

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Play is a literary work that combines text, action and performance to portray all aspects of human life. Usually, all plays must be delivered in the form of dialogues by several characters or actresses, in order to present real or imagined events to a live audience. The actors communicate or portray these to the audience through a combination of gestures, speech, song, music and dance. This helps the audience to know the atmosphere and how the conflict in a play. According to Reaske (1966:5), the play is a literary work or composition that describes life and human activities with all appearances, various actions and dialogue between a group of characters. This means that the play is a performance performed by actors who describe the human experience or a tragedy in front of the audience using facial expressions and supported by music for the audience to feel the situation and also the message. The play can also be written in prose and verse, and can have different genres, such as comedy, tragedy, farce, melodrama, and musical drama. The play can be included to entertain, inform, or inspire the audience, and often explores themes that reflect the human experience or social phenomena of the current era.

As in the play *Gem of the Ocean* by August Wilsons, As in the play “*Gem of the Ocean*” by August Wilsons, Wilson’s play is an exploration of the experiences of the African American community in the 20th century, but it also reveals the complexity of their culture and history. Through the use of symbols, Wilson portrays to the audience the African American identity, trauma and hope experienced by the characters in this play “gem of the ocean”. The play

narrates the ritual of discovery and self-discovery performed by the character of Aunt Ester who guides Citizen Barlow who has lost his sense of identity and also depicts the legacy of slavery and the journey of the Middle Passage. Aunt Ester takes Citizen to the City of Bones, a mystical place that honors the souls of Africans who died on slave ships. There, Citizen finds a connection with his ancestors, receives a new name, and a new purpose in life.

Based on the explanation above, in this study the researcher uses Roland Barthes' semiological perspective, with the symbols in "Gem of the Ocean" can be analyzed through two levels of meaning, namely denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the direct meaning of the symbols used, while connotation includes deeper meanings and the social and cultural contexts that accompany them. For example, the Middle Passage as a symbol in the play not only refers to a physical element, but also symbolizes a tragic journey that results in deep trauma that affects the next generation.

And the use of symbols in "Gem of the Ocean" also reflects the history and collective experience of the black community in America. In this context, Barthes' concept of "myth" is particularly relevant, as the symbols in this play serve not only as aesthetic elements, but also as tools to build a broader narrative about the struggle and resilience of the African community in this play. Like the City of Bones symbol in the context of myth is a mystical place at the bottom of the sea that is believed by the African community. A place built from the bones of African ancestors who have died during the middle passage. Therefore, this research aims to explore how the symbol-ism in Wilson's work can be interpreted through the lens of Barthes' semiological theory, as well as its impact on the audience's understanding of the larger social and cultural context. Then the researcher will analyze the symbols as

second-level meaning and second-level meaning as myth. This aims to look into the culture and history experienced by the African community.

1.2. Statements of the Problems

Based on the above background, this research has two statements of problems:

1.2.1. How is the middle passage portrayed in the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wilson as the second level of meaning?

1.2.2. How are the symbols of African-American culture and history revealing the second order meaning as a myth in August Wilson's play Gem of the Ocean?

1.3. Scope of the Research

This research focuses on the identification of the middle passage depicted in the play Gem of the Ocean as the meaning of the second order and the symbols of African-American culture and history that reveal the meaning of the second order as a myth in the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wilson. And also include symbols of cultural heritage, history, and enslaved African communities in this play.

1.4 Objective of Research

Relating to the statement of problem mentioned above, the objective of this studies are:

1. To identify the middle passage portrayed in the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wilson as the second level of meaning.
2. To identify the African American culture and history revealed the second order meaning as a myth in the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wilson.

1.5 Significance of the Research

In this case, it is expected to provide benefits both theoretically and practically.

1.5. Theoretical significance

Theoretically, this research provides important insights related to cultural and literary studies, especially in the context of African American literature. It offers a clearer understanding of the ways in which past pain and cultural pride still shape a given society's identity and experiences.

1.5. Practical significance

Practically, this research can help readers, academics and literature enthusiasts to understand the complexities and cultural traditions of the African-American community. It can be used as a means for intercultural learning and understanding, comprehension, improving empathy, and supporting further research.

1.6. Review of Related Study

In this part, the researcher takes several previous studies related to this research such as topic, theory, and object.

