

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

In the world of literature, prose is also known as a work of fiction in the form of narrative. Fiction is an imaginative creation that reflects the creativity and consciousness of the author, which serves as a medium for expressing ideas and experiences through literary art. One literary work that is also a form of prose expression is the short story for its ability to encapsulate deep themes, portray complex characters, and provide keen insight into the human condition within a small narrative framework. According to Abrams (2015), a short story is a work of short prose fiction that organizes the actions, thoughts, and dialogue of its characters into an artistic pattern of a plot, which is directed to give a certain effect to the readers. The form is certainly different from the novel in terms of size and scope, but it has the unique ability to focus intensely on a single effect, making short stories more complex and dense.

Short stories have been used to express social commentary and investigate the complexities of human relationships across cultures and periods. That is why it can be said that the short story, as a form of artistic expression, provides an insight into people's lives, presenting a panorama of human experiences, aspirations, and dilemmas. Readers are invited to engage with themes of identity, gender dynamics, social justice, and the human condition through the lens of literature, which fosters empathy, understanding, and critical reflection. With the unique structure of the short story, how the author often begins the story near or even right at the climax, with little introduction and background, maintains the tension of the story, and resolves the resolution quickly sometimes in just a few sentences (Abrams, 2015). Short stories have the uncanny ability to evoke strong imaginations, provoke thought, and leave a lasting impression on their readers due to their concise and compact nature.

Amidst the abundance of short fiction works, Indonesian literature stands out as a dynamic and diverse collection of works, marked by a literary tradition rich

in cultural influences found in Indonesia. Indonesian short story writers have made a significant contribution to Indonesia's literary heritage by creating narratives that reflect the complexity of Indonesian society, depict its cultural nuances, and explore universal human struggles. The short story genre occupies a unique space in the literary world, allowing writers to experiment in developing literary criticism skills, analyzing how a literary work functions, what it says about traditional culture, human nature, and more.

In this regard, Indonesian short stories also serve as a cultural mirror reflecting social structures, gender discrimination, and power relations embedded in everyday life. Through the symbolic narratives of dense stories, many short stories function as a subtle form of social criticism, especially against gender-based abuse and violence. This study specifically focuses on three short stories from the anthology 'Footprints: Insights Into Indonesia: Sylviana's *Flaming Eyes*, Thyaf's *The Mistress and the Lady*, and Padmasvasti's short stories *The Sacred Waterfall*.'

Set in different time periods, these three short stories are contemporary works written to provide insight into the world and society around us, as well as the issues we are currently facing. Each selected short story depicts different aspects of gender-based power and control, revealing the complexity of male dominance and its impact on female characters in Indonesia. *Flaming Eyes* by Mona Sylviana was written in 2011 and tells the story of Titi, a child who witnesses her mother's sudden transformation overnight. That night, Titi's uncle, Wak Ohim, with fiery eyes, came to visit Titi as she was about to fall asleep with her mother's hand in hers. Shortly after, Titi heard snorting and belching sounds like a wild boar approaching her and her mother. Her mother held Titi and closed her eyes, while the large hand carried her mother outside. In one night, Emak changed. From that moment on, Titi suspected that her mother had been abducted by the wild boar that night. Her mother was never the same again, making Titi realize the nature of those fiery eyes, eyes that symbolized the uncontrollable power imposed on women.

The second short story, titled *The Mistress and The Lady*, written in 2015 by Anindita S. Tyaf, depicts the conflict between two different ethnic groups through the characters of a black-haired woman and a blonde woman. The story is

set during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. Both women have a past that causes them to hate each other. The black-haired woman was abandoned by her white-skinned, blonde-haired husband. Meanwhile, the blonde-haired woman, who fell in love with a native man who became her husband at the time, surrendered him as proof of her loyalty to the yellow-skinned colonizers. However, their personal animosity hides a larger truth: their fates were determined by men, highlighting the dominant influence of male authority in shaping their lives.

Then the last short story is by Candra Padmasvati written in 2022. *The Sacred Waterfall* follows Citrik's struggle against marrying Mang Dayat, a man with a dubious reputation, highlighting the challenges women face in escaping patriarchal control. Citrik was terrified when she heard that Mang Dayat had decided to take her as his wife. Mang Dayat already has a first wife, but they have not been blessed with children from their marriage. Some villagers accused Bi Nenden, Mang Dayat's wife, of being the cause. Uwa Enok, who is Citrik's family, does not agree that her niece should marry Mang Dayat, who is known for having illicit relationships with women outside the village. This story tells the struggle of women who want to escape Mang Dayat's power. All means are used, until it resulted in someone's death.

