

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the introduction of the research. It contains the background of the research, research problem, research objectives, research significance, and classification of key terms.

1.1 Background

From McCollum biography (1999), August Wilson is an African-American playwright who wins some awards for his playscript. He is the author of a cycle of plays on Black American life, each set in a distinct decade of the twentieth century. *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson* were both awarded Pulitzer Prizes. Other works that he made include *Jitney*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II*, *Gem of The Ocean*, and *Radio Golf*.

Wilson is known for his work which tells how African-American society faces discrimination situations from year to year. His works are able to present the complexity of the story in a continuous plot with historical events. Wilson's life situations provide the plot with its intricacy. Wilson grew raised in Pittsburgh's Hill District, a vibrant disadvantaged neighborhood that served as the setting for many of his plays. He saw what life was like in African-American society at the time firsthand (McCollum, 1999).

Fences is a play written by August Wilson in 1985. It is the 6th of Wilson's 10 "Pittsburgh Cycle" series (1999). Set in 1950, *Fences* explores how African Americans struggle to live decent lives amidst discrimination and social segregation from white society. The point of view that is highlighted is on the main character Troy Maxon, a father who struggles to break free from the restraints of African-American life. From the point of view of characterization to dialogue, Wilson managed to explore the conflict on racial issues that occurred during the segregation period at that time. And the engraving of the story produces a uniqueness through dialogue that uses a lot of figurative languages. The dialogue grabs the attention of both the audience and the script readers, which really accentuates the originality.

Troy Maxon, the primary character, always gives disconnected replies but eventually explains why things are the way they are. When Troy's wife Rose chastises him for continuing to use alcohol, which can cause death, Troy instead relates how he fought the death gods and kept from dying. This illustrates the portrayal of self-appreciation. "We wrestled for three days and three nights, and I'm here to tell you about it." he said in his dialogue. If you take the parallel literally, Troy has battled his sickness and recovered in three days, but Wilson's dialogues are able to offer distinction sentence composition that is introduced by his figurative language.

Fences (A. Wilson, 1985) was first played at the Yale Repertory Theater and this script won two awards in 1987, the first is 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, one of seven American Pulitzer Prizes and 1987 Tony Award for Best Play, an award that given to the best non-musical play on Broadway. It is undeniable that

this achievement was achieved because of the complexity of the script that is able to represent the history of discrimination in the United States through its structured elements.

One of the interesting things in this drama is how August Wilson represents segregation through irony. Irony is a figurative language in which something conveyed is not in accordance with reality, and irony is a good tool to describe history or events that occur in a literary work, as expressed by Hutcheon (1996) "It is irony in use, in discourse, that is its primary concern: the 'scene' of irony is a social and political scene."

According to Graham (2019) Social and racial segregation is the separation of social class and race that covers public facilities, housing, education, employment, hospitals, to transportation based on racial difference. Mainly distinguish the environment of white society from African American society. However, this action ended in sadness and left sorrow to arouse hatred to this day. Segregation has occurred since the 1800s and began to fade after the Civil Rights Act was echoed, to be precise in 1964. Based on this, the author found a similar event in the storyline of the drama *Fences*, which is has a lot of segregation.

The segregation described through *Fences* is very thick with the discrimination that occurred in the 1950-1960s era against the African-American community. This segregation can still be felt in that era because of their different skin and instead makes it difficult to live properly like other normal humans.

Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton in their book: *American Apartheid* (Douglas & Nancy, 1998) stated:

“This extreme racial isolation did not just happen; it was manufactured by whites through a series of self-conscious actions and purposeful institutional arrangements that continue today. Not only is the depth of black segregation unprecedented and utterly unique compared with that of other groups, but it shows little sign of change with the passage of time or improvements in socioeconomic status.”

This history can be described dynamically by August Wilson in his manuscript, *Fences*. Various events are shown in the text. Such as the struggle for a position as the first black driver, how African-Americans do not have the same place in a professional sports career, how life after school does not guarantee the future, and other events based on segregation rules at that time.

