

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This section consists of a research background that begins by defining the research topic, giving information about opportunities in research problems so that it can be followed up through research, as well as the reasons for choosing the topic taken by the researcher. Then there are research questions related to problems on the research topic. Furthermore, there are research purposes and research significances that provide the objectives and benefits of this research. As well as previous studies which serve to find material for comparison and find inspiration for this research.

#### **A. Research Background**

The researcher was browsing several British novels published in the last 10 years and accidentally found *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith which caught researcher's attention. Initially, the researcher read this novel because the researcher was curious about the reason behind the title stated. However, after reading the initial chapters, the researcher's interest was shifted to 'the main character.' At a glance, the researcher was amazed at the life journey of the main character as a multiracial individual who grew up in London in various aspects. Things in the main character's life that caught the researcher's attention include the fact that she grew up in the upbringing of both parents with their characteristics that are against stereotypes; an intelligent and ambitious black mother, and a pessimistic white father. Being a minority group in the midst of the diversity of London society, the main character cannot choose her own group of friends, does not have equal access to education, finds it difficult to get a decent job, and has to adapt to Jamaican and British cultural life, making the researcher more interested in analyzing social phenomena experienced by the main character. The researcher assumes that it is very possible that Zadie Smith did not give the main character a name because the main character describes someone who does not have a clear identity.

Among Zadie Smith's other novels, *Swing Time* is her work that has its own specialties because issues about race come directly from the main character. For writers, it is very common for them to tell their life stories in fiction. Likewise with

Smith, *Swing Time* is her attempt to tell the world that for multiracial individuals living in cities with multicultural societies, it is difficult for them to find the right perspective in order to define their identity. This novel makes readers aware that those who are born as multiracial individuals experience a dark experience that gives birth to many social and personal conflicts with all the consequences to express their identity as themselves, regardless of the various inherent attributes.

In essence, humans are individual beings who relate to other creatures. This means that basically humans always want to get along, interact, and establish relationships with other humans. When humans interact with each other, what distinguishes humans from one another is identity. According to Burke and Stets, the salience of an identity is the probability that a particular identity will be activated across a variety of situations and thus influence the role choices made by the person. Identities that are more salient are more likely to be activated or activated across situations (Burke and Stets, 2014, p. 59). The identity possessed by a person will be used to communicate with other people. And with the existence of identity, then a person will be able to categorize himself into social groups.

The state of the social group that will be analyzed by the researcher is a novel with the setting of London, the capital of England with a multicultural population. Individual differences in London society will form a diverse culture because these people come from various backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures. But on the other hand, many of those who start life in London do not find the opportunity to express themselves either inside or outside their surroundings. Generally, identity is created so that each individual in a group has a value. So what happens when someone experiences an identity crisis as the researcher described above?

London is the place where most of the events in *Swing Time* are depicted. As a story building element, its existence is very important to build the atmosphere in the story. Being the largest city in the UK, London is home to a human population from various ethnicities in the world. About fourteen percent of London's population was born overseas. Various cultures and languages color the city of London. It shows how special London is with people from all over the world living and sharing their culture. Apart from culture, London also represents beliefs and

thoughts from around the world. The city offers a safe place for people of all backgrounds to practice and develop what they believe in. And again, literature is the right medium to study phenomena that have occurred throughout the ages.

*Swing Time* was chosen as the object of the research because of the interesting or unusual qualities possessed by the main character in the story, it is the main character's ability to deal with different identities that she must negotiate. Furthermore, with the difference in identity experienced by the main character because she was born from parents with different ethnicities, it makes *Swing Time* has its own charm to examine the identity of the main character. The point is that although the topic of this research is not rare, studies that have discussed about identity usually raise the identity of certain groups such as the Muslim community, the gay sexual community, and so on. In fact, the identity and the existence of a community cannot be negotiated when the individuals in it are still experiencing an identity crisis.

