

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the research, the scope of the study, research questions, and aims of the study, research method, data collection and data analysis, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

In recent years the issues about women are always interesting. Women are starting to question their roles and positions in the society. For centuries, the image of weak, useless and irrational have been labeled to women. Women have been regarded to be inferior to men physically and intellectually.

The issue which puts women as immanence in the society becomes one of the main concern of feminism. Since feminism views that men and women are equal, it then, raise the awareness to establish a better position for women. In addition, it attracts women's attention because women themselves want to get the same right as those of men.

Liberal feminism believes that all people are created equal; education is a significant means to change. Furthermore, liberal feminism wants to liberate women from an oppressive point of view towards women's roles which used as a disclaimer to give lower positions, or not at all, to women in both academic and society setting (Tong, 1998).

Liberal feminism is rooted from liberalism which emphasizes on protecting civil freedom such as right of possession, right of voting and right of conveying and delivering ideas. These rights are prevailed for all individuals, both men and women.

Wollstonecraft, a feminist liberalism cited in Tong (1998) critiques the negative perception toward women. She asserts that women have the same capacity in education, so women have the same right to develop their logic through education. In addition, by means of education, women can be independent decision makers so that they can decide their own life without always fulfilling men's demand. Thus, if women are used to fulfill men's happiness and perfection, women are treated unfairly and not accordance with their status as intact human being (Tong, 1998).

Liberal feminism is also grounded on the oppression of women in political field that is women are not allowed to convey their idea in public discussion and not allowed to vote. Both man and wife, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill believe that women have to have their own vote rights in order to be as equal as men. In this respect, they both considers that to vote is to be in position in which one can express his personal political perspective and available to reconstruct the existing system, structure, and attitude that contribute to other people oppression (Tong, 1998). In fact, sex and gender equality will be achieved by giving women the same right in political and educational field as men (Tong, 1998).

Based on some notes above, the writer is interested in studying the feminist issue in the novel *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink. This novel has been

made into a huge successful film starring Kate Winslet as the main female character. The story is very interesting to read and analyze because it presents many aspects about life and moral value that can be learned. The writer is interested in investigating the main female character that becomes the central character in the novel, especially in what she does in her life. The writer also wants to analyze what gender roles the main female character plays in the story.

The root of social injustice towards women can be traced through gender differences. Gender differences eventually lead to the role of gender. It establishes men and women's roles in the society. Roles can be defined as the importance of one's function (Anonymous, 2007). The definition of social role is that it represents the way someone is expected to behave in a particular social situation. Eagly (1987) asserts that gender roles consist of shared expectations about behavior that applied to people based on their socially identified sex.

The kind of roles a certain gender has is shaped by the social construction. Males have different roles from females because our society views that males and females have different roles and expectations. A simple example is what is seen from the roles of parents in a family. Wood (1994) states that children observe what mothers and fathers do, using parents as models for themselves. For instance, a son tends to do what his father does such as repairing the car, moving heavy stuff, while a girl follows what her mother does such as cleaning and cooking. This way, children adopt gender roles.

Moreover, women and men share different jobs referring to the traditional roles. The one who goes to work outside home is man while woman is staying at

home. Woman is not allowed to join the army as the novel *The Reader* described and as Ingleheart and Noris (2003) argued that traditional societies are characterized by sharply differentiated gender roles that discourage women from working outside the home. Departing from this idea, oftentimes man must become a leader or always has a higher position than woman. It becomes the determinant of the social roles of women and men.

The Reader is the story of Michael, a young boy's sexual initiation and attraction for an enigmatic older woman, Hanna, a 36-year-old a working women and as an SS guard at Auschwitz, a camp concentration in Poland. In time she becomes his lover and she inexplicably disappears. When Michael next sees her, he is a young law student, and Hanna is on trial for a terrible crime. Hanna is being accused in a crime related to the Nazis. As he watches her refuse to defend her innocence, Michael gradually realizes that Hanna may be guarding a secret she considers more shameful than murder.

