

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Society is formed with a network of cultures, norms, rules, and language that connects each individual in it. As Durkheim (1973) argues, society exerts its full power over individual existence. With all forms of culture, norms, rules, beliefs, and language, individuals in society can understand each other and behave in accordance with the demands that apply in that society. The existence of a number of these things also creates collective consciousness, as a construction that binds every individual in it. The role of collective consciousness is an essential part, because it creates society and unites it (Durkheim, 1973). That is, the existence of collective consciousness is what makes society different from other creatures, because the individuals in it are aware of each other's existence as social beings.

Furthermore, because of the nature of collective consciousness which is shared from one individual to another, and society consists of many individuals, a social construction may be formed. In a society, one can find a social construction that often becomes a standard or rule, whether it is mutually agreed upon or not. These standards can play a role as normality in the context of social norms. The construction of normality places the individual as part of the web, it becomes the basis for actions, habits, and conditions to get a “normal” label. On the other hand, when individuals

behave outside the construction of normality, abnormal labels can be assigned to them. However, the existence of these individuals labeled abnormal can play an important role in responding to and reconstructing normality, as suggested (Durkheim, 1973). This response and reconstruction is in line with the opinion of Syristová (2010) regarding normality, which is seen as an ongoing process of the creation of human beings, including society, and the re-shaping of the world.

However, before arriving at the stage of responding and reconstructing, understanding the construction of normality is one of the steps that must be taken. This step can also be taken by involving social products, which in this case involve literary works, given that literature and society cannot be separated (Dutta, 2013). It also stated that literary work can educate readers or audience despite entertaining them (Mahendra and Amelia, 2020). As the object of the construction of normality represented by literary works, the writer chose the work of the Japanese writer, Sayaka Murata, entitled *Convenience Store Woman* (Grove Books, 2018). This novel was first released in Japanese (2016), then translated into English by Takemori (2018). As for the story, this novel tells the story of a thirty-six year old woman who for eighteen years worked as a minimarket employee. At that age, the woman named Keiko Furukura was still single, even though her status in the minimarket was a part-time worker. Due to her status, she also has to face the stigma of the people around her, because they feel that Keiko is different, her status makes her labeled “abnormal”. Therefore, there is a part when she as an individual becomes immersed in the society (Kasih and Strid, 2020) with certain

values that are covered as normality. Further about the term of normality and abnormality in Japanese society, there is one term that is in line to describe it, especially to label the good and bad of women in Japanese society. The terms are *Kachi'Inu* or winner and *Make'Inu* or loser. The term *Make'Inu* refers to a label for those who are not married until the age of 30, or even though they are married but do not have children; they are called losers or *Make'Inu*. On the other hand, for those who fulfill it, they are called winners or *Kachi'Inu* (Junko, 2004).

Therefore, the writer sees that this novel describes the struggles of individuals, especially the main character, in society bound by a construction of normality. This is also in line with Sara (2019)'s assumption that this novel has a strong foothold in the real world, especially in terms of social problems and the possibilities for overcoming them. The two assumptions also show the value of literary works, because literary works come from several cultural contexts in society (Afrianto & Gulö, 2019; Suprayogi, 2019), despite being tools to convey author's feeling (Kardianyah and Salam, 2021). Therefore, to reveal more about the social construction in this novel, the writer uses literary sociology lens. This lens was chosen because it focuses on the interaction of individuals with society through cultural, economic, or political aspects (Setyaningrum & Samanik, 2018). Meanwhile, to see the representation of normality construction in more depth, Sarrah Freud's theory of the social construction of normality is used as the first approach. The writer will reveal what aspects reconstruct normality in the novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata.

Furthermore, the writer involved other actors as part of this research, namely humans themselves, who were represented by the readers. There is a reason for the involvement of readers, because literature works cannot be separated from their readers. Moreover, the reader's voice can be an important consideration in seeing how a literary work is received and responded to by certain community groups. Thus, the writer feels the need to examine the responses of readers to the construction of normality using reader-response criticism to this work. This was because the writer sees that they are an active audience who do not consume media content only passively, but also process and translate this content, and then share their understanding through their own media platforms (Pink, 2016).

