand more about the genre of historical fiction.

In analyzing a literary work through the lens of feminist theory, the writer must pay her attention to the feminist issue in the novel and focus on the female characters in order to get the reason of their superiority than the male characters in the novel. The writer also needs to search about the impact of sisterhood for the society and the characters themselves in order to survive during the war against Nazi

Germans and the World War II era. With all of those articles, the writer feels they are very useful to help the writer to elaborate about the topic regarding the power of female characters and the sisterhood among them in the novel.

