CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to describe the introduction of the research. The introduction section is very important in understanding the content of the research conducted. It presents a general description of the research. Consists of six components such as background of the research, statement of problem, research objective, research significance, definition of key terms, and organization of writing.

1.1 Research Background

The stigma against women has evolved and been passed down across generations in society up to the present day. Women are often stereotyped as inherently weak, overly emotional, prioritizing feelings over logic, fearful, easily panicking, anxious, overthinking about everything that may never happen, lacking self-confidence, nurturing, and having low self-esteem, which combined with stereotypes of passivity make them targets of sexual harassment. At the same time, women are sometimes seen as independent, but they are still often categorized as perpetual victims of circumstances. This view has been an enduring issue throughout history, continuing across the centuries.

The impact of stigma that places women in a secondary stratum in society can affect millions of women around the world. This stigma can influence their mindset, leading many women to question their own existence and overlook their

capabilities. Consequently, society's portrayal of women as weak contributes to additional forms of oppression.

With the widespread negative stereotypes about women, numerous literary works have been created to explore women's experiences from varied perspectives. This becomes interesting because many artists highlight gender equality in their works. This phenomenon is based on their belief that literature is not merely a medium of entertainment but also a tool for educating and enlightening society.

Literature is a part of human creation in written form through language. According to Wellek and Warren, literature is everything written that contains ideas and thoughts. Literature is the written product of human activity in expressing their ideas, thoughts, and expressions (Wellek, 1989). Furthermore, according to Pradopo, literary works are a depiction of the world and human life, with the main criteria applied to literary works being *'truth'* or everything the author wishes to depict (Pradopo, 1994). This aligns with Karnataka's opinion that literature serves as a written work reflecting life (Karnataka, 2019). As a reflection of life, literature provides values that can guide people and raise awareness among society regarding social issues. One example is found in the novel titled *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari, which tells the story of a traditional female dancer with the complexities of her life, including social issues, love, human trafficking, and politics. The creation of this novel is based on the realities of life experienced by the author in the 1960s. By reading the novel, readers can gain values and moral lessons to reflect in real life, one of which is the perspective that somebody should

not look down on the profession of a traditional dancer, especially not to consider her merely as an object of desire.

Literary works can also be seen as a form of creative expression through which authors share their ideas. Often, literature serves as a response and protest by the author toward events and issues in their surrounding environment. Through literature, the complexities of human emotions, motivations, and behaviors are explored in depth, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

Literary works come in various forms, including poetry, novels, drama, songs, and more. Novel has an advantage over other types of literary works in their capacity to address complex issues thoroughly. For this reason, the researcher has chosen the novel as the object to be analyzed. As stated by Sitepu, a novel is a prose narrative of considerable length and complexity that imaginatively deals with human experiences, typically through a series of interconnected events involving a group of people within a specific setting (Sitepu, 2020). Novels are preferred due to their larger word count and distinct structure, allowing for greater depth in character development and plot. The lack of word count limitations allows novels to offer greater complexity in characters and storylines. Additionally, novels are particularly engaging for research as they allow readers to immerse themselves in a sequence of events.

One effective theory for uncovering and analyzing meanings within a literary work is semiotic theory. According to Simatupang, semiotics is the study of how messages can be displayed or communicated through signs (Simatupang, 2019).

Everything in the world is a sign, even though some things may not have intrinsic meaning, they can be classified as signs when meaning is assigned to them. Everything in the world carries meaning in the form of words, images, and objects. Contemporary semiotics does not study signs as separate entities but as part of a sign system. It examines how meaning is created and how reality is represented.

The theme of women and their issues presented in a novel can be explored in depth through the representations created by the author. In accordance with Hall, representation is the use of language to convey something meaningful about the world or to depict the world meaningfully to others. It can be understood as a crucial part of the process through which meanings are produced and exchanged across cultures (Hall, 1997). Through representation, the meaning of a literary work can be communicated effectively to its audience.

