

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five subchapters. First it is explaining the general background of this study. The second is the research questions. The third is the objective of the study. The fourth is the significances of the study, and the last is the scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background

During the time of slavery, people from Africa were arrested as slaves by the white colonizers. Slaves were treated inhumanly like animals for forced labor. Hooks (1982) affirmed that white men exploited black women to work hard in fields and households, meanwhile black men only worked in the field. That is why in recorded history, black female slaves suffered more than black male slaves because they were easy targets of the slave trade, sexually abused, and oppressed for sexism in the workplace.

The slave trade by the colonies was inhumane, especially for black women. If they were fertile, then the price would be expensive because the master controlled black woman's sexuality to increase the number of children as prospective new slaves. Great sale of slave occurred in Virginia 1819 as Frances

Corbin reporting, "our principal profit depends on the increase of our slaves" (Hooks, 1982, p. 39). In another report, Historian Deborah Gray White (1985) writes, "Slave masters wanted adolescent girls to have children, and to this end they practiced a passive, though insidious kind of breeding" (Collins, 2000, p. 98). To attract buyers, the sellers used the terms breeding slaves, child-bearing woman, breeding period, too old to breed. Slaves would obey to bear many children because their masters promised them freedom if they succeeded. Therefore, it was the desire to be free that made them give birth too many children.

Black slave was physically abused and brutally raped by her master. The worst is sexual violence was not only accepted by black female mothers but also their children (aged between thirteen and sixteen) who were called as young slave girls. The young were used as prostitutes to be raped and paid. Hooks (1982) argued that "sexual exploitation of young slave girls usually occurs after they left the hut or cabin of their parents to work in the white domestic household" (p. 25). Terrible things always happened because the status of slaves owned by the master and must obey on his orders. If the young refused to serve their master, they would be brutalized and punished. Both the mother and child were terrorized by rapist, if they refused, they were forced naked to be flogged.

Then, the injustice of the division of labor carried out by black male slaves and black women slaves. Black male slaves only worked in the fields because it was masculine area. They did not cook, clean, wash, and so on. Meanwhile, black female slaves worked masculine and feminine areas which the men did not. Black female worked as the man did and sometimes worked in the fields for longer hours. They also worked in the domestic household (cook, wet nurse, and housekeeper), a breeder, and an object of sexual assault. If a man and a woman made a mistake, the punishment would be generalized no longer based on women or men. Hooks (1982) stated, “female slaves were beaten as harshly as male slaves” (p. 23). That is why exploitation of the division of labor makes black women suffer.

It can be concluded that oppression of black women has existed for a long time and is still happen today. Collins (2000, p. 4-5) claimed that women oppression includes three things: 1) Labor exploitation makes them work hard to earn a living and sometimes they get paid for free. 2) Oppression in politics, which distinguishes rights and privileges between black and white women. 3) Oppression by controlling images, such mammies, jezebels, breeder women of slavery.

In line with the statement, Crenshaw (1989) in a study of black women entitle; *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*

discusses the issues of black women. She criticizes that we cannot see one of “woman experience” or “black experiences” because a woman must-see as “black woman experiences” because they are intersecting with race and gender. To illustrate, black men have experiences race oppression but still have gender privilege. Meanwhile, as Black women’s, their experiences are the same with black men by discrimination of race, but they also experiences are the same with a white woman based on discrimination by sex. In addition, as Beale, et al., argues (as cited in Hills, 2000:202) black women experience the injustices associated with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation multiple form of oppression are organized. Thus, we cannot see separately that black women as one of “black” or “women” because black woman experiences multiple burden between race and sex.

The novel *Girl, Woman, Other* by Evaristo has succeeded in raising the voice of oppression against black women, especially in British life. The writer, Bernardine Evaristo, is the first black woman 2019 Man Booker Prize. Moreover, the novel is yet investigated by previous writers using Black Feminist by Patricia Hills. The writer will use *Girl, Woman, Other* to elaborate the categories of oppression of black women and how black women struggle against oppression.

The story *Girl, Woman, Other*, is polyphonic literature which have multi-voice. Twelve characters who relate to each other mostly women, black, and British intersect with their identities (gender, class, nation, race, age, sexuality,

etc.). The story begins with the central character, Amma Bonsu, a queer and feminist playwright who directed *The Last Amazon of Dahomey* which will open at the National. She recalls her early career in theater with Dominique, who is also black and queer. Until they separated because of Dominique's abusive relationship made her move to America and become a radical feminist. The story was followed by several chapters related to black characters, Bummi, Carole, and LaTisha and also followed by the story of mixed/light-skinned, they are; Penelope, Morgan, Hattie, and Grace.

From the explanation about the glimpse of the story above, that *Girl, Woman, Other* has a strong theme about the injustice faced by black women. Some characters experience oppression just because they are black, whether in work, school, or society. This story doesn't only exist in the novel because it is a phenomenon that exists in Britain black women always oppress compared to white women and black men. The issue makes the writer interested in analyzing *Girl, Woman, Other*, novel using the Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hills.

1.2 Research Question

In accordance with the background, this study attempts to answer these research questions:

1. What are the categories of oppression experienced by black women in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*?

2. How do black women struggle against oppression in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*?

1.3 Research Objective

Related to the research question, the research objectives are to describe:

1. The categories of oppression experienced by black women in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*
2. Black women struggle against oppression in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

1.4 Scope and Limitation

The writer focused on black women's character as the object of study using the theory of Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hill Collins. The writer described the categories of oppression that were experienced by black women and struggle against oppression by black women characters in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. Therefore, the writer will try to find and describe what are the categories of oppression of black women and how black women struggle against oppression based on reliable theories throughout the novel.

This study has a weakness. The writer didn't focus on their psychology. Meanwhile, there is an issue that is also interesting to explore it is about the psychology of Black women. It is because the effects of oppression on black

people affect their mental health. The successive study, hopefully, will explore more about the psychological problem.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give a reference about Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hills. In particular, it provides a better understanding of categorized of black women oppression in Evaristo's novel *Girl Women Other*. This study is expected to give various advantages in the development of science especially in the literary research field and to to give a contribution to the understanding of black feminism theory. This study is supposed to give a small contribution for literary research and being a good reference to the reader who takes a similar theory and novel.

The result of this study is also hoped to contribute to the readers, especially for the students of the English Department. From this study, it portrays pain and suffering by black women. That is why important to know, understand, and responsive about black women's oppression and how to treat black women.