

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the research structure as follows: research background, statement of problems, research purposes, research significance, previous studies, and definition of literary terms.

1.1 Research Background

A work always contains the history behind its creation, both in the past and present. A work is not created for nothing but originates from an experience, admiration, idea, and even anxiety that the creator goes through. Apart from that, quite a few works were born from history, such as colonialism and slavery. Almost all societies living in the world today have experienced colonialism, which has the impact of losing or fading the character of an individual or group of people, which influences morals, ethics, and culture and threatens the survival of a nation. The lives of people who experienced colonialism were then expressed through alternative media, including literature (Ashcroft, 2003). One of the pieces of literature that was born during colonialism was black literature, produced by black people during colonialism and slavery. Black literature was created as a form of the life story of black people who experienced racism, slavery, even violence, and exile since colonial times – starting from speeches, sermons, songs, fairy tales, and proverbs to becoming the main key of black literature or Afro-American literature. Their bluesy and secular songs depict courage, insight, humor, and depictions of the great things in their lives. They created memorable songs that expressed their slavery, and hardship, as well as a form of entertainment and hope (Abarry, 1990). However, this is not an obstacle; it has become an attraction and stepping stone for black literature to continue to develop to this day.

The development of black literature was also followed by theories created directly to criticize literary works written by Afro-American writers. The development of black literary theory and criticism is a form of black people's dissatisfaction with modern theory, which often only relies on studying writing

structure. Therefore, various theories focus on writing structure and discuss the work from cultural, historical, and social perspectives. Black literary critical theory often emphasizes the importance of racial identity and tradition in every literary work. The theory of black literary criticism is different from other theories of literary criticism. Literary critical theory generally questions ideas based on the same universal standards. On the contrary, the theory of black literary criticism places more emphasis on cultural and historical perspectives with different standards, and this is what is attractive to black literary criticism, which can influence many writers and literary critics.

Of the many theories used to criticize black literature, there are two significant theories written directly by an African American that are closely related to black literature, namely the theory of “The Signifying Monkey” proposed by Henry Louis Gates Jr. in 1988, and the Double Consciousness theory proposed by W. E. B. Du Bois at the beginning of the 20th century. These two theories discuss how the traditions characteristic of black literature are present in every literary work produced by the author. In the theory of “The Signifying Monkey”, Gates explains that black literature has Black Vernacular and Double Voiced as traditions of black people, which always appear in every black literary work. Furthermore, in the theory of Double Consciousness, Du Bois explains that every character in black literary works has two identities, as an Afro and an American, or what Du Bois calls Dual Identity. These two identities significantly impact African American individuals because they have difficulty finding their identity. These two significant theories refer to the traditional structure of black literature and have one goal: against racism.

The play was chosen from the many literary genres to apply these theories and produce quality research that can be used as a reference for further research. Drama or play is a literary genre that uses performance to convey it. Drama is a genre of literary work in the form of essays that depicts or illustrates the reality of human life, character, and behavior, where the story is told through roles and dialogue (Lafamane, 2020). If based on literary genre, critics argue that each work has its own genre; there are four: lyric, epic, drama, and prose fiction (Cohen, 1986). Drama contains various characters, storylines, and themes, using performances as

the medium. It should also be remembered that dramatic art only appears when the drama is performed (Stuart, 1913). Because drama is part of literature, drama is often referred to as Dramatic Literature. Dramatic literature itself is a record of the drama scriptwriter's efforts to express and communicate their ideas about hopes, dreams, ideas, feelings, thoughts, and human experiences, as well as a summary of them. Drama, thus, deals with human life in moments of crisis and suffering, with its most intimate relationships with its most profound thoughts and deepest loves and hates. With courage, respect, hope, pride, compassion, mercy, and sacrifice. Thus, drama is not just a description or discussion of events from real life, realistic or naturalistic; drama is a recreation of life (Betti, 2015).

The choice of play to apply these two significant theories is not without reason. If we read research on play, we are often only presented with research that discusses play elements such as theme, plot, characters, characterization, dialogue, setting, and action without addressing the purpose or implied messages, concerns, and problems that the scriptwriter is trying to convey to their audience. Apart from the gap in the object, this research also tries to provide novelty from previous research regarding applying these two theories. Researchers or readers often find “The Signifying Monkey” or “Double Consciousness” theory used to criticize literary works such as novels, essays, and short stories, but this research does not. This research applies the theories of The Signifying Monkey and Double Consciousness to play by using narrative, dialogue, and character descriptions as research data, which is then criticized using these two theories.

