

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Damono (2003; 15) argues that literature serves the picture of life. It can be assumed that literary works is the part of literature which consists the idea of the writer or reflect the real situation at that time. As in Wellek and Warren cited in Sheqi (2011; 4) “literature is creative, an art”, literature is a process which is created by imagination, thought, and feeling which contains idea, concept, and emotion. Afterwards all of them are processed to be a literary work. It could be called as an imagination of fact that the writer feels. If people have a strong tendency with writing, they will try to express their ideas by writing a literary works such as short story, novel, and poem.

Poem usually tries to express their meaning in much less space than a novel or short story. However, writing a literary works like poem is not simple because a writer needs to play with their words. Poem is often created from the desire to escape the logic; it could reflect imagination and feeling (Mildorf, 2003; 2). Some poets use poem as media to reflect the real situation or issues happening surround them at that times, it can be shaped as euphoria, madness, sadness, or protest with the condition. As cited from Kristyna (2012; 9) that in America 1950’s there are a wide range of people who criticized uniform culture, the materialistic way of thinking and the overlooking of problems such as racial violence or militarism and started to express their dissatisfaction through literary

works. This generation works reveal the real condition in America, because people could feel the condition and situation that the writers of this generation want to convey in their works. In short, this group was called The Beat Generation who tends to against the conformity and tradition in America (Jackson, 2008; 4). Thus, they reject all of mainstream lifestyle and tradition happened in America.

The term Beat was officially launched in New York Times November 16, 1952 by John Clellon Holmes. As Jerold M. Starr in Patterson (2002) have notices that the beat mounted a “great refusal” against the repression of militarism, materialism, and conformity in American society, and raved about free love, mind-expanding drugs, and creative expression. The way they convey their protest is expressed towards their attitude that reject the situation and conformity of American condition after World War II. The central ideas of the Beat Generation included: experimentation with drugs, alternative forms, sexual freedom, an interest to Eastern religion, and rejection to middle class value (Zhang, 2013; p.4).

At that era The Beat Generation seems to be one of the most prominent literary movements. It affects the new movement such as Hippie or Hipster and influence music style such as jazz, blues, and rock and roll. In the case of influencing Hippies, the beat generation gives a vision that makes Hippies generation become more criticize and aware with the condition surround them, and make them have a political tendencies to criticize the situation especially political and social condition (Reisman, 2012). This generation also inspired the legendary musicians like The Beatles and Bob Dylan (Rudolf, 2006). They inspired those musicians because they contributed to the evolution rhythm from

blues to rock and roll. Since the publication of Howl poem in 1956 by Allen Ginsberg, the Beat Generation caught the public eye (Periz, 2013). It happens because Ginsberg attacked the situation by conveyed what he saw as the destructive forces of materialism and conformity in the United States at that time.

This research takes the poem by Allen Ginsberg entitled Howl which was published in the book *Howl and Other Poems 1957* as the data for the study. Howl is a social commentary and revolutionary of Beats generation. The title Howl indicates protest with all exploitation, repression, and subjugation that happened after World War II (Periz, 2013). This works of Ginsberg was so controversial. In May 21, 1957, police officers entered the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco and seized all the volumes of *Howl and Other Poems* (Periz, 2013). Furthermore, Ginsberg's poem Howl was being prosecuted because he uses obscene word explicitly.

The study on Howl poem in different object has been conducted by Sherry Lutz Zivley from University of Houston in 2005 entitled *Madness and Modernism: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl"—Fifty Years Later*, in her journal article she explains about the situation in America from Ginsberg viewpoint. Furthermore, she criticizes Howl poem from sociological and psychological aspects of Allen Ginsberg by using Louis A. Sass theory of Madness and Modernism. She concludes that Ginsberg shows how a person moves into an out-of-control because the situation that happened around them, and she said that Ginsberg concludes with an all-inclusive assertion that everything is "holy". In short, she analyze this works of Ginsberg by characterize it into seven

characteristics of Madness and Modernism. The other previous research is conducted by Dagmar Van Engen from Boston College entitled *Howling Masculinity: Queer Social Change in Allen Ginsberg's Poetry* in 2012. In his research, he focuses on gender and sexuality inside Howl poem, because Ginsberg's poem suggests a bridge from the poststructuralist critique of essential gender and sexuality to the need for political solidarity, addressing concerns of some gay activists who find theories of identity impractical in the current political situation. In brief, these research not only focus with the gay masculinity side of Ginsberg but also how gay writers demonstrate the political importance in their works.

Both of those research focuses on Allen Ginsberg background, point of view, and how Ginsberg describe the condition, but they did not mention about the beat generation as a generation or a movement that influence Ginsberg life and his works. Thus, the writer intends to figure out this generation by focusing on the central idea of the beat generation which portrayed the counterculture in Howl by Allen Ginsberg because this generation gives a big influence and effect into Ginsberg's life and works.

The previous study about counterculture has been conducted by Steven Andrew Erkel, B.A. entitled *The Poet behind The Doors: Jim Morrison's Poetry and The 1960's Countercultural Movement* in 2011. This research takes Jim Morrison poetry and lyrics who is the lead singer of the Doors, and this research is looking at both his poetry and lyrics. This thesis begins to discover reasons for Morrison's fractured relationship with his generation. Morrison's fractured

relationship with his generation resulted in that the direction Morrison wished to take the counterculture was very different from its actual direction.

In this study, the writer intends to figure out the central idea of the beat generation which portrayed in Allen Ginsberg poem entitled Howl in order to analyze the counterculture that held by The Beat Generation. In conducting this study the researcher uses semiotic study. As Chandler (2002) argues that Semiotic is study of signs, which is way of thinking about meaning and texts. It is concerned with anything that can signify a meaning or idea. The researcher chooses semiotic model by Roland Barthes to help in understanding the language that Ginsberg used in his poem and to figure out the denotative and connotative meaning of word that the writer used.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the problem discussed in this study is:

- a. What The Beat Generation Counterculture is portrayed in Howl poem?
- b. How does the Howl poem portray The Beat Generation Counterculture?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to figure out how The Beat Generation counterculture is portrayed in Howl poem by exploring the characteristics of The Beat Generation in Howl poem.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The study focuses on the Semiotic analysis and the central ideas of The Beat Generation that portrayed the counterculture in Howl by Allen Ginsberg.

1.5 Significance of the Study

By conducting this study, the researcher hopes that this result of this study will contribute for the study of counterculture in a poem especially about The Beat Generation and American counterculture. This study will gain more understanding for the researcher about the study of counterculture in a poem. Hopefully, this study also will give a great contribution to English Department students and can be a reference for those who want to conduct the research in analyzing poem.