The first, a thesis from Nabila Inaya Jannati (2012) about *An Analysis of Symbolic Sign in Emily Dickinson's Death Poems*, Nabila's research focuses more on identifying the types of symbols that appear in Emily Dickinson's six death poems and to describe how Emily Dickinson constructs symbols in her death poems. In addition, the results of her research show two types of symbols (personal and conventional) and indicate that there are three ways Emily Dickinson's constructs symbols in her death poems. The difference is that the previous study used the object of poetry, the focus of research, and the

research applied Riffaterre's semiotic theory of poetry which creates personal symbols in two ways by using natural symbols and modifying the meaning. The similarity is to analyze symbols related to social culture and semiotic approach. The focus of this research is symbols as second-level meaning and symbols as second-level meaning as myth using Roland Barthes' perspective semiology.

Second, research from Fitria Ningsih S. Arahman (2018) about Masonic Secrets in Dan Brown's "The Lost Symbol" using Roland Barthes Semiology Perspective. His research focuses more on freemason symbols that reveal the mystical world that holds masonic secrets through Washington's dark history by presenting several symbolic images. The difference with this research is the different research objects. The similarity is that both use the Roland Barthes Semiology perspective with a research focus on symbols as second-level meaning and second-level meaning as myth.

Third, Agustina and Isnaniah (2020) about *Covid-19 Meme in Social Media: Study of Roland Barthes Semiology*. This research focuses on showing that creators try to express social conditions through Covid-19 memes. These social conditions are presented in several types of memes, namely critical memes, parody memes, and motivational memes. In relation to the presentation of meaning, several social problems are revealed in Covid-19 memes. The difference between this research and the previous research is the object of research and research focus. The similarity is that both use Roland Barthes' Semiology Perspective.

The last, research from Yulia kartika (2012) about Semiotic Analysis of Drama Text *You Wait Who is Nilo* by Wisran Hadi, Universitas Negeri Padang. This research only focuses on symbols in the play script using a semiotic approach. This study describes the loyalty of a girl who loves Kinanti so much,

which is a symbol of Marawa which means that everything told in this text cannot be separated from the traditions, customs, norms and social procedures of the Minangkabau people. The difference can be seen from the drama used and also the theory. If the previous researcher only used semiotic theory to analyze the symbol in the text of the play “Kau Tunggu Siapa Nilo” by Wisran Hadi, then this research uses August Wilson's play “the Gem of the Ocean” with Roland Barthes' semiology perspective. The similarity is to analyze the meaning of cultural symbols and traditions related to a community. If the previous research analyzed community symbols or the Minangkabau people and in this research on the culture and history of the African American community.

In addition, the text of the play Gem of the Ocean has never been researched before, regarding the meaning of symbols that portray the African American experience in the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wil son.

1.7. Theoretical Bases

1.7.1. Semiology

Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist and philosopher, made significant contributions to the field of semiology. Semiology, also known as semiotics, is the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. It is used to uncover systems of ideology and culture, arguing that everything in our cultural environment communicates meaning through signs. Basically, it believes that everything in culture can be a sign and convey a certain message. Be it media, fashion, art, photography, architecture, or literature.

1.7.2. Symbol

A symbol is a sign or image that represents a concept, object or idea. In everyday life, symbols are used to convey deeper and more complex

meanings than can be expressed with ordinary words. Concepts themselves are meanings shared by people who communicate. The shared meaning is called denotative meaning (shared meaning), while the description or personal meaning is called connotative meaning (personal meaning). Symbol meanings can also vary depending on the cultural and social context in which the symbol is used. For example, certain colors can have different meanings in different cultures.

1.7.3. The nature of the sign

Semiotics is the study of signs that exist in human life and the meaning behind these signs. Semiotics comes from the Greek word 'semeion' which means 'sign'. In communication, a person uses a sign to send meaning about an object and the other person will interpret the sign. Saussure defined a sign as consisting of two sign elements (signifier, and signified).



Picture 1: structure of sign

Sourch: Saussure

The relationship between signifier and signified is known as signification. The signifier is the physical element of the sign, which can be a sign, word, image, or sound. While the signifier is an absolute concept that approaches the existing physical sign. While the signification process shows between the sign and the external reality called referent. Saussure interprets

“object” as referent and mentions it as an additional element in the signification process. For example: when people say “dog” (signifier) in a swearing tone, it is a sign of bad luck (signified).