In line with the discussion at the beginning that a literary work must have a history, message, concerns, and problems experienced by the author and the surrounding environment, the researcher finally chose a Pipeline play. Pipeline is a play written by an African American named Dominique Morisseau. The Pipeline depicts an education system called the 'school-to-prison Pipeline,' which refers to the national trend of criminalizing rather than educating children. In this system, black students are more likely than their white peers to be suspended, expelled, or arrested for the same kind of conduct. Apart from being based on injustice in implementing the school system, this play is particular because it depicts how black people, especially the main character, Omari, struggle to defend their lives. Omari,

a clever student at an elite private school, has pushed – some say slammed – his teacher into Smartboard. This is the "third strike" at his school, and he will most likely be expelled and prosecuted. The teacher provoked Omari – in the context of the lesson during a discussion of Richard Wright's "Native Son" – about racial issues that made Omari, as the only black student in the class, feel uncomfortable and cornered. Omari asked permission not to be exposed further. The teacher insisted. After not being allowed to leave the room, Omari responded by pushing him. The incident was recorded on another student's cellphone and later posted online.

When compared to other Dominique Morisseau plays, Pipeline depicts how the invisible but real "enemy" of black people. They exploited the innocence and privilege of young people to bring them down, to show that white people were far superior to black people. This play also represents colonialism in modern times that black people experience, such as alienation, exile, and not being considered equal human beings.

On the other hand, the Pipeline play also presents identity problems experienced by its characters as individuals with two social identities (African and American). The characters Omari and Nya, who study, work, and live in a white environment, experience difficulties expressing themselves as individuals with two identities. The pressure that comes from an environment that does not consider Nya and Omari as part of their race, as well as how white people dictate their lives by other white standards, makes Pipeline have much more complex social, racial, traditions, and identity issues than other plays.

Due to the reason above, in the research process with Pipeline as an object and The Signifying Monkey and Double Consciousness as a theory, a big picture can be found regarding the problem of black literature's resistance to white literature. A Pipeline, created by black people and intended as a form of black people's struggle against various racial actions carried out by white people, such as racism, alienation, and injustice through literary works as a forum for conveying concern, is a central topic in this research. The main topic regarding Pipeline is broken down into two topics that can examine in detail what black literary traditions are found in Pipeline

play by Dominique Morisseau and how the structure of the black literary tradition against the white literary tradition.

Based on the topic, object, and theories used in this research, there are two reasons why the researcher took the topic of black literary tradition and identity against white literature using the Pipeline as the research object. First, the researcher realized that the study of Black literature has never focused on the traditions and identity of black literature. Often, black literature is discussed through theories that only reveal the surface of black literature without paying attention to the differences in the writing of the works. This then became the researcher's focus to research using The Signifying Monkey theory by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and the Double-Consciousness theory by W.E.B. DuBois, with the hope of finding black literary traditions in Pipeline as well as the structure of black literary traditions against white literary traditions.

Second, the researcher chose a play written by an African American as the focus of the literary work criticized through the abovementioned theory. The play written by Dominique Morisseau entitled Pipeline is a play that contains the social polemic that Morisseau experienced as a black person (Afro-American) living in a white environment. The themes, writing style, and meaning in Pipeline convinced the researcher to study Pipeline to find out whether it, written by Dominique Morisseau, succeeded in bringing out the traditions of black literature.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the background of Problem can be formulated into the research questions as follows:

1. What is the tradition of black literature found in Pipeline's play?
2. How does the structure of black literary traditions against the white literary tradition in Dominique Morisseau's play Pipeline?

1.3 Research Purposes

Based on the research question formulation above, this research aims to:

1. To discover the tradition of black literature in the Pipeline's play.
2. To determine how black literary traditions structure against white literary traditions.

1.4 Research Significance

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance:

Theoretically, the results of this research are expected to provide significant benefits for researchers, especially for students within the scope of the academic culture and humanity faculty, as well as for literary majors and other people in general in literary criticism evaluation projects on black literary products related to black literary tradition and identity, especially in Pipeline's play. Thus, theoretically, black literary traditions and identities can be studied in literary criticism.

Practically, the significance of the impact of this research can be a basis for the theory of literary criticism. This theory of black literary criticism can practically be used as a reference and development of the science of literary criticism with a focus on black literature, especially for other researchers, students, and Literary practitioners who are in this field, generally for people who want to know more about black literature and literary criticism.

