

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In 1519, Spain conquerors came in land of America which was called as Texas (Spanish Texas, 1519-1821: 2010). At that time the land was populated with the Native American tribes and other dwellers such as Spanish and France. After some conflicts because of the trial to conquering this land, in 1836 Texas became independent nation as the Republic of Texas (taken from americanhistory.about.com). Finally, Texas decided to join with United States after passed certain events like civil war and segregation era among the white, the black, also the natives.

Texas became so important and targeted by the invaders because this land is wealthy with its natural resources such as cotton. Cotton and ranch became the main treasures of Texas especially in 1870 after the rail way was built (History of Texas Public Land: 2010). The economy of Texas developed more after the found of petroleum oil and timber industry, but still the major product in Texas was cotton that had been planted by the Indians. However, the existence of the natives was not always being free from any kind of disturbances. Starting from 1950-1980 the government resettled many Indians to other region in the country to migrate them all over the land. Almost more than 40.000 Indians moved after been caught into integration program and many of the finally lived away from their mother land (taken from www.texasalmanac.com).

The condition of Indians who became the local cotton farmer that finally moved into another land is depicted in Stephen Graham Jones's *Growing Up Dead in Texas*. This novel described how the local Indians had had migrate from their land after the destruction of their cotton field on December 1985. The fire burnt out the cotton buds and all over the field and left the citizen no choice except left. As the aims of literature to give an entertainment and an education, this novel can show the reader about the history of native America's life on the cotton field without ignore aesthetic elements of literature itself.

Reading this novel brings the reader to the era of many years ago in Texas, United States, where the local tribe tried to survive themselves in the hard condition in the cotton field. During the harvesting season when the cotton buds started to drying, the weather was hot and windy. The cotton farmers had to take the crops before it was too much late to be taken. The other threat during the hot season it was very easy to create the fire. Fire was the most enemy for the cotton farmer. A little ember could easily burn down a whole farm. It was because cotton has special character. The flame would not burn it from the surface. The fire would burn the cotton plant from the inside and finally became a terrible flare outside. When the fire was seen above the plant it meant it was too late to stop it. The fire would not stop. The fire could not be stamped out by water or else. It would gone out by itself after there is nothing left, no cotton left to be burnt out.

The thing that *Growing up Dead in Texas* tried to tell was how a fire destructed the whole life of the Indian cotton farmers. The fire broke a community. Even when the Indians realized that the fire that had burnt out their

whole farm, their whole life was actually happened with a purpose. Someone held a match in the field, a terribly fact that anybody tried to pretend to deny. The effect of the fire was real. The cotton field destruction changed the community's life. The fire caused many social problems and prejudices among the dwellers. The Indians spread all out. They tried to forget about the fire. Many Texas Indians tried to move on their life. But nothing seemed to be the same again.

Growing Up Dead in Texas is not merely a novel, it is a memoir. Stephen Graham Jones is an Indian from Texas. He was twelve years at that time. Spending childhood in the cotton field taught him enough to see through the reality. The fact he wanted to know. This was the interesting part since the novel told not only the history of Indian in Texas that had had to go away from where they were supposed to belong to, but also the hidden fact behind the destruction.

In every single novel that Jones had written, he always put some issues of Indian. It seemed like Jones tried to give an identity for his works. Jones's other works such as *The Demon Theory*, *The Ones that Got A Way*, etc also mentioned about the Indian. In his novel, Jones usually created Indian as the characters. By his preference about the characters, the conflicts, and the whole stories, it is clear that Jones reflected his character as an Indian.

Jones had his own style in creating an art. Here, every book that Jones had written could not only be called as novel but also included as contemporary art. Jones gave a new taste of authoring a literary work. As a contemporary author, Jones's style in presenting the plot and the story was completely unique. In Jones's another novel entitled *The Demon Theory*, the uniqueness of plotting

was given. Jones's ability in mixing the parts of literature and parts of movies was undoubted. *The Demon Theory* presented the new style of developing the story with combining multiple elements and pop cultural references in a book. Some of the critics, as seen on *powell.com* (a review by Jason Starr), believed that Jones had created a new genre of writing literary work, but the rest of them argued that Jones was accomplishing another style of postmodern rather than creates new genre. However, through his works, Jones gave a clear statement his position as the author of postmodern literature works.

From several novels written by Stephen Graham Jones, the *Growing Up Dead in Texas* is probably the novel that is really him. *The Growing Up Dead in Texas* represent Jones's life. After all, Jones tried to depict his childhood in Greenwood when the fire destroyed the cotton field in that place. Left out with the destruction, Jones moved away from his motherland. *Growing Up Dead in Texas* is interesting since it retold the reader about history that finally discovered. The other things that become this novel's strength are that this novel contains many realities and fantasies on it. These mixing elements created new sensation while reading this novel.

The unique and original story that has been explored in this novel can be analyzed by postmodern theory. It is because postmodern undercuts history, reality and truth. Peter Barry (2009) stated that postmodern deconstruct the basic aim of enlighten of modernism, the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject. Rather than agree with the narrative exemplifying the notion of disappearance of the real, postmodern foreground the concept of irony. Peter

Brooker (in *Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* by Peter Barry, 2009) stated whereas modernist tries to destroy the past, the postmodernist realises that the past must be revisited, but with 'irony'. From the statement it can be seen that the postmodern represents the past that has been combined with irony.

Moreover, Lyotard (in *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice* by Bertens and Douwe W. Fokkema, 1997) stated that:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable (p.24)

Lyotard's statement shows that through postmodern anything that cannot be presented can finally be revealed. The point of this action is to corroborate the sense of things that cannot be presented themselves.

Since postmodern is a broad theory, so there are many researches of literary works that related to the theory. The researcher found two researches that in line with this research. The first research is a dissertation which is entitled *Postmodernist Historical Novels: Jeanette Winterson's and Salman Rushdie's Novels as Historiographic Metafictions* by Mustafa Kirca (2009). The second is Pollheide's work (2003) which is under the title *Postmodernist Narrative Strategies in the Novels of John Fowles*. Both of the researches are in line with this research because these researches focused on the narratives element of the novels and analyzed the relation between literary works and history.

Therefore, this study analyzed Jones's *Growing Up Dead in Texas* by using postmodern theory to show the blend of the realities and the fantasies in a novel. The elements of postmodern also had been analyzed in this research as the evidence that *Growing Up Dead in Texas* can be included into postmodern contemporary works.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

From the background of the study, the following questions are formulated:

1. How does the author show the common themes of postmodern literature in this novel?
2. What are the sequences of event caused by the fire that lead to Indian banishment in Texas in 1985?
3. How is the mingling between facts and fictions in this novel?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

From the research problem above, the following objectives are appeared:

1. To explain the themes of postmodern literature in this novel.
2. To explain the sequences of event caused by the fire that lead to Indian banishment in Texas in 1985.
3. To explain the mingling between facts and fictions in this novel.

1.4 Significances of the Study

This work was theoretically expected to give better understanding about postmodern theory, especially the term of postmodernism and postmodernity. Thus, give deeper understanding about the influence of that theory in literature

work. Further, this research is expected to give contribution for further study which analyzes the same literary work or same theory. Hence, this work is presented as the model of analysing literary work through postmodern point of view.

1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study was the theory of postmodern that focuses on the study of the themes of postmodern, then blend of realities and fantasies in the novel and the impact of a fire that cause the Indian banishment in Texas in 1985 that depicted in Jones's *Growing Up Dead In Texas*. The limitation of the analysis here was based on the utterances and the narrations of the characters which show the postmodern's themes, realities and fantasies, also the impact of fire to the local dwellers in Greenwood.