

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an introduction that explains the initial part of the background of this research. This chapter consists of *Research Background*, *Statement of Problem*, *Research Objectives*, *Research Significances*, and *Definition of Key Terms*.

1.1 Background of The Research

Modern slavery represents a disturbing aspect of human civilization's ongoing journey. It is seldom recognized that slavery persists into the present era, as it is often regarded solely as a relic of the past. Modern slavery refers to situations in which a person's freedom is exploited, either physically or mentally. Forms of modern slavery include forced labor, child labor, forced marriage, human trafficking, and debt bondage. One factor contributing to modern slavery is "compulsion". Individuals may be forced into certain work due to various external pressures, leaving them powerless – as seen today, for instance, when individuals are compelled to perform on live platforms like TikTok to receive gifts. Furthermore, modern slavery often capitalizes on a person's financial dependency on another party. This practice traps individuals in a cycle of debt that is difficult to escape, frequently involving high interest, unjust conditions, or forced labor as a means to repay their debt.

Modern slavery is closely linked to the capitalist system, especially in the context of labor exploitation and the pursuit of maximum profits at the lowest possible cost. Capitalism, oriented towards capital accumulation and economic efficiency, often creates an environment in which labor exploitation is possible, especially in sectors with weak regulation and minimal labor oversight. Gender roles influence the dynamics of modern slavery, with women, men, and children facing multiple forms of exploitation shaped by social, economic, and cultural norms. In modern slavery, women are often victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or unpaid and abusive domestic work. Gender stereotypes that portray women as caregivers or sexual objects increase their

vulnerability to these types of slavery. Furthermore, men are more often subjected to forced labor in areas such as construction, agriculture, fishing, and manufacturing, where they experience harsh conditions, low wages, and limited freedom of movement. Children are also at risk of forced labor and recruitment by armed groups or criminal organizations. Often, economic factors, gender inequality, and inadequate legal protections make it more difficult for women to escape slavery than men.

The relationship between literature and society is manifested in how literature portrays social dynamics, including major issues such as modern slavery. Literary depictions of modern slavery often aim to raise readers' awareness of the hidden realities behind seemingly normal everyday life. In this context, such portrayals are not merely about describing the suffering of victims but also about highlighting the mechanisms of power, economics, and social structures that enable the persistence of slavery. Although the term "slavery" is often associated with past history, such as the transatlantic slave trade, the phenomenon of modern slavery continues to exist today, taking more subtle forms, such as human trafficking, forced labor, forced marriage, child labor exploitation, and perpetual debt bondage.

In the context of literature, many works have explored the theme of modern slavery as part of social criticism, such as *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead, *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Sapaan Sang Giri* by Isna Marifa, and *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. These works not only depict the suffering of victims, but also invite readers to understand how the global economic, political, and cultural systems contribute to the continuation of this practice. By using various perspectives, such as the perspective of the victim, the perpetrator, or a third party involved, literature is able to provide a more complex picture of this issue. Some works even invite readers to reflect on how their own actions, whether consciously or unconsciously, can contribute to the continuation of modern slavery, for example through the consumption of goods produced by forced labor or policies that do not support human rights.

Thus, literature has the power to not only document reality, but also inspire social change. By giving voice to the experiences of victims and highlighting the

injustices that occur, literature can play a role in building collective awareness and encouraging real action to end modern slavery. Through compelling and profound narratives, literature can help reveal hidden truths and invite readers to not only understand, but also act in an effort to eradicate forms of exploitation that still exist in the world today.

One example of a historical fiction exploring slavery is *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead (2016), which tells the story of Cora, a young enslaved woman on a plantation in Georgia, who attempts to escape. The narrative begins with Cora's encounter with Caesar, a fellow slave, after which they both decide to flee via the Underground Railroad. Each stop along this metaphorical railway takes them to a new state, presenting new challenges and ways to evade capture. In this novel, historical fiction and symbolism are employed to illustrate the dark side of slavery in the United States. For Whitehead, the Underground Railroad is more than just an escape route from slavery; it becomes a symbol of the arduous struggle for freedom and renewed hope.

The novel *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson (2008) is a powerful historical fiction story about a young enslaved girl named Isabel who struggles to achieve freedom during the American Revolution. Isabel and her younger sister, Ruth, are promised freedom upon their enslaver's death, but instead, they are sold to a cruel Loyalist couple, the Locktons, in New York City. Betrayed and stripped of her rights, Isabel quickly realizes that neither the British nor the Patriots view her as an equal, despite their fight for liberty. As the war between the British and the American colonists intensifies, Isabel is caught in the conflict, struggling to determine which side—if any—will help her achieve the freedom she so desperately desires.

Throughout the novel, Isabel endures immense cruelty, including physical and emotional abuse at the hands of Madam Lockton. One of the most harrowing moments of her journey occurs when she is branded with the letter "I" for insolence as punishment for an act of defiance. This painful experience serves as a turning point, further strengthening her resolve to fight for her independence rather than submit to a life of servitude. Despite the many hardships she faces, Isabel refuses

to give up. She forms an unlikely friendship with Curzon, a Patriot slave who encourages her to resist and seek her own path to freedom.

Amidst the grief, anger, and suffering Isabel experiences, she begins to understand that freedom is not something that will be handed to her—it is something she must claim for herself. The guidance of Grandfather, an older enslaved man, introduces Isabel to the symbolic idea of the River Jordan, a biblical reference to crossing into a promised land of freedom. This concept gives her hope and a sense of direction, reminding her that her struggle is part of a larger journey toward self-determination.

