

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the introduction of the research, which contains background of the study, problems of the study, and objective of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Literature is human creative product used to describe human feeling, thought, idea, experience, and so on. Those descriptions take some forms, such as oral, written, and contemporary visual. However, it remains debatable on how critics or even men of literature define what literature is. Hawthorn puts forward that literature is a kind of writing in which expression and form always connects with human permanent ideas and their universal interest (1999, p.7). This statement asserts that literary work is noticeably a product of human thought. As result of those permanent ideas and universal interest, anyone can comfortably enjoy literature for different ages (p.7).

Literature does not only consist some sentences or words that entertain the readers or listeners but more than that. Literature is bound to culture. There are some realities of life, human thought, and ideas, which can be found in literature product, such as novella.

According to Kip Wheeler, novella is an extended fictional prose narrative that is longer than a short story, but not quite as long as a novel (1998, para.3).

Novella is work of imagination, work of fiction. Somehow, novella is written to reflect life, and its deal with human experiences. Novella as the result creates

world in words. According to SFWA (Science Fiction Writer of America), novella consists of at least 17.500 words but maximum 40.000 words (cited in goodreads.com. 2008, para.2). Novella usually makes the reader to be interested in finishing it because it is not too long like novel and not too short like short story. Novella is an alternative literary work for readers who think that novel is too long to read.

Franz Kafka writes "The Metamorphosis". He is a popular author from Prague, in the Czech Republic. He was born on July 3, 1883. He is an icon of dark existentialist and absurd literature who often wrote on themes of isolation, alienation, and authoritarian oppression themes. According to Mauro Nervi (2007, para.3), more than any other major author, Kafka is associated with one geographical location: the city of Prague. For most of his working life, he was an employee at an insurance office. He published numbers of stories in German, mainly in literary magazines and journals, but little known during his lifetime. He instructed his literary executor to destroy all his manuscripts, a final request which the executor refused to carry out. Most of his works are *Die Verwandlung* "The Metamorphosis", *Der Prozess* "The Trial", and *Das Schloss* "The Castle". Kafka was sick much of various illnesses. The most serious of which was tuberculosis, from which he died in 1924. After his death, his reputation slowly but surely improved and Kafka is now recognized as one of the greatest writers of modernist European fiction. Kafka was buried in Prague. Ian Johnston asserts in his book that the word 'Kafka' has come to embody the blend of absurd, surreal and mundane, which gave rise to the adjective "Kafkaesque" (1912, p.2).

“The Metamorphosis” is a novella which main character is Gregor Samsa.

Gregor Samsa awakes one morning to find that he has been mysteriously transformed into a giant cockroach. He looks around his room, which appears normal, and decides to go back to sleep and forgets about what has happened.

Gregor’s mother knocks at the door, and when he tries to answer her, he finds that his voice has changed. Gregor’s transformation has completed after his outward appearance. However, it leaves his mind unchanged, creating a discord, or lack of harmony between his mind and body.

Gregor is a travelling sales representative. He is the breadwinner of the family. Gregor, however, is now a cockroach. When a clerk from his company comes to demand for an explanation for his absence, Gregor makes a great effort to open the bedroom door and shows his transformation to the clerk. It makes the clerk and Gregor’s family terrified and shocked. Grete, more than his father or mother, handles the situation practically. However, financial reality requires all three to find work and less attention is given to Gregor except when he gets out of his room. No one in the family is fully able to reconcile him-or herself to the cockroach Gregor, and Gregor is unable to express himself to his family. Hobbled and neglected, Gregor begins to spend much time in his room. His family tries to avoid him. He feels lonely and isolated.

Gregor’s family financial is going to decline. Gregor’s father has the initiative to rent some rooms in the house. There are three lodgers renting the rooms for several days. One evening, the lodgers hear Grete practicing her violin.

They call her into the parlor for a show. She obliges and the music attracts

Gregor's attention that he creeps out into the parlor towards her, wanting to convey that he understands her gift. The lodgers are surprised to see a cockroach crawling approaching them. This is the breaking point for the family. Grete tries to calm the lodgers not to be afraid by the cockroach because he is her brother, Gregor. Gregor moves back into his room. He dies that night. A great weight has been lifted from the family. After a moment of mourning, the father demands that the lodgers leave immediately. The family packed up and leave for the countryside.

The research will focus on the motivation of Gregor's transformation into the giant cockroach in Kafka's "the Metamorphosis". The creation of the main character of Gregor who transforms into giant cockroach has many interpretations. The research will analyze the reason of Gregor's transformation.

The giant cockroach becomes a sign that could be analyzed by using semiotic theory. The giant cockroach is signifier and relates to the signified and myth.

There are many various models of Semiotic theory. The suitable semiotic theory in this research is Roland Barthes' semiotic, in his book entitled "Mythologies".

Chandler (2007, p.143) states that myth is not common definition that associates with the fables or heroes. According to Barthes, it is a type of speech (1970, p.107). Barthes develops the Saussurean's theory about the relation between language and meaning and he develops the theory beyond that. The production of myth in text can help the readers to describe the culture, social, and the power of politic around.

The use of Barthes's semiotic in this research is to gain the comprehensive meaning. Barthes' semiotic is the second order of signification. The data collecting of Kafka's background is important to do to know the meaning of giant cockroach in the perspective of Prague's culture. The influence of social culture, civilization, culture and politics have important role in Kafka's way of thinking. It becomes one of important thing in this research.

Furthermore, this research will focus on the analysis of Kafka's motivation in creating Gregor Samsa who formerly acts as the breadwinner of family however after the transformation; he is been avoided and isolated by his family.

This story tells about the characterization of Gregor Samsa from hero to zero. The analysis of Gregor's characterization in the novella will give holistic meaning from Kafka's motivation.

Based on the background of study above, this research is entitled "Barthes' Semiotic on the giant cockroach in "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka".

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on background of study, the problem to be explored in this research is:

what is the signification based on Barthes' semiotic perspective behind the giant cockroach that Kafka oriented in his novella "The Metamorphosis"?

1.3 Objective of Study

In accordance with the problem of the study, the objective of the research is:

- to know the significations based on Barthes' semiotic perspective behind the giant cockroach in "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka.

