

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the writer presents the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significances of the study, the scope and the limitation of the study, the theoretical frameworks, and the definition of the key terms used in the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

As humans are social beings, they are created to live together with other people. People can not live alone since people always need accompanies and helps from others. Everyday, people have to socialize with other people around them to establish good communication. Living together with other people around forces them to adapt with every individual they meet. Before people establish relationships with others, they must learn the character of those people.

Learning characters can be done by living experience but also by reading imaginative works. This happens since character in literature generally, and in fiction specifically, is an extended verbal representation of a human being, the inner self that determines thought, speech and behavior (Roberts and Jacobs (1989). Though it is imaginative in nature, readers can experience it as if people involved in the conflict. In such situation, characters with different characters are confronted to embody the story. This is in line with X.J. Kennedy's (1983) comment that a character is presumably an imagined person who inhabits a story.

However, it should be noted that the “reality” in a literature can not perceived as the reality in the sense of a journalistic product. Fictional characters are like real people in some ways, they are by no means identical to people, as they exist in the new words as it is, whereas characters only exist in an imaginative purposes of drama. (Scholes, Klaus and Silverman, 1978)

Different from traditional society in rural area in which people try to maintain the harmony of life, modern life in urban city to expose people with more complex problems which may cause conflicts, even the severe ones. At this stage, people should be able to deal with existing problems or conflicts by adjusting ourselves and taking appropriate action so that solutions are formed. Sometimes, when people are facing problems or challenges, people do not know what to do. Not a few of people are running away from the problems. In fact, there are many ways people can do to find the right solution for every problem that exists. One of them by looking at a lot of artworks that contain various moral values and messages that people can apply in everyday life.

One of the art works that can give readers moral values and messages is Jeanine Tesori’s musical drama entitled “Thoroughly Modern Millie”. This musical contains many messages and moral values for those who seek strength to face problems in their life. It presents a special character named Millie Dillmount, an rural girl from Kansas, who comes to New York City in search of a new life which is a completely opposite life from her previous pastoral life. Her grand plan is to find a job as a secretary for a wealthy man and then marry him. However, her plan goes completely awry: the owner of her dingy hotel kidnaps young girls to

human trafficking to the far East, her wealthy boss who is proposing her to get married despite her socio-economic status and her feeling towards the man she actually falls in love. Those people own various characters that add color to the struggle of her life. The roles of every person that Millie encounters have different characters, such as antagonist characters, protagonist characters and many more. Besides the characters, the setting of the story also contributes in Millie's conflicts. As it is implied in the title of the musical, "*Thoroughly Modern Millie*", Millie has to encounter modern life which aims to change her completely from a rural girl to be an urban girl. Modern life in New York City challenges her principles and perspective on life. Millie, a rural girl with her innocence, has to face realities of modern life which are full of liars, betrayals, conflicts, impersonal relationships et cetera.

This musical drama also touches the writer personally. The writer stays and studies in Surabaya, the second biggest city in Indonesia, after growing up as a rural boy from East Nusa Tenggara province, one of the poorest area in Indonesia, The writer was determined to move to this city when the writer was 14 years old, to reach his dream of having a better life. Leaving his dear family and living in a boarding house by himself, the writer struggled to make his living in the modern city. Reading *Thoroughly Modern Millie* has made the writer reflect his own life and the writer personally wants to learn from this drama.

However, much more than that, this study is also an intellectual journey. Although reviews of this musical drama are available ([Bomeny, 2015](#)), the criticism is still limited conducted by Indonesian scholars. In addition, the setting

of the musical in urban life in New York City must have shown significant features of modernity in the U.S. which has differences and similarities with the one in Indonesia. This made the writer curious to analyze the complexity of modern life portrayed in the drama.

1.2. Research Questions

Dramatic change in life can be very challenging for people who experience it. Millie Dillmount, the main character of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, in the beginning of the drama is determined by living in New York City by tearing out her return ticket. Via the conflict she faces in the drama, the writer is interested to answer the following research problem:

How does Millie Dillmount cope with the challenges of modern life?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

By analyzing the musical drama of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, the writer aims to explore Millie's ways to cope the challenges she encounters. In order to do so, the writer describes the characteristics of modern life which in some way both develop and hinder Millie to reach her dream to have better life.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The result of this study will be beneficial for readers who want to know deeper about the criticism of modern life shown in Jeanine Tesori's musical

drama entitled '*Thoroughly Modern Millie*'. By reading this thesis, they might get knowledge about the analysis of the conflict and get moral value implicitly from the drama so that they could understand better Millie's struggle as a person who earns a living in a modern city.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

In order to have more focused discussion, the writer limits the study on the conflicts arised among the characteristics; those are Millie, Jimmy, Mrs. Meers, Miss Dorothy, Bun Foo, Ching Ho, etc. The writer also wants to find out the relation between the conflicts and the setting of the story happen. While there might be philosophical or sociological dimensions of the conflict, the writer wants to focus on the intrinsic aspects of the drama. Some theories on modernity are used only as a reference to build a more thorough argument on the issue.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

As this study is literary criticism in nature, the writer employes Abrahm's (1971) seminal work on literary analysis who argues that there are four dimentions of approaches of literary criticism. They are mimetic, pragmatic, expressive and objective theories. The writer uses the mimetic approach which argues that a literary work is a reflection of the universe or the real world. As the title of the musical drama (*Thoroughly Modern Millie*) reveals, it deals with the issue of modern life. To understand the construct, the writer explores the concept of modernism as summarized by Wagner (2001) and Lewis (2013) who bases his

argument on Antony Giddens' criticism on modernism. Since the setting of the drama is New York City in 1922, the writer also describes American life in the Twenties which is claimed to be called as the Roaring Twenties (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008)

1.7. Definitions of Key Terms

1. Conflict

Conflict is the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

2. Modernity

The transition from the feudal agrarian barter exchange system to a system with significantly more complex social interactions—one that no longer depends on face-to-face exchange relations, but is instead based on intense market exchange relationships (Lewis, C., 2013)

3. Criticism

An opinion given about something or someone, esp. a negative opinion, or the activity of making such judgments.(Cambridge Dictionary)

4. *Thoroughly Modern Millie*

Thoroughly Modern Millie is a musical drama written by Jeanine Tesori and Dick Scanlan, and adapted from a book by Richard Morris and Scanlan. The Producer is a Ross hunter and the date of production is

October 2000. It mainly tells about the struggle of a rural girl moving to a big city to reach her American dream.