This study examines the mechanisms of power and control experienced by female characters, and gender-based resistance in Indonesian literature that depicts social life, including gender inequality, as literature also serves to voice social issues. Through the perspective of these short stories, this study aims to reveal how male transgressions are reflected in social and family relationships, and how women manage and resist the forces that seek to control their lives. This analysis aims to contribute to a broader discussion about the dynamics of power that influence social life and male transgressions in Indonesian literature and cultural expression.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Indonesian literature, short stories have been used to explore social issues and human experiences, such as the complexities of power and control in gender dynamics. These stories shed light on how male power is wielded, challenged, and reinforced in various societal context. Analyzing the background descriptions of selected short stories can help address the following issues:

1. In what ways do the selected short stories reflect society's response to violations committed by men through their power and control over women?
2. How are violations of power and control expressed by male characters and how do female characters respond to male transgressions?
3. What do the selected short stories tell the readers about male transgressions in Indonesia?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on these statement of the problem, the following purposes of the study can be formulated:

1. To explain how the selected short stories reflect the public's response to violations committed by men through systems of power and control.
2. To analyze how male characters use power and control, and how female characters respond to male transgressions in the selected short stories.
3. To explore the representation of male transgressions in Indonesia as conveyed through the selected short stories.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of how gendered power and control are portrayed in Indonesian short fiction, specifically through the analysis of three short stories: *Flaming Eyes*, *The Mistress and the Lady*, dan *The Sacred Waterfall*. These three Indonesian literary works can serve as a lens through

which to view depictions of male transgressions in Indonesian social society. In doing so, this research explores the mechanisms of male dominance, societal acceptance or critique of male violence, and the complexities of women's agency in responding to oppression.

By analyzing these narratives, this research contributes to a broader discussion on gender-based violence, power struggles, and societal attitudes towards male transgressions in Indonesian literature. It investigates how literary elements of storytelling construct narratives of oppression, resistance and survival, explaining how women respond and resist to male domination or control. In addition, this research enhances the discourse on gender representation in literature by examining the portrayal of male and female characters, mechanisms of domination, and acts of resistance that emerge in these texts.

Furthermore, this study looks at the relationship between literature and society as depicted in short stories, explaining how they challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms and male dominance over women. This study contributes to the debate about the role of literature in reflecting on and criticizing real-world social issues through a critical examination of short stories. This study seeks to gain a better understanding of how Indonesian literature deals with the complexities of gender-based control and the structures that support it by revealing underlying themes of power, control, and resistance. It also encourages critical thinking about issues of gender equality and social justice.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze three short stories selected from the anthology *Footprints: Insights Into Indonesia*, namely *Flaming Eyes* by Sylviana, *The Mistress and the Lady* by Thayf, and *The Sacred Waterfall* by Padmasvasti. As explained by Chang (2014, p. 30), qualitative research methods are suitable for exploring phenomena that require descriptive and interpretive explanations to uncover the meaning behind social or cultural realities. In the context of literary studies, this method allows in-depth exploration of textual elements and their ideological implications.

The analysis is conducted through several careful readings of the text, paying particular attention to intrinsic elements such as plot structure, character development, setting, and theme. Also on Extrinsic elements such as, symbols or motifs in the story, and the historical and cultural context that influenced the story. These elements are studied to understand how power relations are constructed in the story. This research also uses in-depth textual analysis as the main tool. Narrative techniques such as dialogue, internal monologue, symbolism, and imagery are analyzed to identify patterns of male dominance and their implications for female characters. Through this process, the study aims to trace the recurring motifs of control, resistance and transformation in each story.

Given that the three short stories are set in different time periods and cultural contexts, this study also considers the relevant historical and socio-cultural backgrounds. The differences in temporal and spatial settings ranging from the colonial era, traditional village life after independence, to contemporary villages enable a comparative analysis of how male power and gender-based violence are expressed, normalized, or challenged across different eras. This chronological and cultural diversity allows the study to trace patterns in the representation of male power and explore whether gender-based oppression has changed form or remains structurally embedded.

