

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1. Background of the Research

Literary has been one of the places where toxic ideas of women are perpetuated, flourished and normalized. Taking few mainstream examples such as *Twilight*, *Dilan*, *After*, and *The Kissing Booth*, these novels were criticized sexist by book critics. One of the sexist ideas are women is still perceived inherently weak, an object to be possessed and conquered, and despised when possessing power. On one side, the reader might not be aware of the importance. After all, they might still enjoy them. However, they have missed the importance of this concern. They might not be aware that literature holds the power to normalize ideas. Despite claims of fictionality or illusion or not true, the reader might still accept these ideas unconsciously without question. Ignoring this is at the same time normalizing and accepting the ideas. This means, ignoring sexist ideas in literature would give more constraint to women by allowing it to pass to other readers.

This literature phenomenon actually mirrors social expectation to women. One research pointed that women are still defined and expected with absolute to be the carrier of the baby at certain of age, to handle the family despite working (Komariyah & Andrianingsih, 2021). On one hand, women are also expected to be soft and sexually accommodating to men (Hermawan et al., 2017). On the other hand, women should not be sexual or else they would be shamed and this action leads women to self-shamed due to such fear (Gunning et al., 2020). At worst,

women is believed to be the only trigger of men to sexually harass and assault (Taylor, 2007). Having the latter prejudice in the case of sexual assault, it would be difficult to achieve justice as 75% of the cases getting negative responds from the community (Ahrens et al., 2009). As evident in both worlds, it is a vivid landscape of restrictive ideas and expectation of women in literature and social. It is this restriction that feminist strived to break in order to arrive at fair society that gives respect toward each other. However, as long as people hold this prejudice, breaking the systematic issue would be difficult.

There are many strategies to fight, adverse and counter these ideas and expectations. On one hand, some would prefer to protest on the street which would strive quick, radical and sporadic reception for their counter. On the other hand, some would fight from where this ideas and expectation began and maintained, which starts from discourse especially from literature. A French philosopher and a sociologist named Bourdieu (as cited in Speller, 2011) believed the work of writers and artist possessed symbolic power to control the discourse and extend the voice of victim of inequality. Writers and artists have power to revolutionize people's mind through arts and literature. Hence, they need to join the symbolic struggle against status quo. Bourdieu's statement counters the claim that literature is a mere fiction and illusion. Literature is actually possible for authors to voice and increase awareness to the reader.

Such feature of literature would be interesting to investigate when there is a clear possibility that literature shares social reality and struggle. In this case, *Beartown* novel comprises issues ranging from toxic masculinity, repressed

homosexuality, racial discrimination, extreme strict parenting, men's fear of staying virgin, unfulfilled love and belonging, and feminist issues, which is the center discussion of the novel. *Beartown* is originally a Swedish novel written by Fredrik Backman and published in 2016. The story begins in a Swedish town called *Beartown*, a town which revolves and depends heavily on the welfare and success on hockey. Without the success of hockey, *Beartown* would lose jobs and opportunity for their economy. *Beartown* is also where hockey is a tradition. The men would call themselves proudly as 'bears' who are strong against the cold and the dark, and content despite low economy. Here, Backman draws a society where men are prominent and significant than women who appears insignificant as partner or, for worse, a trophy when succeed deflowering women. He displayed this through interaction and behavior of the people as if it is normal thing to do. One of the instances of the social phenomenon in *Beartown* could be seen below.

Words are small things. No one means any harm by them, they keep saying that. Everyone is just doing their job. The police say it all the time. "I'm just doing my job here." **That's why no one asks what the boy did; as soon as the girl starts to talk they interrupt her instead with questions about what she did. Did she go up the stairs ahead of him or behind him? Did she lie down on the bed voluntarily or was she forced? ...** (Backman, 2017)

This quote resembles the social reality as elaborated before; ideas and expectations of women in the case of sexual assault. When women accuse men, those women too would be doubted more. In this novel, it is Maya, a 15-year-old girl accused her 17-year-old crush named Kevin who without consent forced to sex. The quote shows how they did not mean to doubt the victim as fraud because they are "just doing their job". Instead, as she said, "no one asks what the boy did." The police kept interrogating the victim as the focus of investigation. When asked, they would

respond it as if this was the procedure or logically sense to do. Another instance is Maya's mother named Kira who faced disagreement and disrespect when she decided to be a career woman. This made her refused to accept the promotion. Another instance is Adri who has to repressed her hockey ability despite zero opportunity in Beartown.

