CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains of study's introduction that consists of background of the study, research question, research objective, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of The Study

Colonialism comes from the Roman 'colonia,' which means farm or settlement. There is this misconception to understand colonialism as one specific terrible phenomenon in the past in the form of the conquest of the west to the non-west. When actually, it was never an identical process in the different parts of the world, but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships inhuman history (Loomba, 2005). Although the complex and traumatic relationships occurred in the past, their legacies are lasting until today, which leads us to a term called postcolonial.

To begin with, the prefix 'post' itself signifies two senses; temporal (the next period, as in coming after) and ideological (as in supplanting). The former refers to postcolonialism, the study of socio-political conditions after colonialism is formally ended (Okazaki et al., 2008). Meanwhile, the latter might bring out the complexity yet create a more inclusive discourse to the postcolonialism discussion. Since the inequities of colonial rule still exist and are felt to this day, it is too premature to assume the demise of colonialism (Loomba, 2005). Many countries have declared their independence which makes them postcolonial states (formally independent), yet at the same time, economically, politically, and even culturally dependent on the colonizers' nation. This situation probably characterizes for most third-world

countries. Therefore, it is debatable whether a once-colonized country can be seen entirely as postcolonial (McClintock, 1992).

It does not look hard to see inequalities exist every day in our life. Nevertheless, observation is needed to acknowledge that the long-term effects of colonialism are responsible for many current societal issues. Jorge de Alva suggests that postcoloniality should not 'signify' the concept as the opposite of colonial (read: subordinating/subjectivizing) discourses and practices. In other words, to understand postcolonial as the next period means to validate the existence of long-term disadvantages after colonialism towards independent countries (which used to be colonized) on this day. Likewise, it is better to refer to postcolonial upon specific oppressed or dissenting groups, people (or individuals within them) rather than to a location or a social order, which may include such people but is not limited to them (Loomba, 2005).

When we are talking about one race's discrimination over another race, racism is the most infamous concept which is used to describe it. However, when we are explicitly talking about White domination, Frederickson (1981) prefers to employ the term White supremacy, which is characterized in the form of color bars, racial segregation, and the "restriction of meaningful citizenship right" (Franklin, 1983). George M. Frederickson is one of the scholars who is contributing to the comparative study of Black-White relations in the US and South Africa. He argues that White supremacy begins with the process of "Settlement and Subjugation" from 1600-1840 through superior military power with ecological, economic, political, and religious realities contributed back then (Frederickson, 1981).

Frederickson, in his infamous writing White supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History, defines White supremacy which is inclusive of the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of White or European dominance toward non-White populations (Jones, 2015). The three words mentioned above are then known as Ways of White supremacy, which

is the medium to prove the existence of White dominance and resulting White supremacy (Fany, 2021).

Spears (2021), as an American, in his writing 'White supremacy and Antiblackness: Theory and Lived Experience,' asserts that Black people (specifically African-American context) are the bottom group in the US's White supremacy system. Blackness is the antithesis of Whites. Not to mention, race acts independently to class. For example, Black women in the US had the worst experience with their maternity medical outcomes than any other ethnic-racial group, regardless of their class or level of education. He concludes that White supremacy toward Black people is authoritarian, hierarchical, and patriarchal (Spears, 2021). Also, he adds broader and more profound comprehension of White supremacy as the vital element in the degradation and exploitation of not only labor of color but also white labor—to a lesser extent, and the looming possibility going forward of the United States' decline domestically and internationally (Spears, 2021).

In her research, Anne Bonds (2019) examines White woman's central role in the production and maintenance of White supremacy in the US. Bonds argues that white supremacy is closely related to white womanhood and white feminine vulnerability, and a significant body of research documents white women's role in upholding white supremacy. She cited Haley (2016), White feminine exposure contributed as 'the most explosive sign of white supremacy' by justifying lynching and Black political and economic subordination. Haley maintains 'that gender is constructed through race and that the production of women and other stable gendered categories required violence.

Furthermore, drawing from Black feminist thought regarding the centrality of race in the construction of gender, Bonds presents that Black women become the subject of the unprotected category of "woman." Black feminist scholars insist that racialized and gendered power dynamics devalue and position women of color as more at risk of multiple forms of violence than white women (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981). Hence, the privileged and vulnerable subject position of 'white

woman' is not produced in isolation but instead constituted relationally with other categories of identity, necessitating legal and extra-legal violence to maintain boundaries of race and gender within a white supremacist political and economic order (Bonds, 2019).