Of course, it is good that the historical description of discrimination is blended through irony and makes the manuscript more unique and fun to enjoy and also deserves to be used as material for literary analysis. Literary works are actually not only providing a story with the intention of entertaining the reader, but also educating. A figurative language can be inserted as a tool to convey a meaning with an understanding or idea that is more visible even though implicitly, including irony. According to Sperber & Wilson (1986): “within our framework, an ironical remark will have as natural target the originators, real or imagined, of the utterances or opinions being echoed. ”

. According to Perrine (1996), irony is figurative language where something conveyed is not in accordance with the actual intention or reality . There are three

types of irony, namely verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony. Irony is one of the figurative languages that is frequently used in drama or play. Basically, the use of figurative language is indeed necessary to create a good literary work, including the use of irony in drama. The use of figure of speech does not only give the aesthetic value of words to literary works, but also as a means of conveying messages that become a bridge to a work that is not immediately conveyed like other general writings.

August Wilson is able to present these three types of irony in this script and makes *Fences* story interesting and presents an atmosphere of depressed life when the characters in the story try to deny or are reluctant to feel the pain that is repeated through struggles as an African-American community, especially the main character in this story, Troy was 53 years old in 1957. In the midst of regulatory constraints based on skin color, they always have limitations in their activities to the point of fear when they want to do something that is actually a human activity. And Troy strives to provide a more beautiful life for his family despite the pros and cons of educating his son, Cory. The use of figurative language in this drama gives more value, how a message of struggle and events can be inserted through literary works that are shown and enjoyed by everyone. So, its function is not only as a work of entertainment, but also education.

In his book, Nurrachman (2014) he quotes a statement by Horrace that the goal of literary work is to inform or to delight, or to combine together, in what he says both pleasure and applicability to life.” From this expression, August Wilson also succeeded in creating this work not only for entertainment, but also to present

an insight into the history of the struggle of the African-American community in fighting for their rights which was realized in the Civil Rights Movement which was also overseen by Martin Luther King.

Based on the uniqueness of the work that describes how the social situation in America occurs, the researcher will analyze the irony in August Wilson's work entitled *Fences* with its representation of Racial Segregation in the setting of the story. This analysis will use Perrine's (1996) theory as the main surgical tool, and relate it to historical events of racial segregation that occurred in the 1900s to the 1965s era. At that time, racial segregation occurred as an effort to separate the African-American community and immigrant communities from the Native Americans. The pretext of creating harmony through separation, segregation actually creates an unfavorable life for some community groups, including African-Americans. The separation has an impact on several aspects, such as employment, education, health facilities, and other aspects based on racial differences. The separation is detrimental to the African-American society where they have difficulty getting a decent life like other normal humans.

In doing this study, the researcher needs some previous studies as consideration theory. The first study related to this research is: “*The Failure of the American Dream in August Wilson's Fences*” written by Baharvand (2017). He uses the theory from Kiffer (2017), and the theory from Abdelsamie and Abdallah (2015). Baharvand focuses on African-American communities that cannot fulfill the American dream. The story follows Troy Maxon is the protagonist is the actor in the story of August Wilson's *Fences*, who cannot fulfill his dream to freedom,

and economic achievement where he is surrounded by white people who come from South America full of racism, slavery. This society hinders the growth and desire of Troy. Eventually Troy and the African-American community migrated to North America to find work and happiness. They get information that North America offers a promised land where everyone gets an equal chance of success regardless of race and gender, can be done with perseverance and hard work or what is commonly known as the American dream. This study will be very helpful for this research because the social studies conducted by Baharvard provide an insight related to *Fences*, especially about the social problems that occurred in America at that time and related to the stories in these literary works.

Second, is a Thesis by Haningrum (2018) entitled "*Racial Segregation and Inequality over The Afro-American Community In Southern America Reflected in Kathryn Stockett's The Help (A Sociological Approach)*". The type of the research that is used by the researcher is qualitative research. In this study, the researcher wants to describe systematically, factually, and accurately an interest of racial segregation and inequality over Afro-American community in South America reflected in the novel. The researcher uses the descriptive method to analyze racial segregation and inequality. The results of the research show that: first, the indicators of racial segregation and inequality over Afro-American community in South America in *The Help* involve 6 (six) indicators: separated housing, separated facilities, racial hierarchy / stereotyping, toiletry segregation as assumption that black people bring diseases, segregation in public services, and segregation in public policy.

