

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Understanding literary work is always interesting for the researcher, since observing the characteristics of human being which are vary and attracts conflicts to analyze are amazing things. There are so many ways to do in order to have a better understanding in reading a short story. Here the researcher takes Mary Flannery O'Connor collections of short stories. There are two collections, which will be analyzed, the first one is the collection in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (1955), and the second is the collection in "Everything that Rises must Converge" (1965).

This research unveils the meaning of prejudice, racism and violence, reflected in the collection of short stories of "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (1955) written by Mary Flannery O'Connor where there are ten stories in it, namely; "A Good Man is Hard to find", "The River", "The Life You Save May be Your Own", "A Stroke of Good Fortune", "A Temple of the Holy Ghost", "The Artificial Nigger", "A Circle in the Fire", "A Late Encounter with the Enemy", "Good Country People", and "The Displaced Person" and the second collection consists of eight stories under the title of collection "Everything that Rises Must Converge" including "Greenleaf", "A View of the Woods", "The Enduring Chill", "The Comforts of Home", "The Lame Shall Enter First", "Revelation" and "Parker Back". They are Mary's great works, where she pours her typical writing within

this short story. The writer of the story wants to reveal the prejudice, racism, violence in such a way that the readers will be deeply involved with the style and way of depicting the characters in line with the religious teaching she always inserted inside. (Richard Giannone, 2000).

The collection of short stories in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “Everything that Rises Must Converge” reflects Mary’s specific style in writing, where she includes the religious teaching as she was a very faith person in her religion as well as the violence as a mean to attract the reader’s attention. In her point of view, violence makes the story become alive and fruitful. Almost in all the stories, Mary presented the violence scene as a way to make the readers get involved deeply within the whole stories. On the other hand, the readers become more understand about her style and typical in writing. (Richard Giannone, 2000).

“A Good Man is Hard to Find” and the other nine short stories were written in 1955 and the second collection in “Everything that Rises must Converge” were published in 1965, ten years after the first collection. Most of her short stories cover the grace as the theme, for example in the short story “A Good man is Hard to Find” The Grandmother and The Misfit, neither of whom is particularly deserving, receive Grace. As she realizes what is happening, The Grandmother begins to beg The Misfit to pray so that Jesus will help him. Right before The Misfit kills her, The Grandmother calls him one of her own children, recognizing him as a fellow human capable of being saved by God's Grace. Even though he murders her, the Misfit is implied to have achieved some level of Grace as well when he ends the story by saying, "It's no real pleasure in life." Earlier in

the story, he claimed the only pleasure in life was meanness. (Harold Bloom, 1999).

In "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," Tom Shift let has a chance to achieve Grace. He has been wandering and has no friends, and has found in this household a chance to work hard, watch a beautiful sunset every night, and live a quiet life. This opportunity is hinted at when he first approaches the two women sitting on the porch and turns his back to them to face the sunset: "He swung both his whole and his short arm up slowly so that they indicated an expanse of sky and his figure formed a crooked cross." That crooked cross embodied in his figure represents his chance at salvation. As he drives toward Mobile, having missed his chance, he prays, "Oh Lord! Break forth and wash the slime from this earth!"

The Grace of God is the most important theme in "The River." Grace is misinterpreted by Mr. Paradise and the young boy, Harry. Mr. Paradise has unrealistic expectations of Bevel the preacher, attacking him for not being able to perform any real miracles. Harry, having been brought up without religion, fails to understand Bevel's preaching and drowns himself in the River. However, he achieves Grace in death, since he chooses to strive for salvation rather than live in the atheistic household with his parents. (Richard Giannone, 2000).

In "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," the child, who is on the surface bad-tempered, suffers from a prideful character. She does not ask to go to the fair with the older children, and decides that even if they asked her she would not accompany them because she is too proud. But O'Connor gives the reader insight into the workings of the child's mind, and it is revealed that she strives for Grace,

even considering a saintly death to be her calling. There is a tension in the child's mind between her "ugly thoughts" and the knowledge.

