

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Literary works are the beauty of appreciating works of art in the form of things to be enjoyed by others (Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021), In addition, literary works can also help us find the meaning of words in literary works (Gulö 2018). Literary works are works written by an author with the objective of communicating a specific message. Literary works produced by humans who have deep feelings, therefore, produce literary works born from the author's imagination (Yunara and Kardiansyah, 2016). There are different types of literary works in its evolution, one of them is novel. Furthermore, a novel is a work of prose fiction written in a narrative style, usually in the form of a story. Every writer uses their imagination and depiction of the tale in a specific form when creating a novel.

There are several types of literary works in this world: drama, novels, and poetry (Samanik and Lianasari, 2016). In the world of literature, there are various kinds of themes inside the novel, one of them is a literary work with the theme of slavery. Slavery is a social and political system bound by power, control, and settlement. Slavery is one of the dark history that occurred in human civilization. The effects of this theft case are certainly very broad and complex. Changes in the social structure, trauma on the psychological side, loss of freedom from all aspects, and dehumanization of every individual in it. This is in line with what was stated by Orlando Patterson regarding slavery. Slavery is a social institution that inhibits

individual freedom and treats humans as objects that can be owned and purchased” (Patterson, 1982). Patterson claims slavery was no longer just about the possession of physical property, more so, but also about culture, race, and identity. This injustice that occurs robs those who experience it. Slavery builds a clear and real hierarchical system, in which slaves are exploited by various systems of violence, harassment, and punishment which are all against human rights. Slavery has occurred in various countries around the world.

Slavery and hegemonic slavery are two things that are interrelated and closely intertwined with one another. Slavery in practice throughout history has frequently emerged as a broader manifestation of hegemonic systems. Hegemonic slavery refers to a situation in which a certain power and domination is systematically extended to various aspects of life and social structure, resulting in control and oppression that is much broader than mere physical slavery. Hegemony also refers to the ideological position of one or more groups or classes in civil society that is higher than the others (Simon, 2004). Hegemony was first described as a system of class alliance in Gramsci's Notes on the Southern Question (1926), where a "hegemonic class" exerted political leadership over "subaltern classes" by "winning them over."

The idea alluded to the proletariat in Italy in terms of such a "winning over" that the proletariat had to shed its class corporatism in order to include other classes, particularly the peasants, in a network of alliances within which it could then truly become the dominant force in society. Hegemony is the dominant effort in society

to influence and control society's beliefs, values, norms, and culture more broadly so that the dominant group can maintain their power without continuously using direct violence. In Gramsci's view, hegemony involves the creation and maintenance of social consensus that allows the dominant group to control the political, social, and economic direction of society.

In real cases, slavery has existed since thousands of years ago in many parts of the world and one of them is in the United States. This history began around August 1619, when a private ship from England brought more than 20 African slaves to the harbor of Virginia. At that time the plantation sector and colonies had just opened. This system grew to involve millions of people, mainly Africans, who were taken and worked as slaves. It also developed rapidly until the early 19th century. Slavery was increasingly out of control and spread rapidly to various areas that had plantation and agricultural sectors. This slavery system happened because white people considered black people as something inferior. This can also be referred to as a form of skin color discrimination in which those with lighter skin color have privileges compared to people with darker skin in a community. This system clearly refers to very clear racial distinctions between the two parties.

Due to cases of slavery that were increasingly chaotic and causing controversy, around 1863, the American President of that time Abraham Lincoln give an explanation about a system that was crippling, inhumane, and destroyed millions of human lives called slavery. This is in line with what was stated by Hellie. Slavery is a condition in which one person is owned by another. A slave was regarded as

property, or chattel, by law, and was denied the majority of the rights normally enjoyed by free people." (Hellie, 2023).

President Abraham Lincoln issued emancipation related to the liberation of slaves in the southern confederacy. Slavery was also the cause of the American civil war due to ideological and value conflicts, economic differences, political conflicts, as well as issues of freedom and human rights. The differences that occurred made the southern and northern regions unavoidable. The effects of this slavery are still being felt today, both in the form of racial inequality, and social tensions and in the struggle against systemic racism in various fields.

Slavery is portrayed as a major subject and a terrifying aspect of American history in Colson Whitehead's book "*The Underground Railroad*." *The Underground Railroad*, a system of covert passageways and safe homes used by enslaved African Americans to flee to free states and Canada during the 19th century, is imagined as a real underground train system in Whitehead's book *The Underground Railroad* is a novel written by Colson Whitehead in 2016. The main issue in this novel is slavery. The issue of treating blacks by whites on a cotton plantation in America. The slaves had to endure long periods of cruelty and torment. They are treated like no human. They feel sad, tortured, cursed at, traded and there are still many heinous things in it. The situation of the slaves is like in hell, this is also felt by the main character in the novel, namely Cora. Cora is a slave girl who is brave and has a strong mentality. Cora is trying to escape from the torturous suffering and of course, it becomes a long and tiring journey in her mission. Colson Whitehead describes in detail and honestly what happened in the slavery era. A realistic depiction of slavery

and raising issues of justice, racial treatment, and human rights that are still relevant to today's modern times.

