CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter consists of several matters. Those are background of the research, statement of the problem, research objective, research significance, and definition of key term.

1.1 Background

Romance is one of genres in popular literature. Some think that romance is an easy reading material and easy to write. Barlow and Krentz write that “because the figurative language, allusions, and plot elements of the best-loved stories are so familiar and accessible, romance writers are often criticized for the lack of originality” (qtd in Krentz et al., 28). However, romance novel is constructed with simple dictions and understandable language that we use in everyday life and that is what makes romance accepted by most of the majority. Beer clarifies this by stating that besides the fact that romance is popular, its language can be understood by all people (5). As Pearce claims, romance is a “story” that everyone knows (qtd in Krentz et al., 521).

Popular is liked, enjoyed or supported by many people and literature is written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value (Cambridge). According to that citation, popular literature is a literature which is liked, enjoyed, or supported by many people. So, popular novel should be
bestselling. It is also translated into many languages. *Dear John* is a bestselling novel and also translated into many languages. The writer, Nicholas Sparks himself is a famous romantic-drama writer who has written eighteen novels with the same genre.

The formula of romance is very debatable. Several sources saying that romance is formulaic and others state that romance has no formula. Krentz emphasizes on how romance has no particular formula (16). She says that “romance writers, like all writers, must recreate their own vividly imagined fantasies first and then hope and pray that there will be a large number of readers who will also enjoy that particular fantasy. That is the basic reason why there is no "formula" for romance writing”. However, Cawelti clearly writes that there are some formulas of romance (41). One of his statements is “the ‘gothic romance’, one of the most popular present-day formulas, makes extensive use of elements of adventure and mystery.” Moreover, Saunders claims that romance appears to be the first genre in which the story is seen to be addictive because formulaic (134). Havirova also has the same idea by saying romance is one of the formulaic genres in fiction (14). In other words, romance is indeed formulaic and people love romance because of the familiarity and diversity at the same time. It can be the ending, the character, the plot, and the setting.

One of the romance formulas is being analyzed in this research which is moral fantasy. The word “moral fantasy” is constructed by John G Cawelti in his book *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. Moral fantasy defines particular fiction formula by emphasizing that we can overcome all obstacles (Weibel, 5). Schlobin
says moral fantasies are fictive worlds made up from variety of story patterns in which readers can feel the excitement that they can’t feel in the real world, so are in romances (101). Romance fiction serves moral fantasies that love conquers all and love will find a way, no matter what. The hero and heroines will overcome all difficulties and have happily-ever-after ending—or at least give pictures that true love exists.

There are some previous researches about romance. First, is Katherine E. Morrissey’s thesis in 2008 about fan fiction, romance, the ways that romance stories are being constructed in contemporary society and how they bring pleasure to their readers through immersion and sensuality. The thesis has result that are (1) fan fiction and romance are created within very different production environments, (2) the publishers themselves determine the types of stories and set firm boundaries depending on the target audience. Commercial romances contain different levels of sexual conduct, some stories are conservative and religious, others more explicit, (3) fan fiction stories often opt to omit heroines altogether, indicating just how frustrated some readers are with classic romantic heroines. In fan fiction, romance is one of the most popular story types, but conceptions of romance begin to expand, incorporating homosexual relationships, less permanent relationships, greater sexual realism, and more diverse depictions of gender. This thesis helps researcher to widen the knowledge about romance and its function. The second is Bc. Tereza Havivora’s thesis in 2007 about romance, fantasy and novel, and their connection to two works of popular literature which are J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter series* and J. R. R. Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Ring*. 
The result is that the works are considered to be a part of popular culture which is to a great extent shaped by its audience. The thesis assists researcher in term of the understanding about formulaic literature and romance. The last is a dissertation by Jayashree Kamble in 2008 about popular romance novel and its reader. The result of the dissertation are (1) romance fiction is not fixated on a clichéd plot and descriptions of sexual intercourse; it involves complex themes that are disguised as stereotypical genre elements, (2) readers’ online debates demonstrate romance “formula,” albeit a function of its commodification, engages them in addressing quandaries related to societal preoccupations. The research helpfully gives explanation about romance’s hero characteristics.

The writer chooses moral fantasy of romance in Nicholas Sparks’ *Dear John* because moral fantasy portrays in the novel is different from other romance novels. It is different because the moral fantasy portrayed in the novel is suitable to study in accordance to Calweti’s theory. Besides, *Dear John* is one of popular romance fictions which not only qualify popular fiction in term of best-selling novel, but presents a true love story which specifically different than the others. Most importantly, it has never been analyzed by any researchers especially in English Department of Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The grand theory that the researcher uses in this research is John G. Cawelti (1976). This research title is *The Moral Fantasy of Romance in Nicholas Sparks’ Dear John*. 
1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background of problem above, the researcher has two problems. Before knowing how moral fantasy portrays in this novel, researcher needs to explain the characteristics of moral fantasy of romance. After that, since the portrayal of moral fantasy in every story of romance fiction is different, the researcher will identify the moral fantasy of romance in *Dear John* novel and the supporting role of it in this novel. So, it can be formulated into the research questions as follows:

1. How is the moral fantasy of romance portrayed in Nicholas Sparks’ *Dear John*?
2. What are the roles of moral fantasy in supporting the romance formula in Nicholas Sparks’ *Dear John*?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, the researcher has two purposes of this research as follows:

1. To understand the portrayal of moral fantasy of romance in Nicholas Sparks’ *Dear John*.
2. To understand the supporting roles of moral fantasy to romance formula in Nicholas Sparks’ *Dear John*. 
1.4 Research Significance

In conducting this research, the researcher expects that this research will have significances. Practically, researcher expects this research to be a reference for the reader who wants to analyze the similar problem. Then, this research is also expected to provide the knowledge to the reader in understanding the romance formula, especially the moral fantasy of romance.

Furthermore, theoretically this research is expected to reinforce the theory of moral fantasy of romance in *Dear John* novel.

1.5 Definition of Key Term

1. Popular Fiction

Popular fiction is a genre of fiction which is read by large number of people in the culture industry or contemporary era. The works of such fictions are mostly novels and films.

2. Romance

Romance is one of genres in literature which is very popular. It is a story in which the focus is in the love development between a man and a woman.

3. Formula

Formula is a conventional way to construct cultural products. It can be distinguished from form which is an invented system of organization. Formula is representing a culture which has embodied mythical archetypes and a kind of obsession to specific or particular narrative form.
4. Moral Fantasy

Moral fantasy exists in every formula of popular fiction. But, the moral fantasy of each fiction is indeed different. Basically, it is the ability to overcome any obstacles which in reality is almost impossible.