

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the introduction of the study. This chapter provides the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. All sub-chapters of the introduction of this study are needed as a basis to this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In social life, women are always targets of oppression. The oppression of women is not a surprise as it is often women who are blamed for the mistakes of men and women are always forced to follow the order of men because of the patriarchal culture (Offiong et al., 2021, p. 79). It means that women are never rights so they have to obey men's orders because of patriarchal culture. This is because of power differences between men and women in a patriarchal culture. A patriarchal system is characterized by unequal power relations between women and men (Ekpenyong et al., 2017, p. 80). It can be seen that there is a difference in power between men and women which means that women's position is always under the power of men. The existence of a patriarchal culture that makes men the holders of full rights over women makes women are oppressed so that women must obey men's orders. According to Obiora (2018, p. 80), males hold power and predominate in roles of political leadership, morals, authority, social privilege, and control of property. It can be seen that women are seen as weak in doing everything because of men's dominance which makes men as the leaders until women are oppressed as it is mentioned by Jumrah & Karim (2022, p. 139). They argue that women are often considered weak and discriminated against. In such a society, women are systematically experience oppression.

The oppression against women can be because of race. Race is undeniable in the sense that the categorization of race results in very real, material outcomes such as the deprivation of Civil Rights, mass incarceration, and ongoing racial violence

In the statement that racial differences cannot be denied and the evidence is real (Painter, 2010, p. 385). Discrimination due to different races leads to black people being marginalized and their rights are always differentiated. Therefore, deprivation of civil rights, mass incarceration, and racial violence continue even today. The existence of racial differences causes unfair rights between white people and black people. Black people do not have the same rights as white people. Henceforth, black people are always as targets of violence and oppression because of their differences. Even, black women get double oppression because of their gender and race.

The oppression is not only happened to black women but to nature as well. Responding to gender inequality, ecofeminist delivers a perspective to defend women and nature from oppression. Ecofeminist theory originated from feminist theory which is combined with ecological theory. Ecofeminist is a theory that studies the relationship between women and nature. From nature, women process vegetables, fruits, leaves, wood, and water into a continuance of life. The linkage between women and nature is one of the reasons for the presence of ecofeminist theory (Yusmarani, 2019, p. 63). It means that women and nature are considered interrelated and cannot be separated. As Nelfita et al., (2021, p. 108), ecofeminist theory addresses numerous problems on earth based on the assumption that women and nature are inseparable. Ecofeminist experts try to study human relationships in depth by studying the relationship between nature and women by looking at the system of patriarchy and men dominance which is influenced by nature and has an impact on women. As Bilal et al., (2022, p. 475), the patriarchal system has been dominated by both women and nature. Therefore, the focus of ecofeminist theory is to show how women and nature are dominated and oppressed.

In ecofeminist theory, everything that exists in nature is oppressed unjustified, it is included natural oppression such as racial oppression. Racial oppression occurs to black people and is more focused on women. The existence of racial oppression affects the status of women as it is explained by Zhang (2021, p. 20). She argued that because of the status of women and nature in the modern world, people premise that ideology that authorizes oppression based on race is the approximately same as the ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature. Therefore, studying race in ecofeminist theory can pave the way for black women. Black women must have the right to be free from oppression. As in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston, the story tells about the oppression of black women which can be analyzed by using an ecofeminist theory.

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) is written by Zora Neale Hurston. Zora Neale Hurston is a novelist, researcher, and anthropologist of African-American descent. She is a black writer who aimed to write her work to represent the voices of black people. She portrayed how black people were oppressed through her literary works. She described the racial struggles in America presented in the research on Hoodoo. She published four novels and more than fifty short stories, essays, and so on. Of her many literary works, the most popular is the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Since that time, her name has been known through her novel entitled *Their Eyes Were Watching God* which became her best work. The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is published in 1937. This novel became Hurston's best novel so it entered the hundred most influential novels listed on BBC News on November 5, 2019.

