

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Everyone has their own definition about happiness so that they are motivated to search for their happiness in life. In addition, in the process of searching happiness, some people must ever experience an irony of happiness (Leslie, Aaker, and Robin 1). The irony of happiness refers to the something that people expect it can bring them to happiness yet, in fact, is the opposite way in. A simple example which is common to be found is the irony of happiness in terms of money that people define their happiness as proportional to the money they have but in fact money does not bring them happiness at all.

This kind of phenomenon can be easily found in America where people mostly think that money has correlation with happiness. According to Leslie et al, surveys have found that since the twentieth century the wealth in America has grown up dramatically yet American on average are not happy and satisfied with their life prosperity (2). It shows that money does not guarantee the happiness of rich people living in a developed country with high region minimum wage. Indeed, poor people can be happier when they are rich, but after they are rich the correlation between money and happiness starts to disappear. In this point, the irony shows that what people mostly correlate happiness with the money they have is sometimes wrong. This irony of happiness indicates that what people

consider money as their happiness provider differs from the fact they get that money does not bring them happiness.

Interestingly, this irony of happiness issue is depicted in the novel of *Talk of the Town* by Suzanne Macpherson. The irony of happiness experienced by Kelly Atwood depicted in the novel shows that her happiness differs from what she expected. Determining happiness could be achieved by having much money before; Kelly then found out that she did not get satisfaction from being rich. Because she was from broken and poor family, she thought that being rich could pull her out from her miserable life and cure her painful wound. Ironically, when she succeeded to be a rich woman, she found the opposite reality that money did not bring her to happiness. By facing the irony of happiness, then Kelly's happiness can be found as the theme of this novel.

In choosing the novel, the writer is interested in the irony of Kelly's happiness which reflects the common issue that every person might ever face. Thinking that happiness could be found in money, in fact, Kelly was still not happy after reaching her goal as a successful and rich woman. Ironically, Kelly's concept of happiness differs from what she considered before. This can be called as the irony of happiness in which Kelly thought that she could find happiness in money but the fact was the opposite way. In short, the writer wants to analyze the irony of Kelly's happiness. By examining the irony of Kelly's happiness, the writer can reveal the concept of her happiness as the theme of the novel. This topic is very attracting to be analyzed since Kelly's experiences in facing irony of

happiness can give valuable lesson of life to readers that is in some ways happiness cannot be found in money.

Besides those valuable lessons implied in the story, this novel is worthy to be analyzed since the author of this novel has received awards for the books she launches. In 2005, Suzanne Macpherson was honored as contemporary fiction author by RITA awards. RITA or Romance Writers of America is an annual award given for best American romance authors held by RWA (Romance Writers of America). She proves her undoubted skill of writing by joining NINC or Novelist Inc. organization in which the members of NINC must publish at least two bestseller books. Suzanne has been experiencing in the publishing industry for ten years and becomes professional writer. Her writing specialties are in romantic comedy, women's fiction, self-help, paranormal elements, research projects, content and flow editing. She ever dedicated herself become an author in HarperCollins Publishers, one of the world's leading publishers, for six years. It proves that *Talk of the Town novel* is worth to be analyzed and hopefully there would be more studies examine this novel after this research (AvonRomance).

In order to analyze *Talk of the Town* novel, New Criticism theory is applied because the writer wants to reveal the irony of Kelly's happiness by examining the formal elements of the novel to find out the theme of this novel. New Criticism is used because the topic is the irony of Kelly's happiness so that the formal element of irony in the novel is very dominating. According to New Criticism, the formal elements such as characters, setting, plot, point of view, symbols, and irony connect one to each other to support the theme of a literary

work. All these formal or intrinsic elements work together to make an organic unity to build the main idea or theme of a literary work. Basically, the main aim of applying the New Criticism concept is for understanding more how the formal elements as an organic unity create the meaning of a literary work (Tyson 150).

To make a specific analysis, the writer focuses on examining the characterization, plot, setting, and irony of *Talk of the Town* novel. In regard to the topic of this research is the irony of Kelly's happiness, the characterization becomes important evidence to support in finding the theme of the novel. Kelly's characterization can be revealed by examining the plot because the sequence conflicts of the plot shape her characterization. Besides shaping Kelly's characterization, the plot also constructs the irony that Kelly faced. The setting of this novel also plays big role in shaping the irony of Kelly's happiness because there are three different settings which construct different meanings of happiness to Kelly. Then, the irony of Kelly's happiness is revealed by examining three types of irony such as verbal, attitudinal, and situational. After analyzing the irony of Kelly's happiness, the meaning of her happiness can be found as the theme of *Talk of the Town* novel. Thus, by examining the characterization, plot, setting, and irony, the writer attempts to reveal that those formal elements work together as organic unity which builds the theme this novel.