In the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" the prejudice is shown by the character of Grandmother, where she always expresses her prejudice toward everything she saw. For an instance, when she saw a little Negro without clothes, she has a feeling of prejudice that the little Negro must be from a poor family and the next scene she also express her feeling of prejudice. (Flannery O'Connor; An Introduction; Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1991).

Racism is an extremely important theme in "The Displaced Person," and is quite explicit in dialogue and in the characters' judgments of each other. When Mrs. McIntyre asks Mrs. Shortly where her husband is during the Guises' arrival, she answers, "He don't have time to rest himself in the bushes like them niggers over there." Later, while she discusses the Guises' arrival with Astor and Sulk, O'Connor reveals that, "The illogic of Negro thinking always irked Mrs. Shortly." But Mrs. Shortly is also racist toward Europeans, and is suspicious of the Guises for this reason. In conversation with her husband, she reveals, "I'd rather have niggers than them Poles." Mrs. McIntyre decides to do away with Mr. Giza because he is trying to organize a marriage between his white cousin and Sulk, a black farmhand, even though her financial success will be negatively affected by his departure. Her racism is clear toward the black farmhands as well: "The niggers don't leave - they stay and steal. A nigger thinks anybody is rich he can steal from." Even Mr. Giza, whose point of view never dominates the story, has racist feelings toward the black farmhands: "The Negroes made him nervous."

Racism is important in "The Artificial Nigger;" though neither Mr. Head nor Nelson feels explicit hatred toward the black people they encounter; they certainly view them as others and are nervous around them. When Mr. Head disrespects the black kitchen worker on the train, Nelson feels proud of him. (Flannery O'Connor; an introduction; Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1991).

He realizes that he is dependent on his grandfather to protect him from the unknown, including black people. When Nelson asks the black woman for directions to the train, he is overwhelmed by her presence because she is so different from anyone he has ever seen. Mr. Head later makes fun of him for gawking at her.

A level of racism is apparent in Asbury's interactions with Randall and Morgan in "The Enduring Chill," although he doesn't believe himself to be racist. The very idea that he would be writing a play about "The Negro" is, of course, racist. Last year when he was writing the play, he had spent time with them on the job, and they had bonded over breaking one of his mother's rules by smoking in the barn. He saw this moment as "one of those moments of communion when the difference between black and white is absorbed into nothing." However, he is dissatisfied with their visit because they simply insist that he looks well, which is obviously a lie, and end up bickering with each other. (Harold Bloom, 1999).

In "Everything That Rises Must Converge," Julian's mother is clearly racist. She is afraid of the black people who board the bus, and of black people in general. The fact that the black woman on the bus is wearing the same hideous green hat as Julian's mother links the two women. Julian hopes it will teach his

mother a lesson that she and the black woman are not so different, but instead she finds it amusing, as if the woman is a “monkey that had stolen her hat.” What Julian finds most infuriating about her is that she is not hatefully and openly racist, but rather racist in a pitying way, which is more insulting to the black woman who hits her. She thinks that black people were better off as slaves, and that, “They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence.”

In the story "A Good Man is Hard to Find", Flannery O'Connor uses violence as a force of both good and evil to demonstrate how people's attitudes and perspectives of life change when they are faced with a situation of violent danger. The story is about a family of six who, on their way to Florida are murdered by an escaped convict who calls himself the Misfit. The characters include the grandmother, her son Bailey, his wife and their children John Wesley, June Star and the baby. (Harold Bloom, 1999)