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) tells the story of a black woman. Her name is Janie. Janie is the main female character who is considered mule of the world. The mule of the world is an animal term used for women to show that women are inferior. Women who get that animal term would be treated like slave, as Janie. Janie is forced to marry by Nanny because of natural trauma which required Janie to marry with a man of Nanny's choice. Because of the forced marriage, Janie is unhappy until she married three times and experienced

oppression from her three husbands. The presence of the mule of the world is an animal term to show that Janie is controlled by her three husbands. The use of animal terms is Euro-American language used to show that women are inferior as same as animals. This use of animal terms commonly is used in patriarchal cultural environments.

To begin this study, the writer focuses on the depiction kinds of oppression because of the animal term mule of the world on the black main female character as seen from ecofeminist theory based on Karen Warren's theory (2000). The writer needs to know what kinds of oppression experienced by Janie in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Warren (2000) states that there are five kinds of oppression, namely violence, threat, exploitation, exclusion, and mobilization. Then, the writer analyzes how resistance is carried out by the main character to resist her oppression. The writer needs to know what kinds of resistance conducted by Janie in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by using the theory of resistance from Scott (1985). He states that there are two kinds of resistance, such as open and close resistance.

In conducting this study, this study is inspired by some previous studies. The first previous study that relates to this study is entitled *When Nature Triggers Trauma: Environmental Racism and Ecofeminist Theory in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Rohová (2021). This previous study analyzes the main character who experiences racism and forces to follow the rules of life due to natural trauma. This previous study is analyzed by ecofeminist theory. The second previous study related to this study is entitled *Unnatural Disasters: Environmental Trauma and Ecofeminist/Ecowomanist Resistance in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Jesmyn Ward's Salvage the Bones* by Pfitzer (2020). This previous study analyzes two novels whose stories both discuss oppression that impacts to women based on race, gender, and class which is analyzed by ecofeminist theory. The third previous study related to this study is entitled *Black Feminism in Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Shi (2020). This previous study analyzes the main character's experiences of oppression and tries to

fight for her rights as a woman which is analyzed by using feminism theory. The fourth previous study related to this study is entitled *Racism, Feminism and Language in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Qashgari (2017). This previous study analyzes context, narrative, and Hurston's language to represent issues of race, gender, and class in America which is analyzed by using feminism theory. The last previous study related to this study is entitled *Resistance Against Women's Objectification In Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Ratnawati (2020). This previous study analyzes the main character who carries out objectification to fight oppression which is analyzed by using feminist theory.

Those previous studies have not told mule of the world so the previous studies have not discussed oppression against Janie because of the mule of the world. So, the difference between this study with other studies is the oppression against Janie who is considered the mule of the world by using animal terms. The term equates women with animals which makes Janie become inferior. The newness is made here so that the study would be necessary to conduct. This study uses ecofeminist theory by Warren (2000) to reveal the oppression due to race faced by Janie who is described as the mule of the world and the resistance performed by her. So, the newness must be generated here by conducting the study about *Women Oppression In Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Race Ecofeminism Analysis*.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, some problems can be analyzed by ecofeminist theory, namely as follows:

1. What are kinds of oppression experienced by Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*?
2. What are kinds of resistance conducted by Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find out kind of oppression experience by Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
2. To know how Janie resists the oppression in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Hopefully, the results of this study can provide several benefits to the readers both theoretically and practically about ecofeminist theory, especially literary studies that refer to women and nature. Theoretically, it is hoped that this study is expected to be more familiar with the field of literature, especially ecofeminist theory by Warren (2000). Practically, by understanding this study the readers are expected to be able to practice and apply it so that there is no more oppression that refers to nature and women by fighting back so that women can be free. Then, this study is hoped to be a reference that can be used as reference material for conducting relevant studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is the theory used in this study, namely ecofeminist theory by Warren (2000). Ecofeminist theory is used to see how the main character is oppressed because of the animal term that equates women with animals. Then, the theory of resistance against oppression by Scott (1985) to see how the main character resists her oppression. The limitation of this study is the focus on utterances of characters and author narration in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.