The researcher chose a novel by the British writer Zadie Smith entitled *Swing Time* as the object of research. This novel was first published in November 2016. This novel is a book that discusses cultural identity, especially the cultural identity of black women in England. According to Nurhadi, the novel is a form of literary work in which there are cultural, social, educational and moral values (Nurhadi in Ahyar, 2019, p. 149). Cultural values in the sense that there is a reference behavior of most people of a particular society that has been embedded in their minds. Cultural values are also an abstract description of the existence of common problems that are very valuable in people's lives. Meanwhile, what is meant that there are social values in the novel is that in the novel there is an idea about whether an experience is meaningful or not, has an impact or not, which can give birth to a concept in each individual about what they think is good and what is wrong. they think bad. Swingewood also said, that the novel, as the major literary genre of industrial society, can be seen as a faithful attempt to re-create the social world of man's relations with his family, with politics, with the State; it delineates too his roles within the family and other institutions, the conflicts and tensions, between groups and social classes (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972, p. 12).

Based on the title, the novel *Swing Time* (2016) by Zadie Smith tells the story of the friendship of two mixed-race girls who dream of becoming dancers; they are the main character and her friend named Tracey. But between them, only one person was talented, she is Tracey. The other girl had an insight into music and rhythm, she is the main character. The two mixed race girls met in 1982 at a dance class in London. At first they were friends because they had the same skin color and only the two of them were black in the dance class. Apart from the main character's mother who looks down on Tracey, the main character and Tracey are good friends because they also live close together. As time went on, Tracey's career in dancing was good and continued to gain awards. Meanwhile, the main character's career is vacillating and her relationship with the people around her is not good. She often changes jobs, questioning what the point of her work is, and who she should set an example for that makes her uncomfortable in any environment. This novel tells the story of the British family, class, freedom, where we come from, who we will become in the future, and the process of finding our identity over time. Set in London, New York, and West Africa, in addition to represent the two mixed races of the main character, it also represents that the place and environment in which she was raised can make her feel belonging.

Human life will never be separated from problems. This is the motive for the researcher to assume that the main character in the novel *Swing Time* has a problem, namely trying to reveal her identity through negotiations in the midst of the diversity of the surrounding community. The main character in this novel is "I", who also acts as the narrator of the story. Equipped with characters those are intelligent, broad-minded but lacks self-confidence, she is of English-Jamaican descent, she claims to be "half-caste" and has difficulty adapting to the people around her. The main character wants a place and community group where she can feel comfortable being in it.

*In the autumn Tracey went off to her single-sex school, in Neasden, where almost all the girls were Indian or Pakistani and wild: I used to see the older ones at the bus stop, uniforms adapted---shirt unbuttoned, skirt hitched up---screaming obscenities at white boys as they passed. A rough school with a lot of fighting. Mine, in Willesden, was milder, more mixed: half black, a quarter white, a quarter South Asian. Of the black half at least a third were "half-*

*caste," a minority nation within a nation, though the truth is it annoyed me to notice them* (Smith, 2016, pp. 89-90).

Through the quote above, it can be seen that since childhood, the main character's environment has been colored by various ethnic groups. Diversity in the environment is a difference inherent in human life. Be it ethnicity, social class, ethics, belief values, or nationality, humans will always be faced with differences. Life situations are not peaceful when there are various problems that occur between certain ethnic groups, class, races, or community groups.

In general, humans and society and the social processes in them can be studied objectively using a sociological approach. Sociology places social events as material to be studied scientifically, both from aspects of culture, economy, language, and so on. According to Swingewood, Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972, p. 11). Furthermore, Swingewood said, through a rigorous examination of the social institutions, religious, economic, political, and familial, which together constitute what is called social structure, a picture emerges, not society as feeling (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972, p. 11). By conducting this research, it can be known how to get along in society and what factors make it difficult for individuals to enter a group.

Apart from racial differences, there are many factors that can make it difficult for a person to adapt to the environment. Starting from shame, trauma in the past, the condition of the neighborhood or school, the protective parents; which puts too much pressure until resulting in a loss of confidence and courage. In making decisions or interacting socially, each individual has their own characteristics and behaviors that can influence them. However, it should also be noted that humans behave differently when they are alone and when they are around other people. As quoted in *Swing Time* below,

*But to me a dancer was a man from nowhere, without parents or siblings, without a nation or people, without obligations of any kind, and this was exactly the quality I loved* (Smith, 2016, p. 64).