In addition, Horne (2015), as one of the most original Black scholars, founds that White supremacy and anti-communism are the significant forces shaping post-World War II life and politics in the United States, with significant implications for African-descended and colonized people globally. The bottom line is that it can be said that White supremacy and its implications are not only happening in the US and affects all non-Whites people.

France, once a colonizer country, had different 'baggage' regarding racial issues compared to the US (Beaman, 2018). Sue Peabody, an English historian, published There Are No Slaves Here (1996), which contains the notion that slavery is something that is occurred elsewhere but not in France. In 2017, Fleming's Resurrecting Slavery challenged Peabody's notion by conducting a study through commemorations of slavery to elaborate on White supremacy and antiblackness in France today.

As cited in Beaman (2018), Fleming draws on various data sources, including public statements and speeches by various politicians and other officials, participant observation at various commemorative events, and interviews with commemorators and nonactivists from the French Caribbean. The result showed that some respondents were unclear to include slavery either as Black France's history or not. Also, most of the respondents prefer to perceive slavery as a humanity /immoral crime rather than name it as the product of racism and White supremacy. In her words, Fleming describes White supremacy in France as involving asymmetric racialization, which is a "pattern of unequal recognition for racialized groups that very often renders whiteness as invisible, unmarked category". In her review of Fleming's book, Beaman adds that the flattening of and lack of attention to the

heterogeneity of Black populations in scholarship, in France and elsewhere, is a facet of White supremacy itself (Beaman, 2018).

Speaking of the heterogeneity of black people in scholarship, literature is one medium to express information, thought, opinion, and the author's notion (Annisa et al., 2020). The world was introduced to this prestigious Goncourt Prize winner in 2016, *Chanson Douce*. Originally, the novel was written and published in French. After that, it is sold six hundred thousand copies in its first year of publication which makes the author, Leila Slimani, the most-read author in France. Until now, it has been translated into eighteen languages, one published in the UK and titled *Lullaby*. The UK version is used as the corpus of this study.

One of the story's protagonists is a White Frace woman who works as a nanny, Louise. She always works in a caregiver job all her life. However, for a job that is usually underestimated, she is highly professional. Louise's first interaction with the children is convincing, and her ex-employer's excellent testimony over her makes the couple decides to hire her as the nanny. The couple are Myriam (a Moroccan-France woman) and Paul Masse (a White France man), who live with their two children in the apartment. Since Myriam is back to pursue her career as a lawyer, they decide to hire someone to take care of Mila and Adam. The couple think they are the luckiest people to have Louise as their children's nanny. Her works are flawless. While taking care of Mila and babysitting Adam, she cleans the whole apartment; she decorates, cooks, and mends their clothes. She accomplishes what she has never been asked to do.

One day, the time came when Louise was left out by the Masse when the couple does not invite her on their holiday in Paul's parents' house. Louise becomes the opposite of this perfect nanny that she portrays in the beginning. Louise argues with Myriam regarding leftover foods, which she always keeps until it entirely runs out. In the climax, Myriam finds a chicken carcass on the dining table, which Louise leaves intentionally. Myriam and Louise's relationship becomes full of tension. Soon after, she wants to fix this situation like in the beginning and thinks that a

newborn baby from Myriam is the answer. Yet, Myriam chooses not to. In the end, she murders Mila and Adam. The story is based on the 2012 murder of two kids (Lucia and Leo Krim, ages 6 and 2) by their nanny Yoselyn Ortega in New York (Arens, 2020).

Although this novel is announced as a psychology thriller themed (Barbosa & da Silva, 2022), the researcher believes racial issues occur in it. The author, Leila Slimani, is a French-Moroccan ancestry journalist and writer. She moved to the French at 17 years old for her writing career. Her background in Muslim and Francophone education makes her one of the promising authors of contemporary literature. Most of her works concern women's silence universe, for it reveals loneliness and introspection that permeates women's life in various cultures (Barbosa, R. L. L., & da Silva, M. M. O., 2022). From the summary above, Slimani's identity inspires Myriam Masse's character. It presents Muslim, middle-class, and black women's perspectives, experiences, and notions regarding White supremacy. Thus, this novel manages to represent Black people's heterogeneity in scholarship through Myriam Masse's character.

