

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Harlem Renaissance, also known as the New Negro Renaissance, is one of the literary movements that happened between the 1920s and the 1930s in the United States of America. This movement occurred in Harlem, a large neighborhood within the northern section of New York City in upper Manhattan. The term “Harlem Renaissance” described the extraordinary flowering works in African-American literature, arts, and culture (Brown 218). It was also known as a period of race consciousness and solidarity among African-American artists, writers, and musicians (Witalec 1).

One of the Harlem Renaissance writers is Jessie Redmon Fauset. She is known as the “midwife” of Harlem Renaissance, because “her visionary efforts, mentoring and outreach to emerging writers intensified the intellectual and creative output of the period” (Brown 150). Her career “reflected her keen evaluations of social tensions, racial ideals, and the creative challenges and opportunities for American writers of color during the era” (150). She has written

many works including travel essays, short stories, novels, poems, essays, and reviews. Between 1924 and 1933, she also published four novels in which she focused on light-skinned black women who struggled with the dilemma of passing for white (Witalec 364). They are *There Is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy: American Style* (1933). These novels are said to have “strong and social purpose which is to portray the educated black middle class and thereby uncover American racial prejudice (375).

I choose to analyze *Plum Bun : A Novel Without A Moral* in my thesis. The novel is regarded by many scholars as Fauset’s best and most polished work among all Fauset’s four novels (Brown 154). *Plum Bun* also received mostly positive reviews upon its appearance. It is a story of a light-skinned woman named Angela Murray, who lives in Philadelphia around the 1920s and does the action of “passing” in order to pursue her education in art. At that time, racial segregation in law and everyday practices limited African-American to gain access to many public places and organizations in Philadelphia (“Leisure Time”). In order to escape the racial segregation in her hometown, Angela decides to move to New York and tries to pass for white. Angela hopes that she will make her future brighter. In the end, the conflicts that Angela encounters, within herself and with her society at that time, make her realize that she has to be proud of her own identity as a black woman.

As conflicts is the most outstanding element in the novel, I will analyze the social and inner conflicts that happen to the protagonist in the novel. Conflict is “a situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes” (“Conflict”, def. 3). There are 3 types of conflicts: elemental or physical, social,

and internal or psychological conflict (Shaw 91). In my thesis, I would like to focus only on social and inner conflicts. Social conflict means a struggle between man and man or man versus the society (91), whereas internal or psychological (inner) conflict means a struggle between desires within a person (91).

Statement of the Problem

In this thesis, I will analyze:

1. What social and inner conflicts are experienced by the protagonist of the novel?
2. What are the causes of the social and inner conflicts?
3. What are the resolutions of the social and inner conflicts?

Purpose of the Study

Based in the problems stated above, the purposes of the study are :

1. To analyze social and inner conflicts happen to the protagonist of the novel.
2. To analyze the causes of social and inner conflicts.
3. To analyze the resolutions of the social and inner conflicts.

Method of Research

In writing my thesis, I use the library research. I first read the primary text, Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun: A Novel Without A Moral*. Then, I read the reference books like encyclopedia and get some of the data from the Internet. Finally, I draw a conclusion from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis will consist of three chapters, preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. The next chapter, Chapter Two, is the analysis of social and inner conflicts in Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun: A Novel Without A Moral*. Chapter Three, is the Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.