*Beartown* has significance in terms of perceiving social injustices in the novel which also had made the novel banned. A teacher of Rockingham County School District in North Carolina had sneaked this novel without any supervision or check, and later this novel is banned after parents founded the novel contained vulgarity, disturbing, and graphic for high school student (Duncan, 2018). The banning had undermined the social value that concerns on current phenomena. Even National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) tried to persuade so as the ban is lifted through open letters (NCAC, 2018). Despite having banned, *Beartown* is listed as nominees and favored by reader and literary critics. Not long ago, *Beartown* had been adapted into series in HBO Swedish. This significances of *Beartown* novel above provides interesting standpoint that drives the research to happen especially the social phenomenon it perceives.

One of the ways to analyze the problematic ideas and expectation of women in *Beartown* novel is using feminist approach. This approach examines women subordination and femininity in literary works through psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic aspect (Tyson, 2015). In this case, the subordination part corresponds to the concern of this research and to the problems found in the novel. Subordination recognizes the fact that there are women with

power and women without power. However, using this approach tend to dispense aesthetic qualities of the novel by focusing more into the sociological aspect. This dispensation helps explaining why society expect women to be in certain way they believe (Dobie, 2012). This dispensation is also necessary because this research turns to social for feminist matter.

In approaching feminist issue in *Beartown* novel, the research applies social theory of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence explains how people become dominant and maintains to be dominant by exercising practice that ensure the dichotomy of men and women maintained (Schubert, 2014). Symbolic violence is subtle that people could take it for granted (Jenkins, 2006). In this case, ideas and expectation defined by patriarchal society is taken without question and received easily by women. They would see this patriarchal doxa or value as truth or fact or fate. Besides, subordinated women might not realize that this idea is arbitrarily constructed by men in power. In other words, the idea and expectation began from a stereotype and transformed into natural fact and, thus, normalized. This shows how the concept of symbolic violence could inform the process of subordinated women in *Beartown* novel accepting the idea easily without question.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence in literary analysis has been favored by researchers recently. There are two instances of relevant research concerning to the Bourdieu's concept and novel as the data source. The first one is a descriptive-qualitative journal article by Angelianawati (2020) who studied symbolic violence toward homosexual characters in Andrei Aksana's *Lelaki Terindah* novel. The objective is to analyze the symbolic violence against the homosexual character.

Here, she found that the preservation of social view rejects homosexuality and pressed them to comply and obey. This complicity is the effect of symbolic violence occurred in family, social, and institution that pushed dominant and arbitrary view that homosexuality was 'deviation'. On this account, the journal article shares the same theory to this thesis which is symbolic violence. However, the journal article studied on novel that is different to this research. Besides, the subject of the study is homosexuality whereas this thesis studied women subordination.

The second research is a journal article by Darwis (2021) who studied symbolic violence in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel. The objective is to identify and analyze forms of symbolic violence towards women in the novel. Implementing qualitative method, she found symbolic violence appears in the forms of (1) mother's cynicism and rejection to the main character, (2) father's decision to arrange marriage to the main character, (3) patriarchal culture's control in shaping the clothes and behavior based on their ideas of women. On this account, the journal article shares similar feature of theory of symbolic violence to the subordinated women. However, the journal article studied *A Thousand Splendid Suns* whereas this thesis studies *Beartown* novel.

In regards to data source novelty, there are very few previous researches that is accessible relating to the use of *Beartown* as the data source. Far from the researcher's ability, it is difficult to find relevant and accessible articles relating to the particular novel despite searching on the popular sites such as CORE, Semantics Scholar, Research Gate and other similar journal sites. Nevertheless, the only accessible research found are two Pragmatics articles originated from Russia, but

both do not use *Beartown* as the only primary and exclusive data source. The first article is written by Zghun Daria (2019) analyzing pragmatic potential of emotional utterances in 11 selected literary texts including *Beartown*. The second article is written by Zhgun Daria and Oquendo Alfredo (2018) analyzing Enallage expression in seven selected literary text including *Beartown* with Semantics-Syntactics approach.

