

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Bad things can happen but they only take up few pages of your story and anyone can survive a few pages. It happens to Laura Shurrock Courser in the novel *Tender Mercies* by Rosellen Brown who tries to survive from the trials that she has to face. She has to accept the tragedy that caused by her husband. She is really in bad situation because she loses a very precious thing in her life that makes her totally change. This novel not only shows about the power of love can conquer heart but also explains about the traumatic experience that makes people feel suffered.

Rosellen Brown was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to an American-born father and a Russian immigrant mother. She earned her BA from Barnard College and attended Brandeis University, where she met her future husband, Marvin Hoffman. The couple joined the Civil Rights movement, working at Tougaloo College near Jackson, Mississippi. While Hoffman continued a career in education, founding the North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School in Chicago, Brown turned to writing full-time. Her first book was the poetry collection *Some Deaths in the Delta* (1970); other collections include *Cora Fry* (1977) and *Cora Fry's Pillow Book* (1994). Brown is the author of the short story collection *Street Games* (1974) and many novels, including *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1976); *Tender Mercies* (1978); *Civil Wars* (1984); *Before and After* (1992), which was made into a film starring Meryl Streep and Liam Neeson; and *Half a Heart* (2000). (Poetry Foundation)

Tender Mercies tells the story of married couple, Laura Shurrock Courser and Dan Courser who have live happily for twelve years. They have young children named Jonathan and Hallie Lavender. One day everything has changes, when Laura and Dan come to Los Angeles for a vacation. They feel bored with the atmosphere in Hyland. They meet Laura's cousin too. At that time, he wants to take Laura fishing in Palisades. Then, he borrows the boat of her cousin. He confidently tells Laura that he can ride it. Suddenly, he cannot control the boat. It causes an accident that makes Laura paralyzed from neck down. It makes her permanently unable to

move or feel the arms and legs. It is associated with a variety of emotional reactions like despair and guilt, fear of losing control, disbelief and panic, helplessness and inadequacy, resentment & bargaining, loss of interests, loneliness and isolation.

After the accident she does many treatments that makes her suffered. She not only has to do rehabilitation in New York for a year but also has to do routine maintenance after she is coming out from the Rehabilitation Institute. She receives the pain mentally and physically. The accident scene always turns on her mind. She becomes traumatic. She feels no longer the same after the accident, she always feels frightened and hopeless. Traumatic effect not only makes her emotion unstable like sometimes angry, sad and calm but also makes Laura often has nightmares that always aggravates her trauma. It makes her have to consume sleeping pills. It makes her feel ease a little bit.

In other hand, the accident gives impact to Laura and Dan's marriage. The accident makes their relationship become wide apart. The love that used for Dan is full of intimacy, passion and commitment, now everything has changed. She hates the fact that she loses her beautiful and perfect life because of Dan. All the time, she always blames him and tries to ignore whatever he does or he tells. She tries to make him feel overwhelmed and depressed deal with her. She lets her husband be always pressured by Laura's parents and her sister, Carol. She almost thinks to end her relationship with Dan, but she remembers she has young children that still needs full of love and affection from their parents. In many months, she makes Dan feel punishment by his carelessness. However, Dan tries to stay very patient and he tries to return Laura's love.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the issue above, I identify that the problem of the research is a boat accident that caused by Dan and it makes Laura paralyzed. She becomes traumatic because of the accident. The traumatic effect of the painful tragedy drastically alters the course of their lives forever. The accident gives impact to their relationship, Laura's love is tested by this trial. I assume that the theme of this novel is traumatic experience and the power of love in Rosellen Brown's novel *Tender Mercies*

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problem above, I limit on the problem of the novel as follows:

Theory and concepts that I will apply as follow:

1. Through intrinsic approach: characterization – showing and telling methods, setting, plot, and theme.
2. Through extrinsic approaches which are the psychology of literature and the psychology of personality: traumatic experience and love concept from Robert J. Steinberg

D. Statement of the research

Based on the limitation of the problem above, I formulate the problem that the theme of this novel is *traumatic experience and the power of love*. To answer this question I formulate the problem as follows :

1. What are the characterization of this novel through showing and telling methods?
2. What are the setting and plot of this novel ?
3. What are the concepts of traumatic experience and love through the characterization, setting and plot?
4. What does the theme of this novel reinforce through the result of analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches?

E. Objective of the Research

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the purpose of this research to prove that the theme of this novel is traumatic experience and the power of love in Rosellen Brown's novel *Tender Mercies*. To achieve this purpose, I take some steps as follows :

1. To analyze the characterization of this novel through showing and telling methods.
2. To analyze the setting and plot of this novel.
3. To analyze this novel by elaborating the concepts of with the characterization, setting and plot.
4. To reinforce the theme by using the result of analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches.

F. Methods of the Research

Based on the framework of the theories above, I use qualitative method. Qualitative methods is a broad term that can be applied to a range of research approaches that have their theoretical origins in a range of disciplines, include anthropology, sociology, philosophy, social psychology and linguistics. Although considerable diversity exists in the type of studies that can be described as 'qualitative', it is possible to define a set of core characteristics. Those are study of literature, and interpretative character of research or analysis by collecting data which is the literature text of the novel entitled *Tender Mercies* by Rosellen Brown as the primary source and it is supported by other literature which relates to the concepts as the secondary source. Those are from several books such as the books entitled *Concise Companion to Literature* by James H. Pickering and Jeffrey D. Hoeper, also from some websites.

G. Benefit of the Research

Based on the methods of the research above, this study is expected to be beneficial for those who are interested in getting deeper knowledge of the novel entitled *Tender Mercies* by Rosellen Brown. This study is expected to be useful because it is done through a new perspective by applying the concepts of traumatic experience and love that included in the field of psychology literature that shown as something new and uncovered for the next study.

H. Systematic Organization of the Research

Based on the benefits of research above, systematic organization of this research is arranged as follows:

Related with the title of this research, the systematic presentation is written as follows:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

It consists of: Background of the Problem, Identification of Problem, Limitation of the Problem, Formulation of the Problem, The Objectives of the Research, The Method of the Research, The Benefits of the Research, The Organizational Presentation.

CHAPTER II: FRAMEWORK OF THEORIES

It consists of: The explanation of the concepts and theories. It includes intrinsic and extrinsic approach. Intrinsic approach is characterization – showing and telling methods. While, through extrinsic approach, I use theoretical framework – psychological approach that is traumatic experience and love

CHAPTER III: ROSELLEN BROWN'S NOVEL TENDER MERCIES THROUGH INTRINSIC APPROACHES

It consists of analysis of characterization of Laura Shurrock Courser and Dan Courser by using telling and showing methods. And also consist of setting and plot of *Tender Mercies* novel.

CHAPTER IV: TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND THE POWER OF LOVE IN ROSELLEN BROWN'S NOVEL TENDER MERCIES

It consists of analysis of the novel which reflects of traumatic experience and love concepts from Robert J. Steinberg.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

It consist of conclusion that shows the theme of this novel is traumatic experience and the power of love in Rosellen Brown's novel *Tender Mercies*.

Attachment Poster of the Research and references