

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literary and cultural works of course have a close relationship, because a literary work develops based on the culture adopted by people in a certain area. Literature is also an embodiment that is conveyed through speech and writing. Literature is truly one aspect of culture that plays an important role. The intended role, first, is in relation to the provision of data, namely in the form of literary works, both oral and written. Second, the role and involvement in relation to theory, especially poststructuralism theories. As a source of data, literary works are at the same time fictional and factual, with variants in the form of genres. As a source of data, with the main medium being language, which is then represented in the form of discourse, literary works are also very rich objects of study because as a system of symbols language always refers to something else. Besides providing data sources, literature also provides theories. Fiction and fact, fiction and reality according to the understanding of ordinary people, are important issues in poststructuralism theories, especially cultural studies.

According to Tylor (1832-1917), culture is a complex system that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, abilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. So of course culture means discussing the beliefs of a member of the community who adheres to it. Culture and literature are dependent on each other. Literature is very much influenced by culture, so that everything contained in culture will be reflected in literature. Masinambouw said that literature and culture are two systems inherent in humans. If culture is a system that regulates human interaction in society, language (literature) is a system that functions as a means of

ongoing interaction. Furthermore, Maran (2007: 38) argues that there are seven elements of culture that can be found in all nations in the world. Among them, beliefs, values, norms and sanctions, technology, symbols, language and art. Based on the description above, the problems in this study are divided into two, namely: (1) Mimetic study in the novel *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue (2) Techniques for representing culture in the novel entitled *How Beautiful We Were*.

After explaining what culture is now the researcher will explain what the novel will be the reference for researchers in this research. According to Nurgiyantoro (2012: 4), the novel is a work of fiction that offers a world, a world that contains a model of life that idealized, imaginative world, which is constructed through various elements intrinsic elements such as events, plots, characters (and characterizations), settings, angles point of view, and others who are also imaginative. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the novel is a literary work created by the author from mixing imagination and picture of life around the author who produce a new world that contains the lives of the characters. Literary works are conveyed using language, both spoken and written. Literature is an "art of language", namely a branch of art that uses language as its medium. Furthermore, literature is a work of fiction which is the result of creations based on spontaneous emotional overflows that are able to express aesthetic aspects both based on linguistic aspects and aspects of meaning (Fananie, 2002: 7). Through literary works, writers are able to provide understanding and insight to readers about the human environment by fulfilling aesthetic needs. This is because literary works contain values that attract readers to enjoy a literary work.

How Beautiful We Were is Imbolo Mbue second novel however, Mbue started writing it long before her first novel, *Behold the Dreamers*, appeared. This novel

transports readers to the imaginary African village of Kosawa, grappling with the ravages of environmental pollution as a result of drilling by an American oil corporation. The novel opens dramatically when, at a village meeting with representatives from the Pexton Oil Company, Konga, a madman, captures the car keys of the delegates, steering the village toward an astonishing act of rebellion: holding the Pexton men hostage to exert pressure on the company to reveal what happened to their own men who disappeared when they went to the city to lodge a complaint. The narrative vacillates between the perspectives of the children who witness this primary act of rebellion and other characters in the village. The dramatic act of collective solidarity initiated by Konga is a sly inversion of Pexton's strategy of liquidating the emissaries from the village who had demanded better environmental protections. The initial act of rebellion prompts a retaliatory bloodbath against Kosawa and the arrest and execution of several villagers on charges of kidnapping. Already, readers are plunged into cycles of trauma: the original trauma of oil drilling close to human habitat, the lack of environmental protections to preserve the sanctity of water resources, and retaliation when villagers protest. These traumas are registered most acutely on the Nangi family, particularly Thula, whose father goes missing in the original delegation. Her uncle is then executed without a proper trial for the alleged kidnapping. These early episodes of irrevocable loss radicalize Thula, who is determined to seek justice for her village. She overcomes tremendous obstacles to secure a high school education and then pursues higher education in the US, which leads her to an understanding of neocolonial oppression, capitalism, and environmental justice. She returns to Kosawa, choosing the solitary path of teaching and activism in her native country. However, even before she returns, she flirts with the idea of violence as a mode of exerting pressure on Pexton. She inspires a group of

her age-mates to engage in acts of arson to sow some fears in the minds of Pexton managers. She pours all her energy into building a grassroots movement against His Excellency, the political head of state who has allowed Pexton to drill with impunity. She is able to hire a lawyer to sue Pexton in a US court for reparations. Her brother, Juba, while initially her ally, gradually disassociates from her, choosing instead the easy life, working for the government, and accepting corruption as part of the fabric of life in his country. The novel ends with the shattering of hopes for legal restitution and with yet another episode of violence and tragedy. Mbue seems to be suggesting that every successive generation in Kosawa is subjected to its own history of failure and a brutal crushing of hope. While this may seem to be a presentation of utter pessimism, what preserves a more hopeful sensibility in the novel is the care with which Mbue depicts the bonds of African village life. The Nangi family is characterized by relationships of mutual care, reciprocity, and nurture. The bonds between family members are lovingly portrayed and stand in contrast to the death and violence surrounding them. The memorialization of these affective bonds is perhaps the call to future generations to continue the struggle against the collusion of neocolonial governments with global capital.

This research is going to cultural aspects in the novel *How Beautiful We Were*, before studying further, here the researcher will explain what culture in Literature. Culture in literature is an interesting thing to discuss. In the novel *How Beautiful We Were*, it also contains many elements and comparisons of African and American culture. Researchers will examine the cultural aspects in the novel *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue by using the Brams theory.

1.2 Limitations of the Research

Based on the background, the researcher limits the research problem. The limitations of this research are focused on cultural aspects and cultural play a role in novel.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the cultural context contained in the novel How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue?
2. How does the cultural play a role in the novel How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue?

1.4 Objective of Research

1. To find cultural context in the novel How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue.
2. To analyze cultural context play a role in the novel How Beautiful We Were by Imbolo Mbue.

