

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

Point of view or narrative perspective is how a text presents persons, events, and settings (Klarer, 20: 1999). It is an intrinsic element in a novel. Point of view is the eyes through which readers see any given part of the narrative (Tyson, 2006). Point of view plays a role in which it helps the readers be aware of what position they are in. In Klarer, it has mentioned three types of points of view: first-person point of view, second-person point of view, and third-person point of view. Each of these points of view presents the story differently. Usually, a novel has only one point of view, which is mostly a third-person point of view or first-person point of view. In some novels, the story was told using several point of view or multiple points of view.

Multiple points of view are a novel that is told from the point of view of different numbers of participants involved in a specific event or part of the novel. Novels with multiple points of view go against the majority of narrative fiction's conventional linear, chronological, and single-voiced structure, which is usually told from the perspective of the main character and focuses on the main character but are written in the third person (Koss, 2009). Through the perspectives, the reader can see the story from more than one point of view. Some writers combine this type of point of view, called a multiple perspective narrative of multiple points of view, such as *One of Us Is Lying* by Karen M. McManus, *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins, and *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison.

Toni Morrison is a great writer who has been nominated and received every significant literary honor. Some of them are the Nobel Prize for Literature, Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, National Book Award (nomination), American Book Award, four months on the best-sellers' list, two books in different genres listed simultaneously on the best-sellers' list, Book-of-the-Month Club selection. During her lifetime, she has published many well-known works such as *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), and many others publications that she has made (Jimoh, 2002).

A Mercy was recognized as Morrison's ninth novel. This novel was first published by Alfred A. Knopf Publishers in 2008. *A Mercy* raises historical events that examine slavery in the seventeenth century, particularly in the seventeenth. Similar to Morrison's other works, this novel pictures the domination of the upper class, the domination of white races, economic problems, and the survival of the immigrants during the European colonization. The opinions and perspectives on slavery might be different for each person. *A Mercy* was written in two types of points of view; first person point of view and third person point of view. It makes the reader can see how perspectives in the novel can differ. It was also majorly told from the main character's point of view and yet by the other seven characters.

This research is an inquiry into Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* that will be objective research. Abrams (1993) revealed the objective approach is an approach to literary study that emphasizes the intrinsic element of a literary work itself. This thesis will address and analyze the novel's point of view. This topic is taken because

Morrison presents the first-person narrator as a significant character who plays the center of narration and then shifts to the third-person point of view. It was not only told from the main character's perspective only. Based on the explanation above, the researcher would like to entitle this research to be "An Analysis of Point of View in Novel *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison."

1.2 Identification of Problems

In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison uses first-person and third-person points of view. Uniquely, this novel is told by more than one character, not only by the main character, or it is called multiple points of view. This is an intriguing subject to study since a novel typically only presents the story from one or two points of view. Multiple points of view are used to let the reader know all the available information from a certain scene from each point of view of the character (Rasley, 2008). Based on how each character tells their stories, this writing style helps readers comprehend them better. A remarkable point in *A Mercy* is in its last chapter, where *Minha mãe* (Florens' mother) reveals that Florens would neither know nor understand. It makes the novel more interesting because each character has a different point of view and also different information, but it is still cohesive. It then becomes questionable how the point of view in the novel was arranged so the story's plot becomes cohesive and united perfectly.

1.3 Review of Related Studies

The researcher collected several studies to arrange this literature review. As for related studies, the researcher reviewed four previous studies dealing with the analysis of point of view and the analysis of the novel *A Mercy* itself. Those reviews

related to the level of point of view and the use of multiple points of view, types of perspectives, kinds of point of view, and uniqueness and beneficial reasons to use first person point of view. Besides those four articles, the researcher also reviewed two articles that talk about the novel *A Mercy* itself. Those two are about slavery life especially for African-American women.

The first article is from Andhara (2019). In her thesis, she discusses the level of point of view and the use of multiple points of view in the novel *One of Us is Lying*. Adhara (2019) examines level of point of view based on Rasley's theory. The results of this study show that of the 4 points of view presented in the novel, the author applies all levels to Bronwyn and Addy, five levels to Cooper (except deep immersion), and only two levels to Nate (camera eye and thought). Then, the use of multiple points of view in fiction creates tension, shows individual perspectives of characters, and develops each character. The author uses multiple points of view to create new stories for each character so that the characters have their own narrative stories but still have a relation to the main story. Multiple points of view are used to contrast the knowledge, perceptions, goals, and interpretations of each character in the story and compare their differences, including their characterizations. Multiple points of view are used to let the reader know all the available information from each character that can make the reader know more about one character based on the perspective of other characters.