The reason why the researcher chose this novel is because Race, identity, injustice, and resiliency are just a few of the topics covered in "*The Underground Railroad*." It allows for conversations on racial inequity, social justice, and the legacy of historical trauma while providing insights into the long-lasting repercussions of slavery on society. And also the other reason why the researcher chooses this novel is empowerment and awareness. As a reader, we can develop a deeper knowledge of the structural problems that continue to affect marginalized people by engaging with stories that highlight historical injustices. This information can encourage the reader to take action and help bring about positive change in both your personal life and society.

Therefore, researchers use the sociological approach to analyze the issues contained in it. The sociological is an approach to literary studies that integrates sociological concepts and methods to understand literary phenomena. This involves the application of sociological principles in analyzing literary works and their relationship to society and the social context within them. The sociology of literature originates from the premise that a literary work is a reflection of social reality and is related to insights about cultural values, social dynamics, and conflict values.

Because this is connected to the story of *The Underground Railroad*, the novel about the journey of a slave woman named Cora in seeking freedom from the system of slavery in the United States. As the main character in this story, Cora

lives on a plantation in Georgia owned by a large white family, they call it the Randall family. His leadership tends to be cruel to all slaves. Cruelty and injustice are the daily treatment they receive. Long story short, this journey began when Cora was invited by Caesar, who was also a black slave, to escape from the torturous plantation. After that, they joined the Underground Railroad. In this case, *The Underground Railroad* is symbolized as a secret underground system to help smuggle slaves to places free from the slavery system. During this journey, Cora and Caesar experienced various obstacles, dangers, and cruelties related to hunting carried out by white people to maintain the hegemony of slavery at all times.

In addition, to analyze this novel, this study will use theories of sociology of literature related to the concepts of hegemony, domination, and resistance in the context of slavery. Looking at the conflict and narrative language in the novel "*The Underground Railroad*" describe the hegemonic structure of slavery. In this case, the analysis will focus on the way the author describes the power and domination exercised by slave owners, and how the norms and ideologies that supported slavery were built, maintained, and reproduced. To analyze these aspects, the researcher uses Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory.

Although several studies have raised the theme of slavery in the novel "*The Underground Railroad*" by Colson Whitehead, there is a lack of deep understanding to analyze how the forms of social control and hegemony enforced by the ruling regime against slavery are reflected in the relationship between slave owners and their slaves. As done by Khatimah et. Al. (2020) focuses on discussing the types of rejection behavior depicted in the novel as well as analyzing how African-American slaves react to rejection behavior. In addition, another study conducted by Musmita

et. Al. (2016) more focus on disclosing the issue of seizing freedom using the psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud and the concept of self-awareness by Crisp and Turner. This research is more focused on an in-depth exploration of how the power hierarchies and domination strategies in American slave society describe internalized inequality and how this affects the characters in the novel, as well as their efforts to fight against this hegemony through action and resistance.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What is the construction of hegemonic slavery in *The Underground Railroad* novel?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. Describe and explain how the novel "*The Underground Railroad*" by Colson Whitehead describes and analyzes the concept of hegemony in relation to race, gender, and social class in the context of the slavery system in the United States in the 19th century.
2. Describe and explain in what ways does the novel *The Underground Railroad* establish, perpetuate, and reproduce the fight of slaves against the beliefs and practices that uphold slavery?

## **1.4 Use Of The Study**

### **1.4.1 Theoretically Use**

In the exploration of "The Underground Railroad," this study is used to apply the application of sociological literary theory to the concept of hegemony. The novel deals with the issue of humanity and the desire to achieve freedom. The representation of slave characters in literature, as well as the depiction of slaves in historical fiction, should not be overlooked. The theoretical approach to these themes aids in the analysis of the story's values. Aside from that, this research deals with Hegemony and Sociology criticism that are intertwined. The author believes that the readers will learn more about this theme.

### **1.4.2 Practically Use**

Practically conduct research on underground railroads, the history of slaves in America, and other relevant historical backgrounds in the story. This research can help strengthen understanding of the setting and context of the story. Other than that, discusses the controversy that occurred in the novel. The purpose of this study is to inform the readers about the Hegemonic of slavery and how it is portrayed in the novel, as well as how slavery suppresses the fundamental rights of human civilization. Aside from that, this research deals with Hegemony and Sociology criticism that are intertwined. The author believes that the readers will learn more about this theme.



## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the study of Hegemony and Sociology criticism in the novel *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead (2016) in all chapters (1-12). In this study, the researcher conducts an analysis of concepts of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci, domination, and resistance in the context of slavery and how the character resists slavery systems.