Their role as actors in *participatory culture* is considered important to see how far the influence of a work on them. Based on that, it can be understood for the writer to hire the reader as the primary object through reader-response theory. Consideration of this theory is used because this theory discusses the interaction of the reader with literary texts as a variable which influences and changes the texts and constricts meanings (Rosenblatt, 1978). In this theory, the basis premise of reader responses is that readers breathe life into texts through their prior knowledge and personal experiences (Larson, 2009). Therefore, the reader plays an important role in this approach, likewise in the application itself, the reader gives interpretation based on their backgrounds. In other

words, every individual reader's responses are determined by their educational background and certain socio-historical context (Bennett & Royle, 2004).

Meanwhile, in the reader selection process, the writers took members from several book clubs, namely Kebab Reading Club, Santai Ngobrolin Buku, Baca Bereng, BBB Book Club, and one of Facebook's group named "Japanese Literature" which is group for readers from all the world who loves reading, especially books categorized Japanese Literature. The consideration of taking readers from the book club was based on two things; first, they have sufficient prior knowledge considering that they are active readers; and two, because the majority of them are adults, they have or ever heard experiences in line with issues related to the construction of normality. And yet, the writer is aware that differences in members or readers who come from various backgrounds, from countries, can be a boomerang from this research. Therefore, to relate their interpretation to the contextual issues in this study, the writer based on the term Interpretation strategy by Stanley Fish (1980).

Fish (1980) mentions the term to explain the meaning of a text in the reader, and the reader's interpretation can be formed in a certain way or strategy, and it can be shared with others. On the other hand, because they read or interpret in the same way or strategy, the results of their reading can represent a particular community or geographic location. For example, there are several people in the book club, who agree that

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is about love. Their opinion regarding the theme is not in the text itself, but because they have been formed or given the same instructions to find the theme in the work. By this, the writer applies the same thing to the readers of the book club that the writer has chosen. They represent groups based on three main geographies: Asian, European, and Australian readers. Their interpretation leads to one main thing: the construction of normality, especially in the status of women in Japanese society.

With these two approaches, it can be stated that the research was conducted to reveal the representation of the construction of normality in the novel, and to analyze the reader's response to it. Although the involvement of readers is only a certain number, the writer hopes that by analyzing their response to the construction of normality represented in the novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata, we will see other possibilities regarding this matter. These possibilities, which are expected to be evidence, that the construction of normality can be changed and reconstructed, and that stage cannot be achieved without a human (the reader) response to the cultural products (literary work), which is produced by society.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background stated, the writer has some research questions regarding the studies in reader response of Murata Sayaka's novel. The problems are:

1. How is the construction of normality delineated in Murata Sayaka's *Convenience Store Women*?
2. How do readers react themselves with issues related to the construction of normality in the novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata?

1.3 Research Objective

This research reveals how the construction of normality is described in the novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata, there are two objectives planned for this research. They are as followed:

1. To delineate the construction of normality in Murata Sayaka's *Convenience Store Women*
2. To find out the readers' response relating to the issues of the construction of normality in *Convenience Store Woman* novel by Sayaka Murata

1.4 Use of Study

This research can help other people more understand about the issue within a society and how the society itself sees that issue.

1.4.1 Practical Use

This research can be as awareness that there are some social issues within a society. While in order to more care and understand, this research can be considered to see those with wise eyes.

1.4.2 Theoretical Use

The theory used in this study can be useful by future writers to develop these studies related to sociology issues and the response of the society itself through reader response theory. This study can be used as a research foe who wants to do research about sociology issues and reader response analysis.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on study in sociology and reader response theory in *Convenience Store Woman*. The writer will analyze how the construction of normality based on Sophie Freud's term of the construction of normality which are reflected in the novel and how the reader as representative of society sees that issue through reader response analysis from Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, and also, Beach & Marshal.