The quote above explains one of the reasons why the main character likes to dance. According to her, dancing does not care about things outside of her. Only by

dancing, she is free to show herself as she is. According to Swingewood, the sociological approach to literature can be carried out as well as possible as long as the critic does not forget two things: a) the pure literary tools used by great authors to present the social mass in their fictional world, and b) the author himself, complete with his awareness and purpose (Swingewood in Sujarwa, 2019, p. 41). According to him, great authors do not just describe the social world in a crude way. He is able to play the characters he created in fictitious situations in order to find their own "fate" – to further find value and meaning in the social world. As literature that not only describes the social conditions of society in general, but also describes social phenomena in detail, both those that occur in individuals and groups. Through this process, it can be seen how individuals interact with their communities and social mechanisms so that they can be accepted in a particular society.

One of the concepts of the sociology of literature is trying to make literary works as a means to recreate human relations with the surrounding environment. *Swing Time* focuses on the daily life of a character born of a marriage between a white person of British blood and a black person of Jamaican blood, set in London; England and the United States. Events in the real life of a writer or other person can be made into a creative work called a literary work. According to Sumardjo, through literary works, people can also learn, especially those related to their aspirations, cultural level, tastes, outlook on life, and so on (Sumardjo in Sujarwa, 2019, p. 5).

By applying literary sociology as the approach, various social reality problems, especially regarding identity negotiations contained in *Swing Time*, can also be analyzed using the identity theory of Peter J. Burke and the theory of conflict and social interaction from Georg Simmel. According to Burke, having a particular social identity means being at one with the members of a particular group or category, being like the others and seeing things from the group's perspective (Stets and Burke, 2014, p. 69). Identity negotiation is important to analyze in an effort to find a solution of conflicts with oneself or others that arise as a result of differences.

Based on the research background that the researcher has described above, the main character needs to negotiate as a form of social interaction in an effort to mutually resolve different goals between individuals and groups, as well as to gain



awareness of the lack of understanding that humans will always find when they communicate with other people. Therefore, the researcher took the topic of *Identity Negotiation of The Main Character* to solve problems and find solutions to problems faced by the main character in *Swing Time*, which many humans experience in real life.

## **B. Research Problems**

Based on the research background that has been described, the main character has difficulty in negotiating her identity in the midst of the diversity of London society. Therefore, the problems that will be identified in this research are:

1. What are the identity differences of the main character in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time*?
2. How does the main character's negotiation process to define her identity in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* reflect multiracial individuals in real life?

To discuss the research problems, the researcher uses a sociological approach in order to see the relationship between the society in the novel and the indigenous people at that time reflecting human social problems in real life. The depiction of the community in the story and the indigenous people at that time helped the researcher to understand the character of the main character in the process of interacting with her environment. *Swing Time* seems to contain a message of a young woman's struggle to get a better social life and the status of black young women who are equal to whites to develop in society.

## **C. Research Purposes**

The diversity of society creates problems and differences in the search for self-identity. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct identity negotiation research so that problems can be analyzed analytically. The main objectives of this research are:

1. To find out the identity differences of the main character in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time*.
2. To find out that the main character's negotiation process to define her identity in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* reflect multiracial individuals in real life

Research purposes will be explained in detail in Chapter IV by partly describing the social conditions of minority communities in England. This is based on the assumption that Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* was written on the basis of belief that it could reflect the society at that time so that it could be analyzed to describe social conditions as well. Furthermore, the purpose of analyzing the research problems is to confirm the researcher's assumption that certain social conditions of society have a major influence on building in each individual an extraordinary assumption whether they will survive without having the opportunity to express their identity or build a new condition.

#### **D. Research Significances**

In essence, this research was conducted to obtain a benefit. This research is expected to provide benefits both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, research on the novel *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith is expected to increase knowledge about analytical studies of English literature, especially research that uses critical theory of racial identity differences in society. This research can also develop an appreciation of literary works about identity negotiation analysis in the study of literary sociology. In addition, the result of this study is also expected to expand the repertoire of knowledge, especially in the field of sociology of literature to prove that novels are not only entertainment material, but also can sharpen literary knowledge.