Along with Adhara's research, Dumančić and Oklopčić (2017) also explore the multiple third-person points of view that they found in the young adult novel series *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie Stiefvater. Based on the theory proposed by

Rasley about perspective, where this research focuses on distinguishing perspective (how a character perceives the world and characters around them) and POV (who tells the story). This article analyzed three types of perspectives occurring in the novel series: the character's perception of himself/herself, how the character is perceived by other characters, and how the reader may perceive the character based on the narrator's/other characters' perception. They state that each character may have a different viewpoint of the same scene because of their experiences, differing personalities, backgrounds, and relationships. It then shapes their personality and how they see the world. Uniquely, this novel has similarities to *A Mercy*, in which there is a perspective of a character that appears least in the novel, only present in a chapter of the final novel, namely Noah Czerny. It is similar to *A Mercy* in that the final chapter is told from the perspective of Mianhe (Floren's mother). Dumančić and Oklopčić (2017) believed "if his perspective had come any sooner than the climax of the series, it would have diminished its importance" (55). Another work that uses Rasley's theory is Jennifer Alanentalo. She analyzed *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. This work focused on narration, perception, introspection, and voice. The finding shows that the characters as individuals because the story is told from two different first-person perspectives side by side.

The next is Fikriani (2014) in her thesis, she revealed the kinds of point of view found in *Bad Boy* fan fiction based on Minderop's theory of point of view. There was physical point of view that consisted of position of place and position of time, mental point of view that showed the character being brave, steadfast, honest,

supportive, and patient, and personal point of view which showed that the author used second person point of view in narrating the story. Fikriani (2014) provides some data to strengthen her findings. Lastly, she mentioned some advantages of the second-person point of view used in *Bad Boy* fan fiction based on the interview conducted with the author. The advantages are to make the reader more than an observer, to give a new different experience, and to let the reader question the story more personally.

The last article about point of view was written by Wang Xiaokang (2021). The article analyzes the point of view in *A Rose for Emily* by Faulkner. It adopted theories proposed by both narratologists and stylists, which explore the uniqueness of first-person point of view, transition and transgression of point of view, and omission of point of view. Those explorations will get to the thematic and aesthetic effects. As the findings in the uniqueness of the first-person point of view, Xiaokang explained three beneficial reasons to use first person point of view in the short story *A Rose for Emily*, including to make the possibility of narrating the whole life story of Emily, to create the effect that “we” as the narrator is more authoritative and reliable than the single narrator because somebody’s opinions do not narrate it but more like agreement of the whole community or townspeople, and lastly to shorten the psychic distance between the story and reader because it creates an illusion that the reader is also the witness of the story. The other uniqueness of the short story is the transition from teller-character to reflector-character. Regarding the reflector-character, the reader can see the things that townspeople cannot see, like Emily’s secret room, scanning over the decorations and settings, or spotting the

dead man in bed. Xiaokang (2021) believes the transformation can “make the whole story structure like that of mountain, solid at the foot and steep at the top” (94).

The next article is from Ágnes Zsófia Kovacson, entitled “Body Marks of The Past in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy* and *Home*.” She wrote that Morrison usually focuses on how African-American women experience their blackness, how they remember slavery and its legacies, racism, and colourism (2021). This article tends to use new criticism since it focuses on the intrinsic element of the novels, and it uses Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “sense memory” to explore traumatic memories of the slave past. Kovacs mentioned that Florens’s transformation is marked both by her hardened soles and her sprawling writing on the wall of the new house after she went back from fetching the blacksmith. Kovacs believed that Florens’ hardened body indicates her emotional experiences as she becomes more self-reliant and reflective.

The last article written by Amanda Putnamin 2015 which can support the finding of the previous study from Kovacs. On her writing, Putman believed that Black women’s characters in Morrison’s works frequently have emotional and/or physical scars from the harsh environments that surround them. Putman says that those female characters were constrained by the society where they seem to have no option in their life because they are powerless. It is in line with what Kovacs wrote on his proposal that Florens’s character was build not only because of the absence of her mother but it is more because of people surround her. Putman used feminism in her article that give a strength to her article whereas she believes that female characters in *A Mercy* and some others of Toni Morrison’s works remain

powerful, dominant, and intriguing.

These researches have contributed to the researcher in collecting data and choosing theory. Based on all the reviews of related studies above, it can be concluded that point of view is important in developing a story because it shapes the plot and lets the reader see the story through some particular perspective. The perspective used to tell the story has a level that can be analyzed based on what people see and hear to what they can see deeper in emotion.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the previous sub-chapter, the researcher is going to formulate the research questions into:

1. What level of multiples point of view are employed in the novel *A Mercy*?
2. How useful is multiple points of view in the running of the story in *A Mercy*?

1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of this research focuses on one of the intrinsic elements, namely point of view. The researcher will only focus on the viewpoints in the novel *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison. The research will be done using a new criticism approach and theory on the point of view proposed by Alicia Rasley. The limitation of this research is to see the level of point of view in *A Mercy* and its use in building the story.

1.6 Objective of The Study

This research is focused on the point of view that is shown in the novel *A Mercy*. The researcher will analyze the levels of point of view employed in *A Mercy* based on the theory that Alicia Rasley proposes. Furthermore the researcher will analyze the use of multiple points of view in running the novel as whole.