Third, racial segregation and inequality over Afro-American community in South America depicted in *The Help* through the characters in the novel is portrayed through the existence of white characters and black characters. The style used by the author to depict segregation is rhetorical. In events, racial segregation and inequality are portrayed in: African American maids were treated as ‘despicable human’ although they had been the whites children’s surrogate mothers; Punishment for people who promote racial equality; The growth of love feeling between white children and their nannies, but is hindered by differences of skin colors; Love feeling as mother and daughter as portrayed in Aibileen and Mae Mobley’s relationship; and the feeling as close friends as reflected in Constantine and Skeeter’s relationship. Third, the author specifically address the racial segregation and inequality in *The Help* because of some reasons: expression of regret of past experience and expressing affection towards others.

Fourth, is another thesis by Erlangga (Julian Milzam, 2020), entitled “*Gerakan Perlawanan Terhadap Rasisme Bentuk Baru ‘Black Lives Matter’ di Amerika Serikat*”. This study discusses the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement as a new social movement in the United States. Black Lives Matter is seen as a new social movement based on the goals, actors of the movement, tactics in the actions carried out and the area of action where the movement takes place. New social movement theory is used in this study with qualitative research types and explanatory approaches that collect data through literature study and using Nvivo 12 Plus Software. The results showed that the cause of emergence was due to structural conductivity with the occurrence of new forms of racism. Second, there

is structural tension, namely the existence of violence committed by the police, third, the death of a black man by the police is an accelerating factor, fourth is the spread of general beliefs, namely racism culture that has been strongly bound, fifth, the mobilization of participants by the Black Lives Matter movement and finally there is social control carried out by the government.

Fifth is thesis by Firdaus (2019) entitled “*Bob Dylan's the Freewheelin' Bob Dylan and the times they are a-Changin' albums*”. This research analyzed the metaphor in *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They a-Changin'* albums of Bob Dylan and the relationship between the metaphor to the social conditions of the United States Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, this research is divided into two main problems relates to the metaphors contained in *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They a-Changin'* albums, and what is the relationship between the metaphor to social conditions of the United States Civil Rights Movement in the 21st century. The researcher applied the mimetic approach and qualitative descriptive method that is supported by the conceptual metaphor of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

The researchers found data on conceptual metaphors from the narrative on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They a-Changin'* albums of Bob Dylan relating to the social conditions of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States: *Blowin' in The Wind* is a metaphor of humanity, war, and peace, *Master of War* is a metaphor of against the war industry, *Ballad of Hollis Brown* is a metaphor of *Black Farmer in South Dakota*, *A Hard Rain Gonna Fall* is a metaphor of Cuban Missile Crisis, *I Shall Be Free* is a metaphor of the African-American for changed

country, The Times They Are a-Changin' is a metaphor of a change for new a world, With God on Our Side is a metaphor of war with the name of God, Oxford Town is a metaphor of racial to the first African-American student enrolled in the University of Mississippi, Talkin' World War III Blues is a metaphor of cold war and the Vietnam war, North Country Blues is a metaphor of miners work in South America, Only Pawn in Their Game is a metaphor of the death Medgar Evers the African-American civil rights activist, The Lonesome Death of Hattie Caroll is a metaphor of the murder old African-American barmaid by William Zantzinger. The results of this research found metaphors in The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan and The Times They a-Changin' albums of Bob Dylan, which came from his struggles and experiences involved in the United States Civil Rights Movement and Bob Dylan's song lyrics became the anthem of movement that united the general voice.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the research background, irony has many types but the researcher will focus on the three main types of irony, these are verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony. Irony as figurative language can convey a lot of implicit meaning, for that reason, researcher will analyze how irony represents the racial segregation based on the setting in *Fences*.

Refers to the research background, the researcher limits the analysis of the *Fences* playscript into two research questions:

1. What types irony are found in August Wilson's *Fences*?

2. How does irony represent the racial segregation in August Wilson's *Fences*?

1.3 Research Purposes

Referring to the research question above, the researcher has two purposes of this research:

1. To identify the types of irony found in August Wilson's *Fences*
2. To reveal any events in the segregation of that era that are represented through irony in August Wilson's *Fences*.

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to be useful both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research can be useful to enrich the concept of science broadly and from research that is in accordance with the field of science in research. Especially in the field of literature that uses the study of figurative language, especially the irony in detail, from the three types of irony proposed by Laurance Perrine.

Meanwhile, practically, this research can provide knowledge about the meaning of irony in semantic studies, especially for readers, and can motivate them to conduct research on irony using different objects, and make readers know the meaning of irony conveyed.

Last, this research is expected to be a reference for other researchers who study in the same field, especially in literary analysis.