Representation is closely linked to semiotics. In the context of semiology, representation is defined as the act of physically encoding concepts, information, or messages. More specifically, representation is the replication of something that is absorbed, felt, imagined, or perceived physically using *"signs"* such as images, sounds, and so on. In a novel, representation can be revealed through the analysis of characters and their characterization. Characters are crucial aspects that serve as a medium for introducing various human traits that the author conveys to the reader. Characters perceived as having positive attributes are generally considered protagonists, while those with negative traits are viewed as antagonists. Characters are also divided into two types: main characters and supporting characters. The

main character is the one who dominates the entire story, while supporting characters assist in advancing the plot.

Another important element in a novel is characterization. As stated by Jones, characterization is the description of how an author depicts characters in a story (Jones, 1968). According to Kenney, there are five methods in characterization namely discursive method which the characters will be presented directly by the writer through narration; the dramatic method which the writer will permit the characters to show themselves through words or actions to the reader; the character on characters method which one character will be presented by another character and it means that one character shows or talks about another character in the story; contextual method which the characters will be presented by certain descriptions based on the surrounding conditions; and mixing method which the characters will be presented by using more than one method (Kenney, 1966). Often, in a novel with a long storyline, a mixed method is used to portray the characterization of its characters.

Based on the points discussed, the researcher is interested in analyzing the representation of women using semiotic theory. The portrayal of women's life issues is compelling due to the controversial stereotypes about women in society. Examining how authors present women's voices and identities in relation to their ideological perspectives is a fascinating area of study. In today's world, many women are actively advocating for gender equality and increasingly making independent life choices for their own futures. Despite the struggles to achieve equality, women are recognizing their inherent value, which serves as a foundation

for a dignified life and the pursuit of their dreams. This is illustrated in the novel *Girl in Pieces*, where the main character initially faces complex issues but eventually overcomes them by making bold choices and taking risks.

The researcher is interested in analyzing the *Girl in Pieces* for its intricate depiction of women, showcasing the varied challenges faced by the main character and others. This novel introduces a character who initially reflects societal stereotypes, portrayed as weak, overly emotional, prioritizing feelings over logic, fearful, easily panic, anxious, overthinking about everything that may never happen, lacking self-confidence, etc. However, this representation changes after she experiences a series of events that become a turning point in her life. The novel *Girl in Pieces* will be examined using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, focusing on the representamen, which includes qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. This approach is chosen because the novel contains numerous signs that can be analyzed through the characters' behaviors and interactions.

Numerous studies use semiotics as a research topic. The researcher has found several previous studies in journal articles and undergraduate theses with similar topics to this research, which will serve as references. Each of these previous studies has its own differences, such as themes, topics, objects, and issues, which will be considered in the current research.

The first previous research is from the An-Nas: Jurnal Humaniora Vol. 3 No. 1 in 2019 that was written by Niswatin Nurul Hidayati entitled *"Women Portrayal in Indonesian Folklores: A Semiotic Study"*. In her research, the researcher selected folklore as the object of study, analyzing the portrayal of women in fifteen randomly

chosen Indonesian folklores. The findings indicate that while some stories depict women positively, many present them in a negative light. Some folklores feature women as intelligent, resilient, wise, and self-sacrificing, prioritizing others' interests over their own. However, women are also described as negative figures, such as stepmothers, spirits, animals, objects of curses, and only doing domestic work (housework). Almost in every folklore that has been analyzed, it is stated that a female figure is a figure who has a beautiful face. So, it can be said that women are judged by their appearance.

The second previous research is from the journal entitled *"Representation of Women in the Layangan Putus Film Series: Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes"* which was conducted by Ummy Hanifah and Titiek Surya Ningsih. published in Komunika: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Vol. 17, No. 2, October 2023. This research focused on the representation of women in the context of images and scenarios in a film series *Layangan Putus* using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The findings of this research revealed that the denotation analysis and connotation level in the *Layangan Putus* film series confirm women's opposition to gender roles. Furthermore, this opposition aligns with Liberal Feminism, which seeks to challenge male-dominated structures and promote gender equality. Liberal feminists advocate for freedom from gender-based limitations, disputing the relegation of women to a subordinate status based solely on gender. On the other hand, true equality can be achieved by embracing an androgynous view that recognizes both masculine and feminine traits in all individuals.