In society, violence is generally looked upon as evil because it is believed that no good can result from violence. When looking at the occurrence of violence in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" the reader sees the obvious negative aspect of death which results from violence. The deaths that are a result of the violence elicit feelings of pity and terror which demonstrate the negative aspects of violence within the story. The attitude change in the grandmother demonstrates how violence is used as a positive force. The change in attitude does not occur until the very end of the story and up until that point the grandmother is rather hypocritical and selfish. Although the story was written in 1955 the grandma still seems a little old fashioned for the time. As with many ladies her age, the

grandmother seems to cling to her past saying "People are certainly not nice like they used to be". (Harold Bloom, 1999)

The study investigates prejudice, racism, and violence for the following reasons; **firstly**, the researcher observes that the author of the short stories illustrated the major characters behaviors mostly reflect those features. For example; in the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find", the prejudice feeling is clearly portrayed by the Grandmother as the major character, **next**, the racism is fully shown in the short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge" where Julian's mother is clearly racist. She thinks that the black people should be better as slave not more. It also covers the feeling of prejudice, like the character of Grandmother (A Good Man is Hard to Find). The next is **violence** where the author of the story put it as the way to attract the readers' attention. This character can be seen from the character The Misfit in the story A Good Man is Hard to Find. He is undoubtedly killing the whole family of Grandmother, for he thinks that he doesn't belong to the family of the good one. He believes that it is difficult to find a good one. He prefers to his own. **Secondly**; the researcher is fully interested in interpreting literary work. It is challenging to interpret the characteristics of human being in different situation and condition. The collection of Mary Flannery O'Connor attracts the researcher's attention since the prejudice; racism and violence are the typical of her writing.

Besides that, the researcher also presented the following reasons; **for the researcher herself**, to understand the work of her better besides giving her deep knowledge about the author of the story and familiar with her typical way of

writing. **For the students**, it is hoped to help them to have better understanding about Mary Flannery's work and make them easy to understand the eighteen short stories of her. Besides that, the students are able to pick out the moral values of the stories and make them interested in reading short stories for the sake of their own, for an instance to have entertainment and as a way to practice their reading skills. **For the teachers**; this research is expected to help the teachers understand the eighteen short stories of Mary Flannery O'Connor and make use of them to be one of the materials in their teaching and learning activities, especially in teaching a narrative genre, and make them able to give the religious teaching based on those stories. Besides, it is also hoped to make the teachers make use all the eighteen stories as the media to give a story telling material for their teaching. **For the Institution**; it is hoped that the research will give benefits for the institution, namely Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, which is to enrich the amount of library research on literary work; on the other hand, the research is also intended to deepen the ability of writing skill of the students of English language department.

B. Problem Statements

The major problem statement of this study is to unveil "the meaning of prejudice, racism, and violence in Mary O'Connor's collection of Short story. The main focus of the study is to analyze the following six questions:

1. How is the history of racism in the United States?
2. How is prejudice reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of Short stories?

3. How is racism reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories?
4. How is violence reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories?
5. What are the meaning of prejudice, racism, and violence in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories?
6. Why do human's right abuses exist in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories?

C. Objectives of the Study

This research is intended to answer the meaning of prejudice, racism, and violence reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories. The details objectives are as follows:

1. To explain how racism happened in the United States.
2. To describe how prejudice is reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories.
3. To describe how racism is reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories.
4. To explain how violence is reflected in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories.
5. To explain the meaning of prejudice, racism, and violence in Mary O'Connor's collections of short stories.
6. To describe why human's right abuses exist in Mary O'Connor's collections of Short stories.

D. Benefits of the study

1. Theoretical Benefits

This study is expected to be able to make the field of literature research becomes vary in analysis. The analysis of collection of Mary Flannery short story is hoped to enrich the field of library research on literature especially on short stories analysis.

2. Practical Benefits

This research on the eighteen short stories of Mary Flannery O'Connor is hoped to give benefits to the readers of her works, understand the moral value illustrated within all the characters as well as give better understanding on Mary's typical way of writing. The other benefit is for the teachers who want to find reference on literary work, especially short stories. This study is hoped to help them, become one of the reference, especially in teaching narrative genre.