The writer looks for some related studies for supporting this research. Yet, after looking in many sources, there is still not found any research using *Talk of the Town* as either thesis or article. The writer does not find either the articles which reveal Suzanne Macpherson, the author of *Talk the Town* novel, as the

subject of analysis. Still, the writer has found one study which uses the same theory of New Criticism and two studies discussing the same subject of analysis but focusing on different literary work. The first study analyzes the characters and setting element as the focus of the research which is done by Firenda Dian Megasari in her thesis research entitled *Dave's Journey in Search of Family Love in Dave Pelzer's the Lost Boy: A New Criticism Study*. Two other related studies which discuss about irony elements are taken from English literature journals: *The Poetics of Disengagement: Jane Austen and Echoic Irony* by Massimiliano Morini and *A Tragic Hap: Ritual, Irony, and Myth in the War Poetry of Wifred Owen* by William Kevin Penny.

With those three related studies, the writer can compare her study and draw some differences and similarities between her study and those related studies. The difference can be clearly seen from the object of the research. This research uses *Talk of the Town* novel as the object of the research; meanwhile, those related studies use different literary works: novel and poetry. The similarity between this research and those related studies can be found on the subject of analysis that is the formal elements discussed: characterization, plot, setting, and irony. These three related studies which discussed the same theory and subject of analysis can give guidelines to the writer in analyzing characterization, plot, setting, and irony in to seek the theme of *Talk of the Town* novel. In short, guided by those three related studies in doing the analysis, the writer would like to examine the characterization, plot, settings, and irony to prove that these elements work as an organic unity in building main idea of the *Talk of the Town* novel.

## **B. Statement of the Problem**

After reading the novel and determining the topic that has already been explained above, the writer wants to state a question to elaborate the analysis:

How does the irony of Kelly's happiness appear in the internal elements of Macpherson's *Talk of the Town* novel such as characterization, plot, and setting?

## **C. Objective of the Study**

In organizing the study, there is an objective that the writer wants to achieve. The objective of the study is intended to answer the question mentioned in the statement of the problem above. The objective of this study is:

To explain how the irony of Kelly's happiness appear in the internal elements of Macpherson's *Talk of the Town* novel such as characterization, plot, and setting.

## **D. Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to provide life lessons which can be learnt by readers in real life. Through the irony of Kelly's happiness, this study wants open the readers' mind that money does not always guarantee someone's happiness. Being rich indeed makes people able to buy and get what they want. Yet, it does not always bring happiness and satisfaction for people. So, from Kelly's

experience in facing the irony of happiness, the valuable moral lessons are expected to be able to inspire people in terms of providing valuable life lessons.

However, the main significance of this study is to give understanding of New Criticism as theory for analyzing literary text with the formal elements as an organic unity in constructing the text's meaning. In short, this study gives a valid proof of New Criticism theory that the formal elements in *Talk of the Town* novel, especially characterization, plot, setting, and irony in working together as an organic unity to create the theme of a literary work. It is expected this study can be a reference, especially for English Literature students of Universitas Airlangga who are interested in taking the study of New Criticism as their researches.

### **E. Scope and Limitation**

For a more comprehensive analysis, a scope and limitation are applied in this study. The writer uses Suzanne Macpherson's *Talk of the Town* novel as the projected work. The subject of this study focuses on the characterization, plot, setting, and irony of the novel since those three elements are dominating in constructing the main idea of the novel. Yet, other formal elements such as symbolism, metaphor, and paradox are still discussed only in a small part to support the analysis.

In examining the characterization, Kelly Atwood's characterization is dominantly revealed since she is the major characters and the irony of her happiness becomes the topic of this research. Kelly's characterization can be

revealed by examining the plot because the sequence of conflicts exist in the plot shape her characterization. The plot also takes part in constructing the irony of happiness she faced. There are three different places in the novel: San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Paradise which shape different meanings of happiness to Kelly and one of those settings shapes the irony of Kelly's happiness. In analyzing the setting, the aspects of setting revealed in this study are time, place, and the social condition. Irony element itself shows the contradiction between the meaning of happiness that Kelly expected and what she got in reality. Types of irony examined in this study are verbal, situational, and attitudinal irony. Then, after understanding the irony of happiness she faced, the writer can reveal Kelly's meaning of happiness as the theme of this novel.

