

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter divided into five subchapters. The subchapters in this study consist of the background of the study, research question, research objective, significance of the study, and the scope and limitation of the study. This chapter provide an overview of the research.

1.1 Background of The Study

Motherhood is an endless and interesting topic to discuss. It is because motherhood constantly develop and make progress in woman's life, especially in modern era. A lot of literary works include motherhood in their narrations. One of them is a poem entitled "The Pomegranate" written by Eavan Boland. Eavan Boland is an Irish poet, author, and also professor at Stanford University, where she had taught from 1996. She is one of the leading female voices in Irish literature. She had various collections of poetry, from the prose memoirs of *Object Lessons* (1995), and in her work as a prominent anthologist and teacher, Boland honed an appreciation of the ordinary things in life. Eavan Boland's works deal with Irish national identity and the role of women in Irish history.

According to Williams (2011, p.12), Eavan Boland is an Irish poet who explored politics and violence. From the statement it can be seen that Eavan Boland always criticize gender equality because in Boland's point of view, women no longer have to be seen as an afterthought or object of men's desire, compassion, or neglect. Boland discussed topics such as motherhood, anorexia, mastectomy, and violence. The clear implication is that these themes are as important as the battles,

political strife, manual labor, and men's views of women that generations of men have written. She with the statement that “By her within the home, women give to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.” (Schudel, 2020). From the statement it can be seen that it was not only social customs that make Irish women in obedient roles, but their ideas were enshrined in the country’s constitution.

“The Pomegranate” is a poem written in Boland’s poetry book entitled *In a Time of Violence* (1994). This poem is a type of narrative poetry because it contains a story about a mother who tells her experiences as a mother and how she shows her affection for her child. The volume contains twenty-five poems that are divided into three chapters. Since its first publication in 1994, “The Pomegranate” that written in the book collection of poems with the title *In a Time of Violence* shortlisted for the prestigious T.S. Eliot Prize, contains poems that gesture toward private and political realities at once. Then, at that time Boland had also received the Lannan Literary Award for Poetry in 1994. Boland’s poetry is known as contemporary poetry, where this type of literary work is known as poetry written starting in the 1920s. William (2011) states that contemporary poets might involve in open preposition of free verse, he also states that it makes mistake to consider contemporary poetry as ‘formless’. Based on the statement, it can be seen that Boland’s poetry has free rhymes and not tied to structural rules like poetry in general. Another concept about contemporary poems according to Harits (2012, p. 234), he said that contemporary poems do not follow the rules of rhyme, style, symbolic, and meter as in traditional poetry, but the most interesting notion in

contemporary poems is “interesting”. This statement leads us to know that contemporary poetry is very different from traditional poetry. The aspects that build them are different and both of them have different rules and functions. Poetry in general can make people feel good and represent feelings of sadness or happiness. In contemporary poetry, both of the feelings can be obtained but there is also a historical background behind the poem.

In the poem “The Pomegranate” contains a contradiction in describing motherhood. The main character in “The Pomegranate” sometimes shows as a woman who has nature of motherhood. Motherhood is a social and historical construction (Bassin, Honey & Kaplan, 1994). From the statement, it can be seen that motherhood does not come from instinct alone but comes from the environment, knowledge, and learning. A person, especially women cannot understand directly about the context of motherhood, they have to see and learn what they experienced before as a child in order to feel for themselves the instincts of motherhood arising in them and forming. Rich in her book *Of Women Born* (1976) claims two superimposed understandings of motherhood: motherhood as institution and motherhood as experience. It means that motherhood as institution is a principle, a key component in the political and social order of communities: an institution (O’Reilly, 2010, p.571). Then, motherhood as experience is the role woman does as a mother which implements individual agency in their approach to mothering and deny the institutional version. O’Reilly further states about motherhood that it is —a set of ideals determined by the established traditions and inherited history of a society, which sees women as primarily responsible for

meeting their children's daily needs (p. 571). Based on the quotation, a mother must be able to provide the best parenting for her children such as loving, protecting, and fighting anything for their children. In addition, being a mother must fulfill the needs and provide the rights of her child. However, in another order, the poem "The Pomegranate" shows that the main character does not have the nature of motherhood. There are several sequences in the poem that show a mother as the main character has feelings that are unnatural or excessive, so that it can harm her child and the child does not get her rights. She also shows excessive love in a sequence where she does not allow her child to enter the world of youth such as not having menstruation, falling in love, getting married, and having children.

This sequence represents a contradictory view of defining the meaning of motherhood which also leads us to the ambiguity of motherhood. The presence of inconsistency and ambiguity makes the poem "The Pomegranate" not only describe motherhood in social construction and the views of society in general. Instead, it can be seen that the poem lacks a stable definition of motherhood in the way that is suggested by O'Reilly and Rich. Based on these conditions, the writer decided to use theory of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida, which is the most suitable theory to be applied in this analysis.

This study used deconstruction theory because the focus of this study is to shows on the absence of motherhood nature of the main character in the poem "The Pomegranate". Not only analyze motherhood of the main character that Boland displayed in the poetry text, but the deconstruction function is also used to reveal the hidden character of the main character in the poetry which is contemporary

poetry. Contemporary poetry is free poetry because the writing is not bound but has a meaning that has a connection with history that occurred at the time when the poem is written and prioritizes other thoughts outside the text. This makes deconstruction appropriate to study motherhood nature of the main character in “The Pomegranate” because this study direct the writer to study the events and character of a woman who has motherhood nature but in some parts she does not have motherhood nature. Therefore, the writer used the theory of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida in this study to show the inconsistencies and ambiguities that exist in poetry.

1.2 Research Question

There is a research question which the writer used to answer her analysis. The following of the research questions:

How is motherhood deconstructed in Eavan Boland’s “The Pomegranate”?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

Based on the research questions above, this study has the objectives as follows:

To find out how motherhood is deconstructed in Eavan Boland’s “The Pomegranate”

1.4 Significances of The Study

This study offers two significances, theoretical contribution and practical contribution. Theoretically, this term describes the relationship between the findings expected from this study and the existing theory that is used as a

theoretical framework. This study is expected to support the theory is Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida's in Eavan Boland's poem entitled "The Pomegranate". This is clearly displayed through binary opposition.

Practically, This study can be used as references for subsequent research by looking at the discussion in this study which presents the data and analysis that carried out by the writer. This study can be used to help students in finding information and academic research using deconstruction by Jacques Derrida's with four elements in it namely binary opposition, the notion of absence, the ambiguity, and the inconsistency . The writer hopes that the results of this study can be useful for everyone who reads and want to do the same research in the future.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on motherhood of the main character is deconstructed in "The Pomegranate". The writer focuses on the absence of motherhood nature of the main character in the poem as well as the binary opposition, inconsistency, and ambiguity that is resulted from the absence of motherhood nature throughout the poem. This study used the work of Eavan Boland's "The Pomegranate" with deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida. The deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida, which consists of two things, is the marker and binary opposition of the text. This study just limited data analysis on the focus of study which is motherhood nature of the main character deconstructed in poetry. In addition, the writer only discusses about motherhood and obsession, not their physical appearance.