

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Traumatic events have a great impact on affecting and shaping in human behavior, characters and self-development towards everything in our life. In some cases, some people experience trauma and distressing events in their early childhood and teenager phase. When someone grows up in a traumatic and bad environment, sometimes one can only imagine and consider themselves to be victims from the tragedy that believes suffering should be eradicated. Also, when a traumatic event happens, the subject might experience losing a person, family or personal thing that makes them realize the emptiness and unhappiness because they separated from their loved ones after the tragic event happened. Loss is separation, Of the many aspects that need to be considered in all kinds of losses (loss of relatives, area where a language is spoken, familiar environment), the aspect of separation from the reference person is central. It is definitely no coincidence that a whole area of study has arisen in recent decades dealing with the issue of trauma and separation. It makes sense to see this widespread interest in the issues of separation, which also emerges in psychological literature, as an expression of a concrete, collective human experience of the 20th century, which witnessed million-fold persecution, war, expulsion and flight. Throughout social studies, psychological, and literature, the topics of separation focus very much on marriage and mother-child relationships and are often largely disconnected from the national

background and cultural sense, giving the illusion that politics and culture have had little effect on individuals and communities (Benz 2004).

One of the effects from traumatic events can lead people into suffering from struggles and grieves of losing the loved ones. According to Hill "The trauma always comes back in a symbolic shape, as language, but it is distorted and suppressed by the ego, so that it is not deliberately known. In this way, the traumatized subject is 'protected' from enduring it knowingly with their difficulties. Unless the subject can remember what you had suppressed, it will come back again and again to haunt you" (Hill 1997) . The feeling of being haunted will make the subject feeling lost, scared and incomplete in their life. The subject feels the lack of completeness in his/her life that makes the subject look for a substitute of the person or thing that makes them complete. It is a fact that the subject needs desire that keeps them competing within themselves.

According to Lacan, "Desire is recognition from the 'other' that can be said or defined as the lack from life. In another word, recognition is pushed by desire. It is not a question about what we desire nor what we recognize. Further, Lacan thinks that people depending on others for recognition is important to structure their desires and to encourage them". The concept of desire in Lacanian Psychoanalysis emerges in symbolic order when satisfaction of physiological needs is subtracted from the child's demands for its mother's attention (Lacan 1958). Basically, in desire, the subject tries to seek his passion and may be love beyond his life which is not able and absent in the present time.

Furthermore, in a concept of desire it evolves into another Lacan's theory which is called 'Objet petit a'. *Objet petit a* is a fantasy that has a function to make desire appear; as such it chooses if desire will be expressed within the maximum extent of the pleasure perception or even further, to pursue unlimited *jouissance*, an impossible or even destructive joy (Kirshner 2003). Hence, *objet petit a* can be functioned as a media through the subject to find what his/her desire as the thing or person that actually what they achieve all this time.

In the portrayal of trauma in literary fiction, the works involve trauma often as the projects to tell what stories and tragedies that humans experience. Trauma is also being used by literature to speak to the truest of humanity's experiences. Usually authors represent trauma as the issue of their works as a literary work. Authors have been exploring the horrifying things and the impact of confrontation and unpleasantness on trauma effects on human beings. The issue of trauma is sometimes portrayed in literary works by the characters inside of the story itself. The portrayal of trauma effects draws attention from the viewers and readers. The overview of trauma and the condition of remembrance in individual relationships into broader cultural aspects social appraise and affects other viewers and writers. In novels that have trauma as their theme, the characters in novels act as the author's device to expose the truths of human condition, to fix the flaws in society, or recognize the ways in which trauma can be utilized as a motivator of changes in human life (Literacle 2012). *Dark Places* exemplify this portrayal of a human who holds on to trauma for too long.