Practically, it is hoped that this research can be used as a comparison material with previous studies, especially regarding identity negotiation analysis. It is also hoped that this research can help readers to understand how the identity negotiation process experienced by the main character in Zadie Smith's novel *Swing Time* can define herself in the midst of the differences she experiences. Finally, this research can also be considered by students to give birth to new ideas and can also provide knowledge about the phenomena of reality in life.

#### **E. Previous Studies**

One of the studies that also took the object of *Swing Time* was the research on "Bracial Issues in Three Novels by Zadie Smith" written by Widy Nur Ahliyah (2018). The three Zadie Smith novels he has studied are *White Teeth* (2000), *On*



*Beauty* (2005), and *Swing Time* (2016). This study uses Barbara Tizard and Ann Phoenix's theory of mixed parentage, Werner Sollors' theory of passing, and Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity. Furthermore, the issue of biracialism was investigated using Mieke Bal's narratological theory which the researcher concluded that this biracial issue caused the characters in the three novels to negotiate identity trying to become a certain racial group. In her research, by raising the topic of biracial issues, Ahliyah identified the existence of racial inequalities depicted in Zadie Smith's novels. Experts also conclude that race is something created in the social world. In line with the study of this biracial issue, in the research of identity negotiation, the researcher will further identify that racial differences can cause conflict in the social interaction of a person and group.

Next is a study that alludes to the identity of the main character, namely "*Pembentukan Identitas Diri Tokoh Utama dalam Novel Lelakon Karya Lan Fang Suatu Pendekatan Psikologi Sastra*" written by Ermie Dyah Paramita R (2009). In analyzing the structure in the novel *Lelakon*, this study only uses the theory of characters and characterizations. This is based on the idea that character analysis and characterization can be used to understand the main character's character so that it can then determine the identity of the main character. In conclusion, the process of forming the identity of the main character begins with the process of forming a personality based on environmental factors and self factors. In her research, Paramita uses descriptive methods to obtain data and research results. The relationship with the research that researcher will write is in the process of forming the characteristics of the main character, Paramita's research is only completed on the process of how a person's characteristics are made. While the research that will be written by researcher describes the factors that shape the characteristics of the main character to assist her in resolving conflicts and negotiating self-identity.

Another thesis that discusses negotiations is "*Negosiasi Batas Ruang Pribadi dan Sosial dalam Tiga Novel Dave Eggers*" written by Erisha Bella Christy (2018). This study analyzes the negotiation of personal and social space boundaries in Dave Eggers' novels *The Circle* (2014), *The Wild Things* (2009), and *Your Fathers, Where Are They? And The Prophets, Do They Live Forever?* (2015). In analyzing

these novels, the researcher refers to Henri Lefebvre's (1991) thoughts on social space. Meanwhile, to show how space is negotiated, the researcher uses the theory of Gerard Genette (1988). The analysis produced by Erisha in this study shows that negotiations between personal and social spaces occur when personal and social spaces are not only side by side, but are entered, combined, overlapped, and clash with each other. The relationship with the research that researcher will examine is that it is true and researcher will describe further about the individual being part of society, but there are times when the individuals are themselves who carries their identities.

Finally, there is a thesis entitled *An Analysis of Social Conflict in Rick Riordan's Novel "The Red Pyramid"* written by Arifuddin (2014). The purpose of this study is to explain the types and causes of social conflicts that occur in the novel "The Red Pyramid". The method used in this research is qualitative method. The data source of this research is the novel "The Red Pyramid" which was published in 2010. In collecting data, the researcher used notes as an instrument to collect data. The researcher uses it as a tool to make notes of the same in the novel including chapters, pages, and numbers in different color cards. This can make it easier for researcher to identify sentences and remember what he has read. The method used in Arifuddin research is to provide an overview of the characters and the social conflicts of life that are depicted. The researcher uses a qualitative descriptive method to describe and explain what has been interpreted from the research object. The data analysis technique in this research is Lewis Coser's theory of social conflict. The researcher found that the main character of social conflict through three aspects in the novel. Namely 7 conflicts involving social position, 6 conflicts of interest, and 6 conflicts of role. Researcher has found that the causes of social conflict are relations, conditions, violence, and the sacrifices of the characters in the study. In this study, the researcher concludes that social conflict can occur in the human environment. Then the researcher gets the main character that social conflict is maintained through conflicts involving positions, conflicts of interest and role conflicts.