CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Many people argue that a literary work cannot be used as a learning object. People who say such things tend to regard literary works merely as an entertainment. Therefore, it can be said that they underestimate the power that exists in the literature. They refuse to see literature as a study because they considered literature just as a product of an author’s imagination, and that sort of thing cannot be a topic that deserves to be studied. Even up to this day, for students who studied literature as their major, some of them are still consider that learning literature is not useful. It can confidently be said by seeing the number of students who do not read much of literary works.

On the other side, as one who studies literature, statements about underestimating literature also often heard from students from other studies such as engineering or medical. They do not understand the meaning contained in a literary work because they only see literature as a layperson. They tend to think that literature is a kind of limited knowledge centered only in reading and making literary works because what they know is literary work is something that someone created in the past based on their imagination in a written form, so for those who study literature they only know how to read poems or read the literary books from the past and make a new one. What they do not know is, the author of that literary works recorded, imagined, or told an idea about life events and all other elements in it in the form of
words, which if we deeply studied, known contained other meanings not just about life but also about the science that we have not known before.

A statement comes from an American actor, Will Smith, who is most known through his hit movie series “Men in Black”.

“I know how to learn anything I want to learn. I absolutely know that I could learn how to fly the space shuttle because someone else knows how to fly it, and they put it in a book. Give me the book, and I do not need somebody to stand up in front of the class.” (Iannucci, 2009)

The statement above is an affirmation of the general idea that book is a window of the world. Smith said, through a book he can figure out anything yet he knows in advance.

What will be discussed in this thesis is not a theoretical book but a literary work. It is one of many types of books that existed in the world, a novel. A literary work written by an author tells about the story of a human and life and other elements between them. Confucius once said “you cannot open a book without learning something”. So, it is possible to learn anything from a book and it is not an impossible thing to learn through books, including a novel.

The literary work we are talking about is a novel entitled Perfume: the Story of a Murderer, written in 1985 by a German man named Patrick Süskind. With the setting of 18th century of France, this story tells about a character named Jean Baptiste Grenouille, a lower-class man who lost in his obsession. It was all start right at the gutting table of his mother's fish stall, the baby Grenouille was born and treated just like another fish guts who was to be dumped into the river Seine allegedly because of poverty but later given to a wet nurse. The baby Grenouille who
has no body odor and an unusual nose that can smell more than any normal human received a rejection ever since he was born. With his oddness, the unusual sensing ability and no body odor, he is alienated, shunned and scorned by the society; they say he's possessed by the devil and refuse any contact with him. Grew up with these kind of treatment in his youth are considered to be the cause of Grenouille's obsession that he had. Grenouille killed at least 25 women, and then took their body odor to make perfumes. The heinous actions of him committed without even feeling fear or guilt.

In *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer*, it is narrated how the main character's unusual behavior, disturbing, and even frightening for the people around him based on the author's portrayal that later raises questions about Grenouille's psychological condition. Questions arise about what are the reasons or factors that emerge Grenouille's actions according to the author's description in the novel. After all, a criminal act does appear must be for a reason. Acts that Grenouille received from the society since his youth believed to be the major influence for his psychological growth. A human child is supposed to receive love and affection instead of harsh treatment and a wrong way of life so that can he grow up with a sense of compassion. The society should participate in the growth and development of a young man to guide him instead of treating someone who is different from us like an outcast. These things are the main reason for this study, to answer the curiosity and interest in the behavior of the main character; also with the causes and the effects. The other important reason is, this novel tells us about social and psychological issues that we need to learn as humans who live in a society so that we can apply the knowledge to get a harmonious life with one another. We do not have to read a book about
psychology and sociology theories to get an understanding, we can learn from anything because nowadays a novel is made not only for entertainment but also for people to learn through another person’s thought. This is called studying psychology and sociology from a literary work. To try to understand Grenouille’s behavior and thoughts using psychological and sociological approaches and theories to gain an understanding about him. Also take the social problems he has as a life-lesson for us as a social human being. By taking the knowledge obtained from the psychology and sociology itself, then his behavior will be analyzed and classifies as a psychological disorder. The theory used in this research is the theory of psychopathology by Derek Russell Davis. While the social problems of Grenouille will be analyzed using the theory of sociology by Soerjono Seokanto.

Psychopathology itself must have been very rarely known to our society, but in fact we can find it around us or in the news we watched. Psychopathology is often referred as psychological disorder, better known more as a mental disorder. Mental disorder involves patterns from human thought, emotion, and behavior that are characterized by dysfunctional, disruptive and maladaptive which are unjustifiable, disturbing, and atypical by the sufferer. This is not only having bad effects for the sufferer himself, but also for the people around him. There are several factors that caused Grenouille’s psychological disorder. Genetical and social factors were ascertained to be the main cause of his problems because of these factors happened when Grenouille was in age of mental and physical development.

To be more specific, this research will be limited on the main character’s social problems and his maladaptive and atypical behavior. As an earlier information, the behavior discussed here is the behavior described by the author without deviated
towards assumptions or opinions. Maladaptive behavior is a behavior that appears from an addiction or any pressure that can hurt themselves or others. While atypical behavior is a behavior that departs from the norm or is harmful and distressing for the individual or those around them. These types of behaviors usually violate what society feels is appropriate.

This research can proof that literature is not a study that only learn about its works, but also can be an inter discipline with another studies. Even from the slightest part of a novel can lead us into a new world that we do not know before.

1.2. Problem of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the problems discussed in this thesis are:

1. How is the social problems affected Jean Baptiste Grenouille's psychology?
2. How are Jean Baptiste Grenouille's maladaptive and atypical behaviors portrayed in Perfume: the Story of a Murderer?

1.3. Objective of the Study

In doing the analysis, there are objectives found in this analysis, they are:

1. To find out how is the social problems affected Jean Baptiste Grenouille's psychology.
2. To find out how are Jean Baptiste Grenouille’s maladaptive and atypical behavior portrayed in Perfume: the Story of a Murderer.
1.4. Scope of the Study

In doing this analysis, scope is needed to determine the limitation of the problem that will be discussed. In discussing a topic, we found some different things that if we analyzed entirely the result would be too confusing and unfocused.

The study of *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* novel are limited by only analyzing the social problems experienced by Grenouille and his psychological disorders which have restricted to maladaptive and atypical behavior.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The writer expects the significance of the study as:

1. This thesis was written to answer the curiosity of the writer towards the problems found in *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer*, not only for the interest in studying but also for the interest in understanding people.
2. This thesis will add a reference for students in English Department in analyzing literature with psychology and sociology as an approach.
3. This thesis will broaden the knowledge of the novel’s readers about the main character in *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer*, and is to make people understand the characters in this story and then be able to apply it in everyday life.