1.7.4. Semiology system

Roland Barthes is an expansion of Saussure's thinking. If Saussure only focused on the structure of language as a sign system consisting of signifiers and signs, then Barthes developed the concept by adding a layer of analysis that looks at how signs can provide deeper meaning. Barthes' ideas include denotation or the meaning that corresponds to the dictionary or according to what is visible, and connotation the double meaning that arises from one's cultural experience in which non-explicit and uncertain meanings operate.

Barthes considers myth as a form of language, explaining that myth can be interpreted as a system of communication and messages. The meaning of myth according to Barthes is different from ordinary meaning, he views myth as a form of development of connotative meaning that has been present in society for a long time. In the context of the semiological system, Barthes views myths as a sign system that is interpreted by humans so that the language used in myths requires certain conditions before it becomes a myth that can be accepted by society, so that the discourse in myths is not arbitrary.



Picture 2: Roland Barthes' two-level signification system framework
Source: *Mythologies* (1972:113).

The figure above illustrates Roland Barthes' concept of semiology, especially how signs work on two levels (language and myth). Language this is the first sign system, which is when a sign consists of two elements namely, a) Signifier The physical form of the sign, such as a sound, word, or image that we can see or hear and b) Signified The concept or meaning indicated by the signifier. These two elements come together to form c) Sign which is the combination of signifier and signified that creates the basic meaning. meaning in the myth level signification system refers to the relative or connotative meaning. the concept of myth comes up with what is referred to as the second level in the sign reading system. Myth at the first level (which consists of signifier and signified) becomes 1) Signifier at the level of myth. That is, the whole sign of the language system is used as a signifier to create a new meaning in the myth system. And 2) Signified at the mythical level is the deeper meaning or ideology conveyed by the myth. The combination of the signifier and signified at the myth level forms the 3) Sign which represents the larger myth or ideological message.

Therefore in Barthes' semiology, myth is the way ideology is conveyed through language and signs to convey certain messages. Myths are not just limited to traditional stories, but also include the ways in which ideas and social norms are repeated and enforced in society through a variety of symbols, images, and images.

1.7.5. Middle Passage

The Middle Passage, a harrowing sea trip, was the name given to the forced migration of African slaves over the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. This section belonged to a three-way trade route that transported goods to Africa from Europe (such as knives, guns, ammunition, cotton cloth, tools, and

brass plates), Africans as slaves to the Americas and the West Indies, and goods from African plantations, mostly raw materials (such as sugar, rice, tobacco, indigo, rum, and cotton). Between approximately 1518 and the middle of the 19th century, millions of African men, women, and children journeyed for 21 to 90 days in overcrowded sailing ships with crews mainly of English, Dutch, Portuguese, and French pedigree.

African slaves were brought on deck to work out or "dance" (forced jumping) throughout the trip. During that period, a few captains required the crew to scrape and clean the beds. Inclement weather resulted in fever and dysentery with a high death rate due to the extreme heat and toxic fumes in poorly ventilated and unhygienic confines. Estimates of the number of people who died during the Middle Passage by epidemics, suicide, "fixed melancholy," or revolt ranged from 13 percent. Due to the fact that so many dead or critically ill Africans were thrown into the water, sharks would frequently pursue slave ships as they travelled west.

Based on the aforementioned above, the researcher draws the conclusion that Africans experienced a horrific and historic occurrence during the middle passage as part of the transatlantic slave trade. This slave trade, which links Europe, Africa, and America, resulted in the horrific enslavement of millions of Africans.

1.7.6. African American Spirituality

According to academic Albert Raboteau in Lisa (2009), slaves had a "complex belief system" that combined the natural and pure with the supernatural. African sensibilities were dominated by ancestor worship, sensitivity to the spirit world, and strong community bonds and values. Africans were initially sent to Jamestown in 1619 as indentured workers to help in the

development of cash crops like tobacco. However, they were quickly forced into slavery, and their population grew significantly.

The slaves endured cruel and brutal treatment on a regular basis, which included alienation, exploitation, terrible suffering and even death. This is the cause for the promise of freedom from oppression that existed for slaves generally, and for those who followed Christianity specifically. In social, political, and economic terms, freedom means fairness. "Freedom always means the absence of restraints that could Jeopardise one's responsibility to God," write Lincoln and Mamiya in Lisa (2009). And that since God made you in His likeness and for His own purposes, God desires that you be free."