The minority people, especially women like Hanna, often become the victims of social and political changes. Thus, the novel then was analyzed through feminist criticism perspective to see how woman is positioned in political and social settings as depicted in the novel.

1.2 The Scope of the Study

This research provides an analysis in the light of feminist literary criticism. However, the issues of feminism are so broad and dynamic in the sense that it continues to develop, thus the writer tries to limit the study. The writer limits the research around the issues involving the main character –Hanna Schmitz— in Bernhard Schlink’s novel entitled *The Reader* using liberal feminist literary criticism point of view, which focuses on gender equity between men and women, particularly gender roles, in the political setting of Germany around the year of 1939-1945.

1.3 Research Questions

The research question of this study is:

In what ways are gender roles subverted in Bernhard Schlink’s Novel *The Reader*?

1.4 Aims of the Study

Given the formulation of research question above, the aim of the study is to investigate how gender roles are subverted in Bernhard Schlink’s novel *The Reader* within the perspective of liberal feminism.

1.5 Research Method

When a problem has been identified, the writer selects a suitable tool or method to investigate it. As the research paradigm, the writer in this study will use qualitative descriptive method. This method is emphasizing on the researched elements in order to understand the problem that the writer will examine and mainly concerned with the properties, the state and the character. According to Nazir (1983), descriptive method is a method used in the researches of an object, a set of condition, a system of thought and even that take places in the present. In order to analyze the topic, the writer will conduct feminist criticism to explore the portrayal of woman character in the perspective of liberal feminist.

1.6 Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this study, the data are collected from the novel, entitled *The Reader* written by Bernhard Schlink. The data are also taken from the other sources, such as books, online articles and research papers.

The study will be conducted to the following steps:

1. Collecting the data

In collecting the data, the writer chooses a novel, and then the documentation study will be used as the secondary data. The data collected in the form of textual evidences which identify the portrayal of female in the novel based on specific gender roles issues. Those data are derived from some utterances, expression, attitude, thought, etc. The data then classified in accordance with the portrayal of main female character.

2. Analyzing the data

In analyzing the data, the writer employs feminist literary criticism to explore the topic mentioned. The gender roles of main women character in the text will be analyzed first. It is used to gain the valid information about the text and enable the writer to comprehend the author wants to extend. The analysis will start with identifying the issues of gender roles in political setting in which the main female character is positioned.

3. Interpreting the data

Finally, in the next chapter, the writer interprets and discussed the analyzed data and converts them into a depth description of gender roles in society.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

- a. **Gender roles** consist of shared expectation about behavior that applied to people based on their socially identified sex (Eagly, 1987).
- b. **Liberal Feminism** maintains the women and men are alike in important respect and women should have the same economic, political, professional, and civic opportunities and right as man (Wood 1994).
- c. **Social and politics conditions in German during 1939-1945** it was the condition during World War II, when German under Hitler and the Nazi. In this period also, the Holocaust happened. Many Germans hoped Hitler would bring order to a nation suffering economic depression, mass unemployment, social disorder, and political instability. Hitler's brand of fascism combined

several elements: extreme nationalism, militarism, racism, and anti-Semitism. At the end of the war, millions of refugees were homeless, the European economy had collapsed, and most of the European industrial infrastructure was destroyed. (www.germanculture.com.ua).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

The paper consists of five chapters:

- **Chapter I**

This chapter is the introduction that consists of the background of this study, literature review, the scope of the study, research questions, aims of the study, research methods, clarification of terms and organizations of the paper.

- **Chapter II**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework of the study that provides the basis theory for this research.

- **Chapter III**

This chapter contains the research method of the study, including the data collection and data presentation.

- **Chapter IV**

This chapter provides the result of the research and contains of the findings and the discussion.

- **Chapter V**

This chapter is the conclusion of the study and suggestion for further study.

