

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Humour is always related with people's life. Now, it has become an important aspect in man's daily life and interaction. No one can imagine how the world is and people's life will be without humour. It will be so sour and plain.

A person's life and this world are full of tension and problems. And here, humour comes to offer a relaxing atmosphere by presenting funny aspects of life.

Humour becomes very popular because one can find it in many fields of one's daily life. Basically, humour is created to entertain. But as time goes by, the intention of the humour itself has also broadened. Now it is not for entertaining only, but humour can also be used for satirizing something that runs not in their place or runs improperly.

In the world of literature that kind of humour is called black humour, which has a function as a device to deliver a hidden message and also moral lesson. By using irony and paradox without leaving the aspect of humour, the black humour itself can make the reader feel the bitterness of what is happening throughout the story. However, in spite of its term, black humour sometimes does not necessarily make people laugh. As it is explained in Webster Dictionary, black

humour is ‘...marked by the use of morbid, irony, or grotesquely comic, episodes that ridicule human folly’ (Webster, 1995:144). This kind of humour exposes ironic and strange characters as well as the dark side of human nature. Sometimes it also amuses the readers with something which would be unsuitable to laugh at. It ‘...makes us laugh at the darkness of human life...of cruelty and other things that we cannot understand’ (High, 1986:197).

Black humour became popular in the 1960s, and replaced the traditional satire. It is mostly applied by novelists and playwrights. This humour is ‘...used to express the absurdity, insensitivity, paradox and cruelty of modern world’ ([http://www.bartleby.com/65/bl/black\\_hum.html](http://www.bartleby.com/65/bl/black_hum.html)). Through this kind of humour writers can express their indirect criticisms toward something that went wrong. A black humourist’s style in satirizing the madness and cruelty of life without ignoring the funny or comedy aspect has made the readers unaware that they are actually laughing at their own foolishness and perhaps the cruelty of life.

One of the black humourists of all time is Kurt Vonnegut, who is acclaimed as, “OUR FINEST BLACK HUMORIST...we laugh in self-defense.” —The Atlantic Monthly (<http://www.urly.com/URLv2Day/Vonnegut/von.html>). He is the author of eighteen highly-acclaimed books and dozens of short stories and essays. Although his novels have been criticized for being too simplistic, the readers who love his imagination and his sense of humour like him. He is at once irreverence and highly moral that has made him a valuable voice in American literature. ([http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Authors/about\\_kurt\\_vonnegut.html](http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Authors/about_kurt_vonnegut.html))

The present writer chooses to analyze the literary element of black humour in the novel of Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless You Mr. Rosewater. It is a comic masterpiece which tells about the life of Eliot Rosewater, a young and affluent man troubled by the plights of the poor. Eliot is the President of the Rosewater Foundation, and he is responsible for a family fortune worth approximately \$87 million. Using this position, he does everything he can do to help the poor. This charity-giving is socially unacceptable to the wealthy, particularly Eliot's father, Senator Lister Ames Rosewater. Vonnegut uses caricature, irony, paradox, and satire to satirize the lack of care the rich have for those socially "beneath them". They are rude and heartless because they see no benefits from it, no immediate rewards. However, Eliot does. He understands that human must be nice and must care for one another.

By analyzing this literary work, the present writer wants to show that in this period there was an obvious social disorder between the poor and the rich. The author wants to criticize the society in the contemporary period, which is the setting of time of the novel and the time when he lives, through the use of black humour. The present writer also wants to reveal the author's presenting the black humour and the author's purpose of applying this literary element into his novel, God Bless You Mr. Rosewater.

Based on the above statements, the present writer comes to the decision to choose a novel as a topic of discussion in his thesis. The reason is that the present writer thinks that black humour is something interesting to be analyzed. Through the use of black humour usually the author wants to deliver hidden messages or a moral lesson. So, by analyzing the literary element of black humour in Kurt

Vonnegut's God Bless You Mr. Rosewater, the present writer can learn more about the use and the function of the black humour itself.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

1. How does the author present black humour in the novel?
2. What is the author's purpose in using black humour in the novel?

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

1. To show how the author presents black humour in the novel.
2. To show the author's purpose in using the black humour in the novel.

#### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

The present writer mainly uses library research in writing this thesis. Firstly, he reads the primary textbook God Bless You Mr. Rosewater. Then he reads several references, which are relevant to the topic being discussed. In addition he has also taken some data as the reference from the internet, in order to support his analysis of the novel. In the end, he makes some conclusion of the analysis of the novel.

#### **THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, which 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 Black Humour element in Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless You Mr.

Rosewater. The last chapter, Chapter Three, is the conclusion of what is discussed in the previous chapter. The thesis also includes the synopsis of the novel and biography of the author in the Appendices.