Slaves were frequently denied the opportunity to fully participate in worship sessions and were forbidden from learning to read when they were brought to Christianity, which was typically done by Christian slave masters. It was believed that slaves would grow more educated and brave enough to fight for their liberation if they read. Although some kind-hearted slave owners treated their captives with respect, many did not. Christian owners of slaves frequently placed different limitations on their slaves to reduce their involvement in church-related activities.

As a result, this reality gave rise to the phenomena known as the "invisible institution," or the group of black worshippers who discovered locations to worship that were not under the authority of their owners. These locations included "quiet yards," hamlets, plantations, and occasionally their own homes.

Additionally, spirituality is perceived as more subjective, less formal, emotion-focused, individualistic, and less visible. Three general demographics have been identified from the global attributes of spirituality: (1) translocation;

(2) finding meaning and purpose in life; and (3) having a connection to God or a higher force. Given that African Americans experienced forced migration, slavery, systemic discrimination, and victimization, their spiritual traditions can be considered distinctive.

1.7.7. African American Culture and History

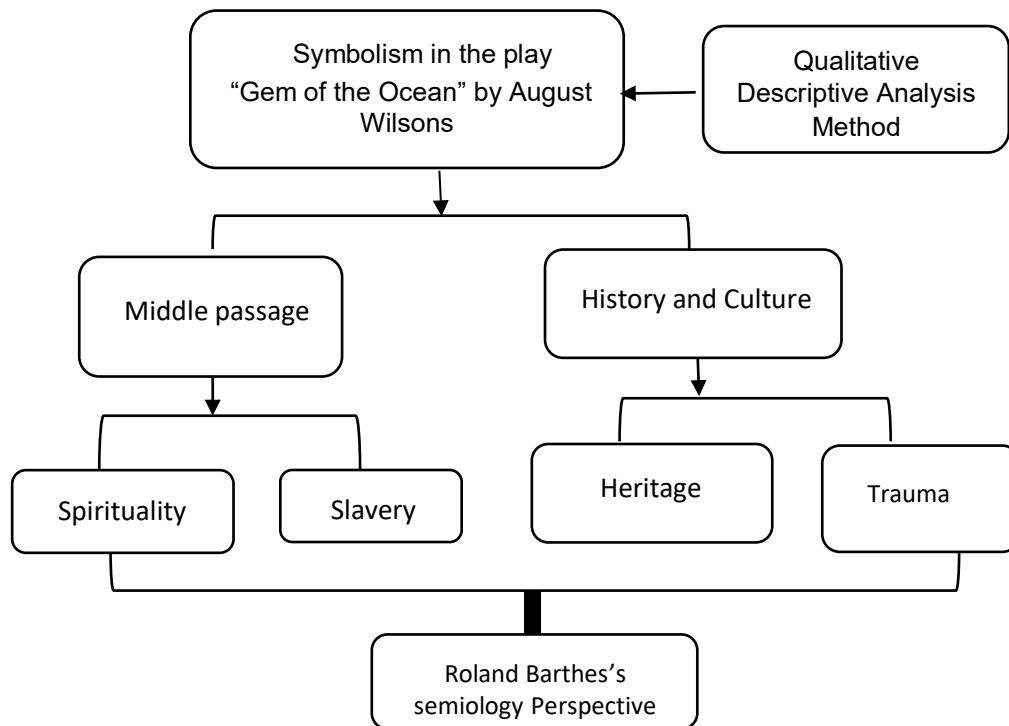
African Americans have experienced many difficulties through their history in the United States. They are descendants of people who were forced to leave their native Africa and sold into slavery. Their economic, social, and political rights have been severely restricted for generations, resulting in significant inequality. However, African Americans have made invaluable contributions to American history and culture despite all these challenges.

Their culture, which is vibrant and diverse, reflects a unique blend of their African heritage with experiences of slavery, segregation, and civil rights struggles. Music, art, literature, and more have been powerful platforms of expression for this community. From blues and jazz to hip-hop, to evocative visual artworks, African-American cultural heritage has had a profound impact on American culture as a whole.

African-American culture has not only produced avant-garde art forms but has also impacted language, cuisine, and dress in daily American life. Political and social movements spearheaded by figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks have also shaped the direction of change in the United States, fighting for equality and justice for all citizens.

Because of their struggles, African-Americans have inspired future generations, leaving a lasting legacy in American history and culture, and bringing about positive change that is leading to a society that is more just and inclusive.