It has been said before that racism does not explicitly exist in this White supremacy discussion since it is also a postcolonial era. However, it is always about race. Louise's perspective of the Masse, Louise's acts of violence, and Louise's revenge. To realize her White advantages are not resulting benefits compared to the people of color, signified by the Masse, especially Myriam Masse. It then leads to racial emotions, which are central to how White people experience race, and thus are integral to understanding and challenging White supremacy (Du Bois, 1903/1996; Feagin, 2013; Helms, 1990; Ioanide, 2015; Tatum, 1992).

In 2019, a group of counselling psychologists examined how their field approach could help to combat White supremacy. One of their methods is identifying White racial affect, and the result shows the suggested steps to sharpening counselling psychology as a tool to deploy social justice. White racial affect (i.e., feelings of racism and antiracism) has been linked to White individuals' racial ideologies, with

significant implications for their behaviour (Kernahan & Davis, 2007). Spanierman & Cabrera (2015) introduce the "Taxonomy of White Racial Affect", which examines how such emotions manifest on individual and collective levels and consider implications for challenging transnational White supremacy. It is divided into two categories: Emotions of White racism and Emotions of White antiracism. The former refers to White apathy, White fear, White melancholia, and White rage. Meanwhile, the latter includes moral outrage, compassion, joy, and hope which are not related to the White supremacy discussion in this study.

As stated above, the emotions of racism primarily refer to White apathy, White fear, White melancholia, and White rage. Start with White apathy, which is already proven by much qualitative research as White people's typical response to inquiries of racism (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001). Most of them feel disconnected talking about racism and perceive it as unimportant and only a sensitive issue for people of color. Although from the literal meaning, fear and rage might be in the spotlight. White apathy effectively works to extend structural racial inequities. White fear at the individual level refers to irrational fear and high mistrust of people of color, primarily Latino and Black men. Next, White melancholia which reflects a sort of white fear at the collective level. It is manifested as a longing for a memory (false or otherwise) of racial purity and a resurgence of right-wing extremist social and political groups (Grzanka et al., 2019). Last but not least, White rage. It involves intense negative feelings toward people of color, such as racial hatred, a sense of superiority, and a desire for dominance.

Another term which is unseparated when it comes to White supremacy since it is affecting the birth of White supremacy named Orientalism. Orientalist refers to Occident (west) who study the Orient using their perspective and feel entitled to identify how, what, and who the Orient is (Williams & Chrisman, 2015). Under the heading knowledge of Orient and Western hegemony, emerge Orientalism as a suitable study in the academy, display in the museum, reconstruction in the colonial office, theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about humankind and the universe, and examples of economic and

political power. Through this knowledge penetration of Western understanding towards and about non-west. Hence, Orientalism can be understood as a body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, has been a system of knowledge about the Orient (Said, 1978).

Edward Said is known as one the most famous scholars to challenge this notion through his influential book, Orientalism. While he emphasizes Occident as the west (white people), his concept of the Orient not only refers to South Asia and the Middle East, but also all the non-West entities. Said (1978) argues through one of his reasonable qualifications regarding the West and Orient's reliance on each other that the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K. M. Panikkar's classic Asia and Western Dominance (Williams & Chrisman, 2015). Through his illustration, draws from Flaubert's encounters with an Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, which then becomes Oriental women model. There is this widespread assumption signed to Oriental women that they expressed themselves through White men's validation which is "never speak and represent herself". In short, this pattern of interaction is not an isolated instance.

Obviously, Louise, who works as the nanny, could not dominate Myriam based on her class position. Hence, it brings another Said's concept named "Power and Knowledge", which departs from Foucault's perspective. Said claims that most knowledge production concerning the Orient is only possible because of the West's power over the East, manifested in Europeans' ability to travel, trade, study, excavate, describe, and analyze arbitrarily. In turn, the knowledge generated by these texts, including stereotypical ideas, invites or justifies the extension of Western power over the East, particularly in the form of colonialism. At the same time, the success of this process confirms the necessity and validity of such knowledge and opens up new avenues for its production in the future (Childs, P., & Williams, P., 2014). In Slimani's *Lullaby*, the interactions between Louise and Myriam show how Myriam embodies the Oriental women model. Meanwhile,

Louise's silence is the result of the class gap and has nothing to do with the racial issue. Myriam Masse's silence results from racial inequalities structure with people of color as the inferior ones, which have been applied and normalized through power and knowledge for decades.

