

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Research

Words have the power to dismantle stereotypes and complicate established narratives that have gone unquestioned for too long. Muslim women are in constant battles against their lives and identities, whether within our communities or the world. Many Muslim women fight back with words by contributing stories that offer a more honest or complex perspective. Many Muslim women respond with words by writing articles, novels, or poems presenting a more straightforward way to fight for their rights.

According to Women's Studies Journal about the Muslim women writers,

Muslim women writers in the middle-ages were poets because poetry was the silent literary genre at the time. Later, they experimented with new genres, such as novels and short stories, and the subgenres, such as memoirs, autobiographies, graphic novels, chick literature, and drama. Usually, they talked about the issues like stereotypes, gender roles, etc., that examine works from across the globe by Muslim women, including works from the middle east, south Asia, and Southeast Asia. Nowadays,

characterization of Muslim women is widely represented today by both Muslim and non-Muslim writers across literary genres. (Muslim Women Speaking Persistently, 2022).

One of the Muslim writers is Fatima Farheen Mirza, the author of *A Place for Us*. As an American writer of south Asian descent, Mirza's novel looks at the personal discordances within an Indian-Muslim family settled in California, America. *A Place for Us* (2018) is the debut novel or the first novel created by Fatima Mirza, which was first released in New York in 2018. Fatima Mirza is an American female novelist best known for her novel with the theme of Muslim minorities and feminists. She was born and raised in California on April 10, 1991.

*A Place for Us* is a novel that presents the social problems experienced by a Muslim family who moved from India to live in California. A moving portrait of what it means to be a family in California today, a novel about love, identity, and belonging that eloquently explores what it means to be an American and a Muslim. Fatima Mirza presents the feminist issues in the novel. The issues that can be seen is the marriage experienced by the family's first daughter, Hadia. Their parents arranged the marriage not based on Hadia's choice (a match of love rather than tradition).

In the novel, Fatima Mirza addresses the feminist issues as she describes the relationships of Indian family and how women and men go through conflicts of interest. One of the issues described is marriages carried out because of arranged marriages, which reflects how parents come from

Asia. This is a form of gender equality for women and men, one of which is arranged marriage by the character's parents and high expectations—given by parents to their daughters in terms of education, work, and a mate. Feminist issues related to injustice happen to women, such as education, work, relationships, and salaries.

The parents of Fatima Mirza are Indians who have long lived in California. Fatima was educated at the University of California, Riverside, majoring in health but in creative writing as an undergraduate. Shortly after graduating from a lowly writing workshop and receiving a Michener-Copernicus scholarship. In the process of making this book, she explores how the dynamics of Muslim immigrants who live in California differ after moving from India. From this experience, she has received various awards, namely the New York Times bestseller and a commendation by the national book award foundation as an honored for "5 under 36" in 2020.

In this study, I intend to analyze the narrative patterns and the Muslim female experiences portrayed in the novel *A Place for Us*. I used narrative theory because it will explore how the novel employs the structure of the story like the plot, characters, and conveys its overarching themes. This novel is interesting to read because the author is a Muslim woman who came from India and lived in California, I would like to analyze this novel to see the feminist issues in the novel.

## **1.2. Identification of the Problems**

This *A Place for Us* book tells about a Muslim Indian family living in California; who struggled and faced the differences and problems like the problem that happened inside of the family. However, I assume several problems in this novel written by the author. The researcher will only discuss the problems related to the feminist issues told in this novel and also related to narrative theory. First, the researcher will explain the five patterns according to Todorov. Second, the researcher will examine the form of the feminist issues that represented through the female characters in the novel *A Place for Us*.

### 1.3. Review of Related Literature

The first related study is from article "A Feminist Discourse of Mirza's *A Place for Us*" (2022) by Ringphaso Zimik. This article explains the feminist issues that happened to the female characters in *A Place for Us*. The author made this analysis based on the female characters in the novel but only focused on a few characters, namely Hadia, Layla, and Amira. This article analyzes the narrative from the perspective of the female characters' struggles and journeys in the patriarchal Muslim society. The result of this research is that the female characters in the novel do not all adhere to the traditional principles of Indian culture that their families adhere to. However, several characters have the characteristics of being accessible and robust enough to achieve their dreams and desires. One of these characters is Hadia. This research has the same topic as the thesis I wrote, so this article helped a

lot in my research. Overall, this article has a relatively in-depth discussion of feminism and uses sentences that are easy to understand.

The next related study is "A Narratology Analysis on Jun Chiu's *Crop Circles*" (2020) by Dini Oktavia. This is a thesis that focuses on the elements of the narrative and the function of the narrator in the literary work that is the object. It uses the narrative approach by Genette (1980) because the analysis focuses on the elements of narrative found in the silent comic Jun Chiu's *Crop Circles*. In this thesis, the researcher explains the four categories of narrative elements and the researcher also gives examples of the four elements. The analysis of the qualitatively data using the analysis phase of Miles, Huberman and Saldana. The result of this research shows the elements of narrative found in Jun Chiu's *Crop Circle* those are narrative mood, narrative instance, simultaneous narration. Overall, this research has the interesting review about the Jun Chiu's work. The thesis also gives me new insight about narratives theory, it also can be used to analyze the illustrated comics by looking at the meaning behind the images and arranged according to the storyline shown in the comics.