The sexist literature phenomenon as stated previously mirrors to what today's society expect from women. One of the ways to counter this is to return to literature which is believed to be the source of normalization. Bourdieu believed that authors and writers have power to counter these ideas and this is reflected strongly in *Beartown* novel. The novel brings the restrictive ideas and expectation of women into discussion. In contributing to fight the constraint, the research conducts a study analyzing *Beartown* in feminist approach by applying theory of symbolic violence. This could inform how power relation that maintains women subordination and how it is legitimized as true, fact, or normal. This implies the significance of bringing into awareness to both academic and society by using *Beartown* as the example. This would help the reader understand the feminist issue and hope to provide a fair and equal treatment of women in society. Therefore, the research conducts a feminist approach with symbolic violence theory by Bourdieu with objective to examine the social and feminist issue as reflected in *Beartown* novel.

## 1. 2. Identification of the Problem

Identification is necessary before the research finalizes the focus of the problem. In preliminary research, *Beartown* novel comprises feminist issues in its society that reflects restrictive ideas and expectation of women. Such is as follows:

1. Rejection and silencing of victim's experience of sexual assault
2. Social disinclination toward career woman and immigrant low-class woman
3. Lack of opportunity given toward women in *Beartown* novel
4. Restrictive ideas and expectation toward women's life in *Beartown* novel
5. Insecurity of virginity and fatness in men's culture in *Beartown* novel
6. Social disinclination toward migrant people in *Beartown* novel
7. Repressed emotion and homosexuality in *Beartown* novel
8. The relation of toxic masculinity and extremely strict parenting in *Beartown* novel
9. The unfulfilled love and belonging in children in *Beartown* novel

## 1. 3. Limitation of the Problem

Limitation signifies important selection of problem to be discussed. The limitation should adjust the time and the ability of the researcher. Besides, limiting problems preserves cohesion and coherence of the analysis. Thus, there are two limitations:

1. The form of symbolic violence toward subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown: A Novel*.



2. The legitimation of symbolic violence toward subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown: A Novel*.

#### **1. 4. Formulation of the Problem**

The limited problems undergo formulation into question or interrogative forms. This is necessary to specify the type of question the research aims in in order to maintain the linear of question and the answer. Here, the formulation would be;

1. What forms of symbolic violence are projected toward subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown*?
2. How is the legitimation of symbolic violence toward the subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown*?

#### **1. 5. Objective of the Research**

The objective of the research is derived from the formulation above. The use of 'how' indicates how the general objective is to describes. Thereby, the specific objectives are:

1. The research aims to describe the form of symbolic violence toward subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown: A Novel*.
2. The research aims to describe the legitimation of the symbolic violence toward subordinated women in Fredrik Backman's *Beartown: A Novel*.

## 1. 6. Significance of the Research

### a. Theoretical Significance

The research possesses theoretical contribution to knowledge and theory.

These points are elaborated in the following points:

1. The research provides theoretical contribution to the field of feminist approach specifically for feminist type that examines sociological aspect of literary works for feminist matter.
2. The research contributes in measuring the relevance and usefulness of Bourdieu's theory in comprehending complicity in women subordination specifically in *Beartown* novel and literary works in general.

### b. Practical Significance

The research possesses practical contribution which would impact the students, researchers, readers and society. These impacts are elaborated in the following points;

1. The research contributes in providing new and in-depth angle of reading *Beartown* novel.
2. The research serves as a medium of socialization to the reader of how patriarchal practices affect and undermine women.
3. The insight of the research provides basis for consideration to include *Beartown* novel in the list of readings in schools and libraries.
4. The research serves as reference for future researcher whose interest concerns in approaching literature through feminist approach and/or using Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence in analyzing literature.

### 1. 7. Definition of Key Terms

- Feminist Approach** : Feminist approach is literary approach that examines women subordination, and the quality of being feminine by analyzing social, cultural, political, psychological and economic aspects reflected in literary works (Tyson, 2015).
- Symbolic Violence** : Symbolic violence is a field phenomenon in which the dominating agents maintain their position by imposing values or doxa to other agents to be taken for granted for it appears as natural and normal (Bourdieu, 2013).
- Habitus** : Habitus is a durable generative principle—which is constituted by history—embodied within individual or collectives that generates practices, and habitus is embodied through inculcation and appropriation of objective structures (Bourdieu, 2013).
- Field** : Field is a social arena of battle or struggle in which social agents competed to each other to capitalize stakes that would ensure their position in the arena (Jenkins, 2006; Thomson, 2014).