Numerous pieces of research about the novel have been conducted with different principal themes. Onur Isik's "Identity and Belonging in Leila Slimani's *Lullaby* (2021) investigated the traces of colonialism's effects on the characters in the text, especially Louise and Myriam. Through France's nation-state identification, Isik relates Louise's White privilege absence in society and Myriam's disconnection to immigrant solidarity even though she is a minority. Hence, the research found that the two protagonist women are unsatisfied with their identities and in need of belonging. Finally, Isik concludes that the encounters between Louise and Myriam are slave-master in reverse. Since it is a contemporary context, in class stratification, Myriam is the one with the position to dominate Louise. However, the intense long-term legacies of colonialism are projected in Louise's character to regain White supremacy.

Meanwhile, Barbosa and da Silva (2022), in their research entitled "The Canção de Ninar Novel and The Relationship between Women, Education and Work", examined some issues regarding gender, education, and work. Canção de Ninar is the Portuguese edition of Slimani's text. The research includes a historical aspect of the nineteenth century, where women were incorporated into labour relations in order to understand how the problem involving gender, education, and work was forged (Barbosa & da Silva, 2022). To explain the condition of women in work in different periods, the researchers use three versions of Nana neném, a Brazilian *Lullaby* metaphorically. Furthermore, they look at structural discursive elements in the novel, focusing on the female characters Myriam and Louise and contrasting their literary construction with gender, education, and work relations from the mid-nineteenth century.

In tune with the previously mentioned research, Annisa et al. (2020) examined the description of Louise's psychological turmoil and its implication in high school learning. Just like the title, "Psychoanalytic Studies in Roman *Chanson Douce* by Leila Slimani", the research uses Freud's psychoanalysis approach to be applied to the intrinsic elements, which are characterizations, theme, plot, and time using content analysis technique. The result showed that Louise's imbalanced psychological condition through her id, ego, and superego had led to her act of repression, justification, denial, and diversion.

Sarah Arens (2020) offered a different perspective to postcolonial discussion through her research "Killer Stories: 'Globalising' the Grotesque in Alain Mabanckou's African Psychoand Leïla Slimani's *Chanson Douce*". In Slimani's text, Arens found a new globalised grotesque, an aesthetic which is inspired by other international texts and describes new forms of postcolonialism in the age of neo-imperialism. Finally, she engages with Slimani's identity as the literary author to have a better understanding of how her reconfiguration of the grotesque as a 'globalised' aesthetic extends to a reconsideration of what African literature in French and its authors are today on the global literary market.

Differing from the previous related research above, this study will focus on finding out Quo Vadis White supremacy over People of Color in Leila Slimani's *Lullaby*. Since the novel consists of domination from a White individual towards people of color, Frederickson's Ways of White supremacy and Spanierman & Cabrera's Emotions of Racism are required. In addition, Said's perspectives on Orientalism are also needed to explain the postcolonial context.

1.2 Research Question of The Study

According on the discussed in the background study, this study purpose to answer this question: How White supremacy over people of color is portrayed in *Lullaby* by Leila Slimani?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research question above, this study aims to examine and scrutinize the portrayal of White supremacy over people of color in *Lullaby* by Leila Slimani.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on character's direct and indirect remarks, as well as Slimani's description which portray Quo Vadis White supremacy over people of color. The words, clauses, and sentences that are identified as Ways of White supremacy and Emotions of Racism in *Lullaby* novel by Leila Slimani are the study's limitation.

1.5 Significance of The Study

Numbers of studies on Slimani's *Lullaby* have been conducted, however none of them are found specifically discuss the White supremacy over people of color theme in it. Thus, this study gives an authenticity of the analysis. Additionally, the analysis results are expected to enrich the references and understanding of the readers towards White supremacy in the postcolonial context.