The next related study is "The Structure of Narrative in Cormac Mccarthy's *Child of God*" (2013) by William C. Scott. This thesis different with the first thesis, the first one focuses on the elements of the narrative while this thesis focuses on the structure of narrative. The writer explained and described about the novel that used for object of this thesis and also add some critique from another critiques about this novel. In this thesis, Scott

gives his argument about the structure narrative in this novel. The finding of this research about the novel *Child of God*, is about the tellers and their construction of moral truth, that the seven local narratives have a greater significance than as mere exposition to the dominant *Child of God* narrative that the most critiques. This research shows the good explanation about the structure the narrative, but there is not much explanation about the theory or about the definition of the structure of narrative that he wanted to write in this thesis.

The next related study is "Conrad and Narrative Theory: A Narratological Reading of Selected Novels of Joseph Conrad" (2013) by Vali Gholami. In this thesis Vali talked about narratology reading of selected novels of Joseph Conrad from different term of his career (early, middle, and late). In this research, for the chapter one Vali establishes the theoretical framework of the thesis, reviewing relevant narrative theory in its pre-narratological. In the chapter two, Vali talked about how Conrad's taking advantage of distance and focalization makes *Almayer's Folly* a first novel with European imperialism. This thesis uses the postmodern narratology of Patrick O'Neill and Lyotard's grand and local narratives. The author explains the contents of this thesis well, so it is easy to understand. The contents of this thesis are also interesting to read and can help people understand how to analyze a literary work using narrative theory. Overall, this thesis has covered and explained parts of the contents of the thesis that will be explained.

The next related study is "*The Portrayal of Sisterhood in Liane*

*Moriarty's Blh Little Lies Novel*" (2018) by Irma Noor Fitriastari. In the abstract, we see that the author finding of the study is shows that sisterhood traits depicted by the three female characters is considered as the ideal one by carrying the same spirit with what bell Hooks' expected within sisterhood. Furthermore, sisterhood managed to overcome patriarchal dominance by raising consciousness within women. The finding also shows that the strength of sisterhood lies within the characteristics of women themselves. In my opinion, this article shows interesting finding about how the researcher portrays the sisterhood in that work, in addition the study can make the reader, especially woman, become more aware about the true power of sisterhood rather than manipulate it for granted.

The next related research is "Women In Islam: Challenging toxic narratives and stereotypes against Muslim Women" (2021) by SIHA. The Women in Islam offers an opportunity for Muslim women to be a resource in addressing the several misconceptions to set the records straight about them and Islam. The research aims "to promote progressive voices on gender equality and justice" through its publications in analyzing the gender relations in Islam. The article is a product of the Strategic Initiative for women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) documenting the several "human rights violations and the stories of marginalized women". The article does not only serve as an information, education and advocacy tool, but also holds the potential to change the mindsets of readers about the status of women in Islam. The article talked about Muslim women to have a safe space to be authentic,

genuine and free without being judged for expressing themselves because against all odds.

The next related research is *The Emergence of Feminism Among Indian Muslim Women* book by Azra Asghar Ali (1920-1947). Azra Asghar Ali's book on Muslim women in pre-independence India. In India, however, this growing body of work on women deals mostly with Hindu women. In contrast, the experiences of women of other communities, including that of Muslim women, remain grossly understudied. Ali's main goal in her book is to study "the chain of developments that gradually opened up a space for Muslim women" in the decades before independence, and in turn facilitated the "emergence of feminism" among them. In this book, Ali focuses on the transformations in specific education institutions, health care, society, and politics. This book is very interesting because it explains feminism among Muslim women in India. This book is quite detailed, and the analysis is easy to understand.

The next related research is "*Woman and Family in Recent Indian Feminist Fiction in English: A Select Study*" (2011) by G. Ruby Davaseeli. This thesis discusses women and families in India. This thesis focuses on feminist issues that occur to Indian women and the systems in Indian families. The author, Davaseeli, makes this thesis easy to understand because he writes and explains the issues well. However, there are similarities in the related studies I discussed previously; namely, they both discuss women's issues in India. This thesis is related to my study because



my research also discusses issues experienced by Indian women.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

*A Place for Us* by Fatima Mirza as the object of research, the researcher decided to formulate two questions to be answered in the results and research chapter which are classified as follows:

1. How is the narrative used in the novel *A Place for Us* to structure its plot and character development?
2. What kinds of feminist issues that represented through the female characters in her novel *A Place for Us*?

#### **1.5. Scope of the Research**

There are some issues discussed in *A Place for Us*. In order to make the analysis clear, compact, and not out of the topic, the writer sets several limitations for this research. This study focuses on a topic that discusses the narrative structure and the feminist issues that depicted in the novel.

#### **1.6. Objectives of the Research**

This research aims to examine what kind of feminist aspects happen to the character in the novel and it will be explained by using the narrative theory. For this research, the researcher wants to explain about the narrative structure in the novel by using theory by Todorov. The researcher also wants to explain about the feminist issues told by the author in the novel in order to understand what kind of feminist issues happen to the female characters.