Dark Places was written by Gillian Flynn and published in 2009. Gillian Flynn is an American author who has already written three novels and one short story, namely *Sharp Object* (2006), *Dark Places* (2009), *Gone Girl* (2012) and *The Grownup* (2015). Her writing is known for the dark plot, the thrilling tale of murder and serial killer in a city, and a journalist who came back from out of town to cover what happened in the city. The themes that she has written include dysfunctional families, child abuse, trauma, aggression, self-damage and a strong evocation of dread. Flynn imbues her novel characters with female characters. She identifies herself as a feminist. She feels feminism allows women to be bad and rebellious characters in literature. She simply demonstrated with her characters that malice and violence were not the sole preserve of men.

Dark Places is a mystery novel that tells the story of the main character, Libby Day, a sole survivor of a massacre in her childhood from Kinnakee, Kansas. She is also a witness of a murder when she was 8 years old that took Libby's two sisters and her mother in "The Satan Sacrifice" hysteria that swept the United States in the 80s. She testified for her brother Ben, who was accused as the killer of the family. After twenty-five years of the massacre, Libby is jobless and needs money, so she meets the Kill Club, which is a secret society in the city that is fascinated with the notorious and infamous crimes in the United States. She meets the leader of the group to get the profit from telling her tragic family history. As she tells the story to the club, she discovers that there is a hope to prove that she may free her brother, Ben, and discover the truth of the real killer of her family to stop her

anxiety. While she was digging her findings from Missouri to Oklahoma, an unimaginable truth emerges from her.

There are several thesis and journal articles that use the concept of psychoanalysis. However, previous studies that specifically use Jacques Lacan theory to analyze the novel are very rare. A study from Trijayanti (2016) on the same novel, focuses on analyzing the reason why author Gillian Flynn addresses anxiety in her novel entitled *Dark Places* using Freudian psychoanalysis. She aims to analyze the signal of anxiety to determine what dominant type of anxiety in the novel *Dark Places* using Freud analysis. Unfortunately, Trijayanti's study only focuses on anxiety elaborating specifically how anxiety and trauma in childhood affects main character personalities, character and decision making in the novel. Using Lacanian psychoanalysis as a main theory, the researcher intends to expose how trauma and desire drives someone into finding the main character fulfillment in her life, which can illuminate the research gap in this study.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Based on the issues briefly described in the background above, the questions that are proposed in his thesis can be stated as follows:

1. What are Libby Day's traumatic events in her childhood that influence her behavior, personality and characters throughout her life?
2. What is Libby Day's desire that make her pursue her *objet petit a*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, the writer aims to conduct the following:

1. To reveal Libby's traumatic experience during her childhood that influence her character, behavior and personality in adulthood period
2. To show how Libby Day's lack of desire that drives her to pursue her *objet petit*

1.4. Significance of the Study

In literary works, the emergence of mental health issues, especially the effect from trauma either in fiction or nonfiction tends to fascinate amongst the readers. The issue of trauma is also reflected and represented in many peoples but surely some people choose not to expose and tell other people because of the trauma itself. From this story, people can have perspective on how the victim of trauma struggled, especially trauma in childhood to forget and erase the pain through trauma that has happened.

The importance of study is to acknowledge the readers the effects of trauma and how the absence of family gives such a powerful impact through someone's development. Moreover, the application of *objet petit a* from Lacanian psychoanalysis will help the reader to understand if the desire can drive someone into finding their image of ideal self. Also, the researcher wants to broaden the reader's knowledge, especially those who possess interest in Psychoanalytic criticism. Through this analysis, the researcher also hopes for the readers that this study provides the readers with insight and perspective regarding the issue of

trauma and reaching the *objet petit a* in daily life which will be discussed by the researcher in this study. The researcher generally expects that this study can be beneficial and give a contribution for students in English Department of Airlangga University or outside of the university.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

- Objet Petit a* : Lost object of desire; It can be defined as the missing part in someone's life that will give completeness if they had one.
- Trauma : Emotionally disturbing condition which is relate with psychological issues.
- Childhood : The early period from age 1-13, when a child develops and encourages the first skill such as calculation, drawing, writing and extending social life with family and friends.
- Desire : An emotion of hoping and wanting something to happen.