In short, the main data of the study is *Talk of the Town* novel by Suzanne Macpherson. The formal elements in the novel such as characterization, plot, setting, and irony become the primary focus of this research. According to New Criticism, because the focus of this study is only the formal elements, other information such as the author's information and reader's response are not considered as important evidences in seeking for the theme in this research.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

The novel of *Talk of the Town* is analyzed by applying the theory of New Criticism. This theory is chosen since the writer wants to find the irony of Kelly's happiness so that formal elements in New Criticism theory can help the



writer in finding the irony as well as in finding the theme of the novel. New Criticism does not seek the meaning of a text through both the author's and the readers' perspectives. However, it interprets the meaning of a text based on the text itself (Tyson 136). The main source of the evidences to be interpreted is based on the formal elements of the literary work itself. Other information from the author and the readers' responses are not categorized as the supporting data to interpret the text. It can be said that New Criticism only focuses on the intrinsic or formal elements of the text to find the meaning of the text. The formal elements such as characters, setting, plot, point of view, irony, paradox, metaphor gather as the organic unity to build the theme of a text. In establishing the main idea of one text, those formal elements connect one to another, work together, and cannot be separated.

In examining the formal elements as the evidences for interpreting the meaning of a text, the method of New Criticism is by doing close-reading. Close-reading is done by reading the text not only once, but several times for examining the formal elements as the evidences for revealing the theme of a literary text (137). It can be inferred that the method in analyzing with New Criticism is done by reading the literary text for several times and finding out the formal elements to reveal the theme.

According to that definition of New Criticism theory above, the writer wants to analyze *Talk of the Town* novel by examining the formal elements as the evidences to interpret this novel. The information excluding formal elements such as the author's background and readers' responses is not considered as supporting

details in doing the analysis. So in doing the analysis, the writer only pays attention to the major formal elements in *Talk of the Town* novel such as characterization, plot, setting, and irony to find out the theme. These three major formal elements are analyzed as an organic unity in building the theme of *Talk of the Town* novel.

### **G. Method of the Study**

To make a proper analysis of this research, qualitative method is used since it supports in collecting the materials for the analysis. In collecting the related materials, there are two types of source used by the writer: primary and secondary source. The primary source is the novel itself meanwhile the secondary source involves information from various books, journals, thesis, online information, and other related sources. One of the books used as guides in examining the formal elements and providing an explanation of New Criticism theory for this analysis is *Literature Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* by Robert DiYanni. Besides, the journals and thesis help the writer in analyzing this research by giving guidelines as related studies like what the writer has already explained in the background of the studies in chapter I. The writer also uses information from the web of *AvonRomance* for giving information about *Talk of the Town* novel's author achievement.

As this research is based on New Criticism study, close reading method is applied for collecting the data from the main source or *Talk of the Town* novel.

There are two steps in doing close reading: examining the formal elements and finding out the theme of the novel. In the step of examining the formal elements, the writer focuses on the four major formal elements of the novel such as characterization, plot, setting, and irony. In revealing Kelly's characterization, the writer examines the plot because the events or conflicts exist in the plot shape her characterization. Besides shaping Kelly's characterization, the plot is examined because it also shapes the irony of Kelly's happiness. Then the analysis is done by examining the setting because there are three places which construct different meanings of happiness to Kelly and also cause the irony of Kelly's happiness emerges. In analyzing the setting, there are some aspects of setting are revealed such as physical, time, and social condition aspects. Then, it is focused on examining the irony element to find out how Kelly's expectation of happiness contrasts to the happiness she got in fact by examining three types of irony: verbal, situational, and attitudinal. Finally after understanding the irony of happiness Kelly's faced, Kelly's happiness can be revealed as the theme of this novel. By finding the theme of *Talk of the Town* novel, finally, the writer can draw a conclusion of this research as the last step that the formal elements of characterization, plot, setting, and irony work together in shaping the theme of *Talk of the Town* novel.

## H. Definition of Key Terms

*Conflicts* : a struggle between two opposing forces in which the forces can be either internal (feelings) or external (physical).

*Happiness* : the feeling of joy and peace caused by pleasant emotions.

*Irony* : a contrast between appearance and the reality in literary work which oppose between: what it is and what it seems to be, between what it is and what it will be, between what it is and what someone wishes, and between what it is and what someone expects to be.

*Struggles* : the efforts which people attempt to reach their goals of life.