

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Bruce Norris is an American playwright and actor. He began his career as a playwright by writing *The Actor Retires* (1992). As a contemporary playwright, he has been productive in writing a lot of plays in the last two decades (“Bruce Norris”). Until today, he has written thirteen plays and is associated with Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago (“Bruce Norris: Profile”). *The Pain and the Itch* (2005), *Clybourne Park* (2010) and *Domesticated* (2013) are some of his notable works which make him one of the famous playwrights in America. His newest play is entitled *Downstate* (2018). His plays could be described as black comedy, social satire of just simply, family dramas (“Bruce Norris (playwright)”). Norris has won many awards, such as The Whiting Foundation Prize for Drama in 2006 and Steinberg Playwright Award in 2009. His masterpiece, *Clybourne Park*, won the Olivier Prize and Evening Standard Awards for Best Play in 2011, Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2011 and Tony Award for Best Play in 2012 (“Member Profile

Bruce Norris”). Seeing all his achievements, Norris is already proven to be a great playwright.

Clybourne Park is Norris’ play that I will analyze in my thesis. This play focuses on racial discrimination between white and black people, and it consists of two acts. The first act is set in 1959, when a white couple has decided to sell their house and prepared to move to the suburb after the tragic death of their son. Without them knowing, their real estate agent has sold their house to a black family. It becomes controversial because there is no black family in the neighborhood before. The second act is set fifty years later in 2009, in which the situation has reversed when a white couple tries to buy and rebuild the same house in a now predominantly black neighborhood. In both acts, fierce debates and fights occur on the basis of racism.

I believe that the conflicts in this play are the strongest point that is very suitable to be analyzed. In literature, conflict is the result of competing desires or the presence of obstacles or problems that need to be overcome. Conflict is necessary to propel a narrative forward; the absence of conflict means there is no story (“5 Types of Conflict in Literature with Examples”). The conflicts that I will analyze are social conflicts. It is a situation where two characters or a character and a group or two groups have opposing desires or interests (“Conflict Examples and Definition”). *Clybourne Park* has many social conflicts between its characters and those conflicts are related to racism. Therefore, I will analyze the conflicts in details to help the readers have a good understanding about the purpose of the author in making *Clybourne Park*.

I would like to analyze *Clybourne Park* by using formalism approach because all the conflicts in the play are clearly written and the readers can understand them easily. Formalism is a literary critique that separates works from cultural influences, authorship, biography, historical and society or politics. That means a work is analyzed purely on its own intrinsic value (“Formalism”). In formalism approach, the critic is mainly concerned with the form, language, style, symbols, images, contrasts, structure and development of plot in a literary work (“Formalism (Literary Theory)”). I believe, it will not be necessary for me to use other sources than the play itself.

Statement of the Problem

1. What social conflicts happen in the drama?
2. What is the cause of each conflict?
3. What is the resolution of each conflict?

Purpose of the Study

1. To show the social conflicts that happen in the drama
2. To show the cause of each conflict
3. To show the resolution of each conflict

Method of Research

The method of research used in the study is library research. I begin the study by reading Bruce Norris’ *Clybourne Park*. Then I search the internet for some

references to help my analysis. After that, I analyze the social conflicts in the play and after analysing the play, I draw a conclusion from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction. It consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of the Social Conflicts in Bruce Norris' *Clybourne Park*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion from the analysis of the social conflicts. This thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, containing Synopsis of the Play and Biography of Bruce Norris.