1.5 Previous Studies

The researcher included previous studies to advance knowledge, provide background, context, and to ensure that there were no duplicative efforts in this research regarding topics of black literary traditions resisting white traditions, black identity influencing black literature, and Pipeline as study objects in this research. First, the article *Even Cinderella Is White: (Re) Centering Black Girls' Voices as Literacies of Resistance* by Jemimah L. Young, et al (2018), discusses the black literary tradition that exists in various black literary works such as in the works of Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison functions as a form of resistance to the dominant white literary tradition by providing a narrative that affirms the experiences, equal

rights, and voices of black people, especially black women as a form of resistance to dehumanization, stereotypes, and grand narratives.

Apart from black literary traditions, identity as a black person plays a large part in the process of writing literary works. In the article *Cultural Identity in Black Subjects: the Emergence of New Black Subjects in Beloved* by Tajizadehkan and Ghasemi (2019) use Tony Morrison's novel *Beloved* as the main focus to reveal black identity after slavery. Illustrated by the loss of identity due to dislocation and deprivation of a sense of self post-slavery and how black people's identities are subject to ideas created by grand narratives. Through the novel *Beloved*, Tajizadehkan and Ghasemi explain that black identity functions as a basic element that drives theme exploration, character development, and influences narratives in black literature, and more black identity in black literary narratives is aimed black people against the dominant narrative.

And lastly, *Pipeline* as the object in this study is explained in the article *The Representation of Black Youth in John Singleton's film, Boyz N the Hood, and Dominique Morisseau's play by Linda Kelechi Eronmhonsele* (2022), Eronmhonsele uses *Pipeline* as a comparative work and reveals that *Pipeline* is a play that explains the social issues facing the Black youth. On the other hand, it is said that this *Pipeline* also explains the issue of identity and the absent father in the lives of Black youth. In contrast to this research, the *Pipeline* play is studied through the study of black literary criticism. This is something new in the world of literary research because, in general, the *Pipeline* play is often studied regarding its drama or other things unrelated to the identity of the *Pipeline* play as a product of black literature.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

However, to avoid errors in interpretation, this research provides fundamental concepts in the form of definitions related to terms that hold the intensity of the topic or theme throughout this research.

1. Black Literature

Black Literature is a term for literary works created and written by black people and created for black people. Black literature is literary works created by African-Americans. Black Literature is also the study of African-American literature, which contains matters about slavery and its meaning for the history of America and its relationship to the American ideal of "freedom".

2. Black Literary Tradition

The black literary tradition is a tradition that arose from habits and characteristics which over time have transformed into the identity of black literary works. This black literary tradition emerged from the habits of black people. Apart from that, the black literary tradition cannot be separated from the influence of the slavery era in the formation of black literary works. The black literary tradition often takes the form of dual identities, figurative language, and black vernacular which are attached to every black literary work and become the black literary tradition.

3. Double Consciousness

Double Consciousness describes a feeling where an individual has multiple social identities, making it challenging to develop. The concept of double consciousness is to describe a distinction between one's authentic self and how others perceive it. An individual with double consciousness feels at once like both an American and an African-American and cannot reconcile the two identities.

4. The Signifying Monkey

The Signifying Monkey is a theory of literary criticism coined by Henry Louis Gates Jr. This theory used the figure of a trickster figure from the Yoruba myth related to language. The Signifying Monkey is a figure that becomes a metaphor for revising and deconstructing language. Signifying is tropes or figurative language Afro-Americans speak, with the monkey as the figure. This theory classifies the languages of black people in black literature, such as black vernacular and double-voiced, as the black tradition, which is divided into Tropological Revision, The Speakerly Text, Talking Text, and Rewriting the Speakerly black tradition.

5. Black Vernacular and Double Voiced

In *The Signifying Monkey*, black vernacular and double voice are used to identify black people and as a tradition of black literature. In black literature, the black vernacular is used to identify a theory of criticism in the black vernacular tradition, which informs the shape of the African-American literary tradition and allows the black tradition to speak for itself about its character and its various functions. Besides the black vernacular as the identity and tradition of black literature, the double voice has also become part of the black literary tradition. Double voiced is the trope of the talking book, of double-voiced texts that talk to other texts.

6. *Pipeline*

Pipeline's play is a literary product written by Dominique Morisseau, who is African-American, and because of that, this play is indirectly categorized as black literature. This play tells the story of a system called the "school-to-prison *Pipeline*." This play also discusses the characters' struggles as black people living in a white community.

