

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the introduction is devoted to be discussed: background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study and scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of the study

Women are born as the great precious creature. According to Pratiwi, in her writing, *Hakikat Seorang Wanita*, women can pass many difficult things in their life (2010). Especially, when women passing the level of marriage. Unlike men, women can do many things without other's help. For example, giving birth, taking care of the household, raising the children and so on. They also have to decide to live without the intervention of parents for marriage. Pratiwi also adds that women who succeed through their hard times, they still have an obligation (Pratiwi, 2010). Some struggle to take care of, protect and guide of the children with sincerity and love. The woman who sincerely loves and keeps her children called mother. Mother has a lot of love will never drop all of the time.

The reflection of the human life—female issues, women abilities and their justice—can be seen in many literary works. According to Wellek and Warren, 'literature' represents 'life' and 'life' is in large measure a social reality (1963, p.94). It means that the social reality and the reflection of human life can inspired many writers to write many literary works. It can be seen in many kinds of literature. One of that is American literature. According to Van Spanckeren, in her book, *Outline of American Literature Revised Edition*, literature in the United

States is likewise dazzlingly diverse, exciting, and evolving (1994, p.136). From that statement, it can be seen that many writers in American literature have been contributed through their works in which writers reflect on experience shaped by culture, color and gender.

One of the divisions of American literature based on the historical period is contemporary American period. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms Seventh Edition*, Abrams (1999, p.209) explains that the contemporary American period starts from 1939 to the present which has various themes of writing. The themes are the images of sexuality, death and sensuality. Besides that the themes of adolescence are coloring the contemporary American literature for the readers, especially for teenagers. Then, the themes of liberty and justice are explored in contemporary American period. Based on Abrams' statement above, it means that there are many kinds of themes that inspired many writers.

Since the appearance of various themes of writing, black writers also popped out and contributed the writing of literary works in contemporary American period. Such as, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, Sylvia Plath, Kathryn Stockett, Gwendolyn Brooks, Jamaica Kincaid, Maya Angelou, Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, Nikki Giovanni, Langston Hughes and so on. Among of them are black American poets. According to Van Spanckeren, in her book, *Outline of American Literature Revised Edition*, Black Americans have produced many poems of great beauty with a considerable range of themes and tones. African American literature is the most developed ethnic writing in America and is extremely diverse (1994, p. 93). It can be seen many awards like

Pulitzer Prize and American Awards that they won by their works. They shaped their works with the reflection of experiences—not only regional, political and racial differences aspect but also their subjects invariably voice women's concerns (Van Spanckeren, 1994, p.89-90).

According to Rushing, most of black-American poetry that appeared in contemporary American period is not only about beloved, but also mother. Most of these poems presented about self-sacrifice, hard work and fierce maternal love (1979). Those black Americans poet that put their subjects invariably voice women's concerns and the motherhood are Jamaica Kincaid and Langston Hughes.

Jamaica Kincaid, the angrier voice, from Antigua, Caribbean Island, whose unsparing autobiographical works include her first book entitled *At The Bottom of the River* (1983), *Annie John* (1985), *Lucy* (1990) and *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) (Van Spanckeren, 1994, p.152). She contributed and fulfilled the wave of contemporary American literature. According to BBC World Services, many awards that she won because of her works (2012). She ever nominated for the PEN/Faulkner Award, won the Morton Darwen Zabel Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and recent, she won of the 35th annual American Book Awards. One of her literary works that shows the outstanding characteristic of mother can be seen in a dramatic monologue poem titled *Girl* by Jamaica Kincaid. This poem tells about *mother* who struggling her life through her guidance in growing her daughter. Based on Rushing, African-American poems gave the images function as black-American

experiences (1979). The poet, Jamaica Kincaid tried to reflect her experience in her past through the poem (BBC World Service, 2012).

Langston Hughes also gives the notion of self-sacrifice, hard work, and hopefulness of mother by his works that titled *The Negro Mother* poem. He was born in Joplin, Missouri. He was particularly known for his insightful, colorful portrayals of black life in America (Academy of American Poets, 2014). It depicted in ways that is poem that tells the stories of black mother's hopefulness for her children. He also elaborates mother's struggles in her past life.

So, the writer makes some reasons why she chooses those literary works. First, those poems tell about the portrait of black mother and children in relationship. Black mother concentrated on the protection and survival of their children. Second, it describes how the woman's struggle—like mother in this poem—to survive without man's figure. Last, those works made by those poets that they contribute in the notion of black motherhood.

Because of this background above, the writer interests in analyzing words, phrases or line in Jamaica Kincaid's *Girl* and Langston Hughes' *The Negro Mother* poem as the topic of the study. The writer uses the theory feminism approach as the main theory which focuses on caring-focusing and motherhood as supporting theory. The theory feminism is used because the theme of the poems tells about mother's struggle in growing her child. Besides that, those works made by those poets that they contribute in the notion of black motherhood. It motivates the writer to read and comprehend the feminism theory also motherhood. The

theory, of course, related to this study that entitled: *Mother's Struggle in Growing Child in Jamaica Kincaid's Girl and Langston Hughes' the Negro Mother*.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Connected with the background above, the writer would like to investigate the research problem that can be formulated on question: how is the mother's struggle portrayed in those poems?

1.3 Objective of the study

In line with the statement of the research problem above, this study concerns to describe the mother's struggle that portrayed in those poems.

1.4 Significance of the study

The result of the study is expected to give contributions both the theoretical and practical benefits information for anyone more deeply and better understanding. Theoretically, the result of the study is expected to strengthen and enrich the theory of literature and feminism especially about motherhood by focuses on care-focused feminism. Moreover, the result of the study also inspires other writers to write about woman's struggles in other forms of source of data. Meanwhile practically, the writer hopes can give contribution also for the reader and society. The writer hopes the result of the study can add the knowledge about the motherhood, especially African-American motherhood, woman headed family, and the relationship between mother and children. And of course, the result of the study is hoped to give the moral values especially a guidance of life between parents and children.

1.5 Scope and limitations

This study is focused on woman's struggle—mother's struggle—that is showed by *mother* in Jamaica Kincaid's *Girl* and Langston Hughes' *The Negro Mother* through the theory of feminism that focuses on care-focused feminism as the main theory and motherhood as the supporting theory. The limitation of the study is on words or lines that related with the theme of the study.