By placing the analysis within a textual and contextual framework, this study aims to provide a comprehensive interpretation of how literature serves as a venue for negotiating issues of gender and power. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader discussion on the intersection between literary form, social criticism, and gender discourse in contemporary Indonesian short fiction.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is an in-depth analysis to explore gender-based perspectives in Indonesian short fiction by analyzing three short stories: Syalviana's *Flaming Eyes*, Thayf's *The Misstress and the Lady*, and Padmasvasti's *Sacred Waterfall*. The main focus is on the depiction of gender power, male dominance/control, and female responses in these narratives, by examining how

these themes are constructed and conveyed through the selected short stories. The analysis will explore the narrative structures that shape representations of male transgressions and control, as well as the ways in which such power is critiqued or normalized. It will also investigate women's resistance and response, analyzing how women endure or challenge male authority within the confines of their social environment.

Given the continuing issues of gender-based oppression in both historical and modern contexts, it is crucial to examine how literature reflects these realities and contributes to broader discussions about power and control. The difference or novelty of this study lies in its approach of analyzing male power and domination in Indonesian short fiction, which shifts the focus from feminist discourse in general to a more nuanced examination of how power is exercised and resisted in these literary works. Therefore, this research primarily examines these themes through character development, plot development, and dialogue, and considers the cultural and historical contexts that influence these narratives. However, this study does not aim to generalize its findings to all Indonesian short fiction or literary works. It offers a focused examination of gendered power and control in the selected texts, contributing to a deeper understanding of how literature reflects and engages with issues of authority, oppression and resistance.

1.7 Status of the Study

Previous studies have examined the themes of gender-based violence and gender inequality in Indonesian literature, particularly through the perspective of how literary texts depict male dominance and female resistance. These studies form a valuable foundation for the current research, which aims to expand the discussion by focusing on three contemporary short stories from *Footprints: Insights Into Indonesia*.

Juanda (2018), for example, explores the portrayal of gender stereotypes and discrimination in Fanny J. Poyk's short stories. His research reveals how literary works can serve as a critique of patriarchal values, particularly through female

characters who experience marginalization and social injustice. Juanda's study shows how literature exposes systemic oppression and reflects unfair treatment of women in both domestic and public spaces. Similarly, Yulianeta et al. (2016) analyze novels from the Reform Era, showing how dominant gender ideologies such as motherism and familialism shape women's roles in Indonesian fiction. Using Gramsci's theory of hegemony, their research reveals that even though some characters reject traditional roles, they remain trapped in structural gender expectations. These findings are in line with the objective of this study to analyze how male power is maintained or challenged through literary narratives.

Furthermore, Septiaji et al. (2020) analyze women's lives in contemporary short stories using an ecofeminist framework. Their research highlights how women are victims of environmental and gender exploitation, yet are also portrayed as resilient figures navigating their roles in patriarchal society. This reinforces the idea that literature is a space where issues of power, control, and resistance intersect. Last, Widarwati et al. (2021) provide another important perspective by analyzing gender discrimination in the translated works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Although this study focuses on translation, it emphasizes the importance of accurately conveying gender-based oppression in literary narratives and the risk of losing critical meaning during the translation process. The focus on subordination and male-centered power structures aligns with this study's attention to how women's experiences are depicted and interpreted in literary texts.

From these previous studies, it is evident that many Indonesian literary works have been used to raise issues of gender-based violence and male domination. However, few have specifically compared how male power and female resistance are depicted in short stories set in different times and cultures. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing three selected short stories, *Flaming Eyes*, *The Mistress and the Lady*, and *The Sacred Waterfall*, which represent the colonial era, post-independence in a traditional village, and contemporary life, respectively. In this way, this study is expected to provide a broader picture of how gender-based violence and power relations are portrayed in Indonesian literature.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This *skripsi* is organized into four chapters to provide a clear and systematic presentation of the research. Chapter I presents the Introduction, which includes the research background, problem formulation, research objectives, research significance, research methodology, scope and limitations, research status, and the research organization itself. Chapter II is a Review of Related Literature, in which the writer explores the relevant theoretical framework related to gender-based power and control. This chapter also explains the theories that support the analysis of the selected short stories. Chapter III, entitled Findings and Discussion, presents an analysis of three short stories based on the theoretical approach discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter outlines contextual findings and discusses how the stories reflect issues of male transgressions. Finally, Chapter IV presents Conclusions and Recommendations, where the writer summarizes the research findings and provides suggestions for future studies related to gender issues in Indonesian literature, particularly in short story analysis.

