

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Literature is a form of art that uses written works to create stories that take inspiration from real-life events from different perspectives and periods. Wellek and Warren (1956) define literature as a reflection of human feelings and experiences in the form of written works. It serves as a medium to discuss and address social realities and issues, which can be analyzed and interpreted through various approaches in order to understand the meaning.

Many literary works explore and criticize various things in the real world as their central themes, such as social issues and cultural norms. These works can then be studied using the sociology of literature approach. The sociology of literature is a branch that studies humans and their social implications through literary works (Damono, 1979). Nurholis (2019) supports the understanding of the sociology of literature as an approach to see literary works as a reflection of how social factors such as class, race, gender, ideology, and politics influence literary works.

One of the most widely raised social themes in literary works is gender inequality, where women are seen as inferior to men in their personal and professional lives. A study by Allanana and Makama (2013) states that the majority of people believe women hold a lower status and have less authority than men due to their predominantly domestic roles. The belief of gender inequality raises social issues such as power imbalance which contains unequal treatment, opportunities, and rights against women in various aspects of life.

Therefore, the socio-political movements and ideology of feminism emerged. According to Hooks (2000), feminism is the belief and aim that women must have the same rights and opportunities as well as ending oppression, discrimination, sexism, and exploitation towards them. Feminism evolves through different waves that represent distinct periods of focus and activism. The first wave of feminism inspired the abolitionist movement, in which women focused on women's suffrage or the right to choose as the issue. The second wave centered

around civil rights and women's liberation, where women began to find jobs outside the traditional stereotype. The third wave, postfeminism, focused on women's individuality and diversity. Lastly, the fourth wave, referred to as the "Me-Too" movement, emerges as a response to the surrounding harassment and violence targeted at women on social media and the flawed systems that enable such misconduct to persist.

The social issues above are often used as a theme in literary works. The social issues of gender inequality and feminism in literary works, such as novels, drama and film scripts, song lyrics, and more, are often related to women's authorship and the representation of women's conditions (Barry, 2017: 107). Therefore, I am interested in analyzing a novel related to gender inequality and feminism, specifically postfeminism entitled *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo is a novel by Taylor Jenkins Reid, published on June 13, 2017. Taylor Jenkins Reid was born in 1982 in Maryland, United States. She is a New York Times bestselling author of novels such as *Carrie Soto is Back*, *Malibu Rising*, and *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo tells the story of Evelyn Hugo, a Hollywood actress and film legend in the 1950s. The book is written as a biography in chronological order following Evelyn's personal life and career to uncover the truth about her glamorous and scandalous life with each of her seven ex-husbands.

Evelyn Herrera grows up in a poor Cuban family with her mother and an abusive father in Hell's Kitchen, New York City. She is beautiful, with shiny brown hair and light bronze skin, and dreams of becoming an actress in Hollywood. Evelyn has puberty faster than girls her age, which changes every part of her body. She then quickly realizes that grown men would look at her, particularly her developing body parts, and seduce her in exchange for something. Eventually, Evelyn learns that her appearance and sexual appeal can be used as an advantage to get the things she wants. Evelyn eventually marries her first husband, Ernie Diaz, to escape Hell's Kitchen and move to Hollywood.

Evelyn immediately started her career as an actress at Sunset Studio. There, she will only get small parts because of her ethnicity. She is also deemed not to fit the entertainment industry's beauty standards and criteria for becoming a leading actress, many of whom are white and blonde. Evelyn knows that the only way to get the role is to change herself from her name to her looks. She is also aware that she has to seduce or even sleep with a much older producer to get the same treatment. Evelyn learns to wield her sexual power to achieve success and gains control over how her sexual image is perceived by her audience, creating scandalous stories and a successful life that masks the truth about her true self.

Therefore, I am interested in analyzing the main female character and the postfeminism theme that exists in the novel. It is still a relevant reality that women are still sexually objectified and cannot make their own choices, whether in the work industry or anywhere else.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem, I identify the problem of this research in the main character, Evelyn Hugo, who demands freedom and to be treated as equals. Evelyn uses her appeals to gain advantages in her life. The novel describes her as determined and confident in making her choices. She is not hesitant to use her sexual attraction to satisfy the male gazes in order to achieve success in Hollywood, where women are often portrayed as having the traditional roles of wife and mother, and those who are not married are depicted as unattractive.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problem, I limit this research to postfeminism sensibility by Rosalind Gill. I think it is suitable to analyze Evelyn Hugo in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* using Gill's theory of postfeminism. Gill describes the term postfeminism as women's empowerment as doing it yourself" and "to find pleasure." I use Gill's theory of postfeminism to analyze and find the actions that reflect postfeminism in the novel.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the limitation of the problem above, I identify the formulation of the problem to prove the reflection of postfeminism on the main character in *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* as follows:

1. What is the characterization of Evelyn Hugo in relation to the postfeminism found in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*?
2. What are the functions of the plot in building the postfeminism theme in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*?
3. What are the functions of the setting in building the postfeminism theme in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

Based on the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to find and present the reflection of postfeminism of Evelyn Hugo as the main character in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. I would like to carry out the following steps:

1. To analyze and explain the characterization of Evelyn Hugo in relation to postfeminism in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.
2. To analyze and explain the function of the plot in building the theme of postfeminism in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.
3. To analyze and explain the function of the setting in building the theme of postfeminism in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

1.6 Benefit of the Research

This research is expected to provide the following benefits:

1. This research is submitted in the hope of fulfilling the requirements for obtaining *Sarjana Linguistik (S.Li)* degree.
2. This research is expected to provide information for those who are interested in the related topic of the Sociology of Literature and Postfeminism.

3. This research is also expected to be helpful as a reference for students in the literature field or any readers.

1.7 Systematic Organization of the Research

The framework of the term paper titled *The Reflection of Postfeminism of The Main Character in the novel The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is as follows:

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the phases of the research layout, such as the background of the problem, identification of the problem, limitation of the problem, formulation of the problem, objective of the research, benefit of the research, and systematic organization of the research.

CHAPTER 2 : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter consists of the theoretical approach that is related to the research problem, which is as follows: “Intrinsic Analysis of Characterization, Plot, and Setting,” “Sociology of Literature,” and “Postfeminism Theory.”

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter contains information about the research method used to analyze and arrange the research based on time and location, research approach and method, and data analysis technique.

CHAPTER 4 : THE REFLECTION OF POSTFEMINISM IN THE NOVEL *THE SEVEN HUSBANDS OF EVELYN HUGO*

This chapter explains the research problem analysis elaborated by Gill’s theory.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

This chapter gives the result of the research analysis and suggests the next researcher with a similar analysis topic.