1.8. Conceptual Scheme



1.9. Method of the Research

In this research, researcher used the descriptive analysis methods. Qualitative method is a method that applies in-depth aspects of the quality of phenomena and problems. According Strauss and Corbin in Fitriahningsi (2018) Qualitative means something relating to the aspects of quality and meaning contained in the facts and it can be expressed and explained through linguistic, language, or word. The data collected more the letters, words, or pictures.

Qualitative research use for Attention to meanings; in this sense is a reference to the 'holistic' of interconnected meaning that form a way of life and which cannot remain meaningful if they are extracted and broken down into separate units outside of their meaningful context

Method Descriptive analysis is a way of describing and explaining the facts that already exist in the object of analysis. According to Ratna in Sari

(2008) Descriptive method is done by describing facts, analyzing, making assumptions, first, the data is described to find the source.

By using descriptive analysis method, researchers will describe the facts contained in this play, characters, or conflicts in this play script. By describing and analyzing the elements in the play, researchers can find sources of information or factors that influence the story, describe characters, and present assumptions based on the development of the story.

1.9.1 . Kinds of Data

There are two types of data used in this study, namely primary data and secondary data.

1. Primary Data

The primary or main data is the manuscript of August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean. The play consists of two acts, pages and was first published in 2003. The researcher downloaded the play Gem of the

Ocean and then collected the data.

2. Secondary Data

In secondary data, the researcher collect the data with read more referens from artkel, journal,skripsi and thesis from internet media to collect the data.

1.9.2. Techniques of Collecting Data.

Researchers first read the play Gem of the Ocean by August Wilsons to understand the storyline. Th en look for data that is relevant to the topic, then researchers collect supporting data from the novel itself, as well as from

internet sources. Then filter the data according to its relation to the analysis, because not all data is relevant to the topic.

1. Library Research.

The researcher collected supporting data that complemented the information found in the play. The researcher read, and photographed books and theses or journals in the library as data sources and references related to the history, symbolism, or spirituality of Africans in contexts relevant to the drama *Gem of the ocean*.

2. Reading comprehension.

The researcher tried to understand all the contents of the play script by reading, understanding the meaning of symbols, and finding out important things such as themes, conflicts, symbols, and how characters related to the research topic. The researcher also noted and underlined, things related to symbols and conflicts that built the story in the play *Gem of the Ocean*.

3. Internet Research.

The researcher obtained data from the internet as a reference source for this research and used the data to further analyze this research. Internet sources were chosen to collect data on theories and approaches in this research problem. The researcher also notes things that are interesting, important, or meaningful from the play *Gem of the Ocean*.

1.9.3. Techniques of analysing Data

1. Classification.

Researchers classify based on the focus of the problem such as how aspects are analysed such as symbols, characters, history and

spirituality of African Americans.

2. Interpretation.

The researcher explained each context of African symbolism, history and spirituality. The researcher analysed how these data relate to each other and to the theme or message that the author wants to convey in the play. This data will be the main focus in describing and understanding how these elements are reflected in the narrative and messages conveyed in the play.

3. Explanation.

This research presents a further explanation of the selected data, elaborating on its meaning and significance in relation to African symbols, history and spirituality in the context of the play "Gem of the

Ocean".

4. Conclusion.

The conclusion of this research is also generated to provide a deeper understanding of the symbols in the play Gem of the Ocean as the object of research.

1.10. Systematic of Writing

In this section, the researcher will provide a systematic overview of the structure of this research. This research is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter, starting from the background that explains what drama is, the approach that researchers will use and the reasons why researchers chose the drama Gem of the Ocean as the object of research. And followed by the formulation of the problem in which the researcher has two

problems that must be answered. Then there is the scope of the study which aims to find out the limits in this research. Then there is Objective, significant, and review of related which explains the difference between this research and other people's research, there is also theoretical Bases to explain the theory of Roland Barthes that researchers will use in this research. And at the end there is a conceptual scheme that describes in a chart and method of the research to explain the method of data collection in this research.

Chapter two, there is an overview of the play Gem of Ocean and the author's background.

Chapter three, there is data and analysis of the play Gem of the Ocean to find out the meaning of symbols that describe the history and culture of African American society and also the use of symbols in this play.

The last chapter, there are conclusions and suggestions where the researcher concludes the entire analysis and then provides suggestions.

Researchers also attach a bibliography as a reference or information used in this study.