The third is entitled "*An Analysis of Women's Emancipation in the Novel Girl in Pieces in Obama's Era*" in Philology Journal of English Language and Literature Volume 1, No. 1, February 2021 written by Imraini, Harianto II, and Dewi Nurmala. The purpose of this study is to find out the type of female emancipation in the novel *Girl in Pieces* by Kathleen Glasgow in the Obama era in 2016 and to find out the impact of women's emancipation. The results found that there are two types of emancipation, namely, the emancipation of women fostering progress/society and ensuring global gender equality. The positive impact of women's emancipation is that women foster independence from male dependency. While the negative impact of the emancipation of women is the absence of gender identity or the loss of gender identity during the Obama period.

The last previous research is entitled *"Semiotic Analysis of The Little Mermaid Movie Poster Using Peirce (1996)"* published in Mahadaya, Vol.3 No. 2 and written by Lanang Dwi Wicaksono, Nungki Heriyati. This research is conducted to analyze the sign depicted as well as the meaning of *The Little Mermaid* movie poster. The result of this study indicated that there are two types of signs found in movie posters, namely qualisign and sinsign. *The Little Mermaid* movie poster also contained two different kinds of objects, namely icons and indexes, where the index is further categorized into spatial and temporal indexes. The last thing from the poster found was the interpretant which is the connection and the meaning of signs and objects. This analysis shows that each sign in the movie poster is effectively represented through both visual and non-verbal elements. We could also get official information on where we can find or see the movie, which is very crucial for the movie poster.

In comparing this research with previous studies, there are both similarities and differences regarding topics, objects, and theoretical approaches. This research uses a novel as its object, which differs from the objects of the first, second, and last studies. However, all three used the semiotic theory. While the first and second studies also use semiotic theory, they do not employ the same approach as this research. This research utilizes the semiotic theory proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce, which is also used in the fourth study. The first, second, and third studies share a similar topic concerning women and their issues, aligning with this research. Additionally, the third study shares the same object, the novel *Girl in Pieces*. The distinction between the third study and this research is that the third study specifically focuses on women's emancipation in *Girl in Pieces* during the Obama era, while this research centers on women's portrayals and their struggles to overcome societal stigma.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the research background above, the researcher concludes that there are two questions that will be the main focuses on this research, they are:

1. How does characterization depict women's representation in the novel *Girl in Pieces*?

2. How are women's representation described through qualisign, sinsign, and legisign in the novel *Girl in Pieces*?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher can propose some objectives of the study below:

1. To analyze the characterization depicting women's representation in the novel *Girl in Pieces.*

2. To analyze the women's representation described through qualisign, sinsign, and legisign in the novel *Girl in Pieces*.

1.4 Research Significances

This research offers both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research contributes to the enhancement of knowledge and understanding in the field of semiotics, particularly through Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model. It will enhance insights into how meaning is constructed and communicated from speaker to listener or writer to reader. This research is expected to serve as a reference material for various types of studies, research, and other academic disciplines both within and outside of academia.

Practically, this research can inspire literary readers, especially novel enthusiasts, to critically evaluate what they consume through the reading process. This critical approach can help readers recognize that various elements are interconnected, thereby shaping their responses, reactions, and perceptions with greater awareness.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of terms used in this research, some definitions are disclosed as follows:

a. Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs or the science that studies about the signs in human beings (Hoed, 2011). It can conclude that anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as "signifying", something referring to or standing for something other than itself.

b. Qualisign

Qualisign is a marked quality. It cannot actually function as a sign until it is manifested, such as a loud sound or a sweet sound (Sobur, 2009).

c. Sinsign

A sinsign is a real event with a sign, for example, a girl screaming may indicate that she is in a dangerous situation or injured (Sobur, 2009).

d. Legisign

A legisign is a law embodied in a sign. This law is typically created by humans and has been agreed upon, such as a traffic light (Sobur, 2009).

e. Representation

Representation is the process of recording information, ideas, or knowledge in various physical forms, serving as signs intended to mimic, connect, or depict something imagined in a physical form.

f. Novel

A novel is a lengthy prose with a certain level of complexity that aims to reflect and express the qualities or values of human experience. It contains a series of events that occur throughout the life of the characters.

g. *Girl in Pieces*

The novel titled *Girl in Pieces* was written by Kathleen Glasgow and published in 2016.

h. Characterization

Characterization refers to the process by which an author reveals and develops the traits, qualities, and personality of a character in a story.