

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five sub-chapters that present a brief explanation of this study. Those are Background of the study, Statements of the research problem, Objectives of the study, Significances of the study, and Scope and Limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Literature is part of art or as imaginative literature (Wellek & Warren, 1977, p. 3). Imaginative creation presents the reflection of human life and the universe. It imitates, contemplates, and builds up the phenomena that happen in the real world. As a creative creation, a literary work may give some informations to the readers. It may tells about the writer's experiences, cultures, events, opinions, thinking and about what really happen to an era. Hence, a literary work is divided into fiction and non-fiction (S. Hirschberg and T. Hirschberg, 2004, p. 1). Novel as narrative fiction of literay work has various complete elements that can be discussed extensively. It undergoes the same episodes of human in real life (Abram, 1999, p. 190; Landy, 1980, p. 3), in other words, novel as the representative of human's activities involve many aspects such as problems, ambitions, failures, emotions, desires and so on.

To deliver a message in a literary work particularly in a novel, the writer does not always express the meaning of his/her ideas and opinions explicitly,

instead he/she conveys the meaning implicitly by using symbols or signs to deliver the messages. In Oxford Dictionary (2008, p. 450), Symbol means a sign, shape, or object that used to represent something else. For example, a black color is interpreted as badness, evil, and darkness, heart shape is the symbol of love, the no U-turn sign means that it is forbidden to turn out, and the words “let me fly” can be interpreted as a desire want to have a freedom as like birds flying in the sky. It is to say that there are many hidden meanings in every literary work that must be uncovered to understand the implied meaning.

Henna House, a novel by Nomi Eve is a literary work has many hidden meanings, symbols and signs needed to be revealed. The story is led by Adela Damari, a Jewish girl whose life is in the verge of the hazard of the imam’s Orphan Decree. It is because her father’s health is failing and her mom cannot find her a future husband to protect her from the Orphan Decree. That situation will bring bad risk to Adela’s life in which she will be adopted by Moslem people when her father is dead. Suddenly, it changes when her two cousins come, Asaf who introduces her to a beautiful life full of love and hope and Hani who recognizes her to the mysterious and powerful ritual of henna. Nomi Eve as the writer of the novel is capable to bring the story naturally (Kirkus in Eve, 2015, p. VI). She portrays and mixes the henna, history, mystery and power that really surprising the readers. So that’s why this novel gets some good impressions. One of them is from Michiko Kakutani, a legendary former book critic for *The New York Times* (Kelly, 2018, p. 1).

The story of *Henna House* novel by Nomi Eve is full of traditions and cultures. The bold one is the tradition of henna itself that becomes the second main topic in the novel. Generally, henna, which known as *Lawasonia Inermies* in scientific name (Jones, 2015, p. 5), is only an adornment of a temporary body art which the henna paste is applied usually on hair, hands, feet, and other parts of body that will fade away in several days. Henna is as a semi-permanent dye, which mostly associated with a ritual of marriage and romantic love (Roome, 2014, p. 158). It has been used for thousands of years in some countries and in many religions to make a beautiful temporary body art. People in the ancient times also use henna as medical uses since henna is considered as a herb that has the quality of healing and can give cooling effect. It can relief such wound healing, headaches, stomachaches, swelling, burns, and as fever reduces (Sharaby, 2006, p. 14; Jones, 2015, p. 4). In addition to its medicinal qualities and cosmetic qualities, some religions consider that henna has magical properties. It is believed that henna can give good fortune, protection, and grace primarily in premarital ritual. Miczak (2002) states “Women wear henna to divert the Evil Eye” (p. 93). It means that they wish god can protect them and their family from misfortune. Roome (2002, p. 208) stated that henna adornment can placate the god and ingratiate the god to the women with henna adornment.

In line with it, this *Henna House* novel by Nomi Eve also describes henna as medical properties, cosmetic properties, and magical properties. Beside the story that is very attractive and engrossing, the sequences ritual of henna is really surprising, compelling the researcher to explore and draw out what henna is

exactly. Commonly, henna is used for joys, self-expressions, celebrations, weddings, and healing. Inevitably, henna in this novel is very sacred and crucial, it does not only describe henna as those all but also describe henna as a thing that can be used for some wickednesses such as assassination and betrayal and as a thing that full of mystery and power as though every bad thing and good thing happen are caused by henna. “When a marriage went wrong, or a first baby was born dead, the henna dyer was often blamed, as if the henna dyer’s art were more than art, as if it could really ward off or conjure evil” (Eve, 2015, p. 1). Those kinds of embedded unique events that depict henna as mysterious and powerful thing, invite the researcher’s desire to analyze it and reveal the exact meaning of henna in this novel.

To unfold the exact meaning of henna in this novel whether it is as a celebration, crime, medical and magical uses, or even as them all, the researcher uses Semiotics theory by Charles Sanders Peirce (1931). Weiss & Burks (1945, p. 383) stated that Peirce is known as one of the founders of the modern theory of signs (Noth, 1995, p. 39). Peirce’s semiotics theory is called Triadic relations which consist of three elements: first, representament (sign) is a form represent something else; second, object is something that is represented; and third, interpretant is a term for the meaning of a sign. The interaction among the three elements is called semiosis process. In finding the meaning of henna in the novel, the researcher specifies the analysis on the second trichotomies of signs which consist of icon, index, and symbol. Berger (1984) states “Peirce’s trichotomy is the key to semiotic analysis” (p. 14). By using Peirce’s sign theory, the researcher

is able to reveal and know the exact meanings of henna in *Henna House* novel by Nomi Eve. Thus, this study by title *The Meaning of Henna in Henna House* by Nomi Eve is very suitable to be analyzed by using Peirce's semiotics theory.

1.2 Statements of The Research Problem

Based on the background of the study, the questions that are going to be discussed, formulated as follows:

1. How is the semiosis occurred in finding the meaning of henna in *Henna House* by Nomi Eve?
2. What are the meanings of henna in *Henna House* by Nomi Eve?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

Related to the research questions, the aims of the study are as below:

1. To explain the semiosis occurred in finding the meaning of henna in *Henna House* by Nomi Eve
2. To reveal the meanings of henna in *Henna House* by Nomi Eve

1.4 Significances of The Study

Theoretically, this study is intended to give understanding and significant information concerning with Semiotics theory by Charles Sanders Peirce (1931). Practically, this study will be a guideline for other writers that interested in analyzing the related theory and also this study will be a reference to the students that interested in analyzing the related topic about henna.

1.5 Scope And Limitation

The scope of this study is Semiotics theory by Charles Sanders Peirce (1931).

The use of the theory is to describe the semiosis proces and to reveal the meaning of henna in *Henna House* by Nomi Eve.

The limitation of this study is specified to the characters' quotations and the main character's naration that relate to henna in *Henna House* novel by Nomi Eve (2015).