As the war rages on and Isabel continues to endure hardship, she learns that true strength lies not only in physical survival but in perseverance and the will to determine her own fate. Ultimately, *Chains* is a novel about fortitude in the face of injustice, the resilience of the human spirit, and the unyielding desire to break free from oppression. Isabel's story serves as a poignant reminder that even in the darkest of times, hope and determination can light the way toward freedom.

Then in the novel *Sapaan Sang Giri* by Isna Marifa (2024) is a story that highlights the slavery of Wulan and Parto. Nine-year-old Wulan finds herself on the other side of the world, far from her village in Java. She is separated from the grandparents she loves, the relatives she loves to chat with, and the sounds and fragrances of her beloved home village. Wulan and her father, Parto, were enslaved on a farm in the far south of Africa, with no hope of returning home. They continue to cling to their Javanese identity and teachings, facing the bitterness of life in Africa. They formed a community that became known as the 'Cape Malay'.

In literature, characters become an important element in building and bringing the story to life and history becomes close and relevant to the reader. Characters in historical fiction usually consist of characters taken from related real history or characters designed fictionally. Characters in historical fiction become a bridge for readers to better understand the historical context, culture, and values of the past, and become an interesting way to learn history in depth through the emotional experiences of the characters.

The transformation of characters in historical fiction draws readers deeper into the atmosphere and essence of the depicted era. They not only witness the personal changes of the protagonist but also come to understand the weight of moral burdens, social pressures, and inner struggles faced while living in a particular period. Evolving characters serve not merely as reflections of individuals from that historical context but also as symbols of the changing times and the evolution of societal values. This enriches the reader's experience, allowing them to feel as though they, too, are part of this process of change.

The relevance of comparative literature studies in this research lies in enabling the researcher to explore differences and similarities in the approaches taken by literary works from diverse cultures. As emphasized by (Bassnett, 1993), comparative literature is a multidisciplinary approach that involves analyzing works from various cultures and periods, with the aim of uncovering cross-cultural connections and relevance within literature. Spivak also critiques the Eurocentric perspectives often found in this field, advocating the importance of understanding and valuing cultural diversity in the study of world literature. Spivak's perspective provides a strong theoretical foundation for appreciating the significance of cross-cultural comparisons in examining themes of enslavement and character transformation within literary works (Spivak, 2009). Comparative literature embodies an intellectual journey that crosses cultural and geographical divides, establishing itself as a discipline focused on cultivating a more profound comprehension and identification of parallels within literary works from a range of cultural backgrounds. This corresponds with Bassnett's observation that few begin their academic pursuits directly within comparative literature; rather, they often come to it from other fields. For some, this path arises from a desire to escape the constraints of a single, limiting discipline, while for others, it is an interest in examining connections between texts or authors across cultures that draws them to this field (Bassnett, 1993). Therefore, this research is directed at comparing two novels originating from different cultures and languages, namely Laurie Halse Anderson's '*Chains*' from America and Isna Marifa's '*Sapaan Sang Giri*' from Indonesia.

There are several previous studies that have similar discussions such as character comparisons, character transformations, and forms of "portrayal" of reality in novels. The first previous studies, titled *Perbandingan Karakter Tokoh Utama Pada Novel Atan (Budak Pulau) karya Ary Sastra Dan Film Laskar Anak Pulau Produksi Komunitas Film Batam* was written by Titik Dwi Ramthi Hakim (2018). This research examines a comparison between the main character in the novel *Atan (Budak Pulau)* and a film adaptation of the novel. The study employs theories of character and characterization. The findings reveal no differences between the character of Atan in the novel 'Atan (Budak Pulau)' and the film adaptation. In the film, Atan retains the same characteristics and traits—simplicity, patience, perseverance, religiosity, and humility—as depicted in the novel (Hakim, 2018).

Then, the second previous study, titled *Perbedaan Karakter Superhero Antara Komik Laba-Laba Merah Dengan Komik Spiderman* was authored by Annisa Ulfah Miah (2019). This study compares the characters Laba-Laba Merah from the Indonesian comic 'Robot' with Spider-Man' from the American comic 'The Superior Spider-Man #1'. The findings show some similarities between Laba-Laba Merah and Spider-Man, such as similar appearances. However, the research indicates that there are more differences between the two characters, particularly in areas such as technological proficiency, humanity, cultural aspects, and mentality (Miah, 2019).

The third previous study, titled *Perbandingan Karakter Tokoh Film Meet Me After Sunset Dengan Taiyo No Uta (Sebuah Kajian Sastra Bandingan)* was written by Iqbal Murtadho (2020). This research explores a comparison of characters in the films 'Meet Me After Sunset' and 'Taiyo no Uta' through narrative analysis. The findings reveal that the main characters in both films share similar traits, namely innocence and appreciation for others' efforts. However, the character differences are largely influenced by societal responses. In 'Meet Me After Sunset', the societal response is more judge mental, making the main character appear melancholic and unsociable. Conversely, in 'Taiyo no Uta', the main character appears cheerful and enjoys social settings (Murthado, 2020).

The fourth previous study, titled *Perjuangan Perempuan dalam Novel Para Pawestri Pejuang karya Suparto Brata dan Novel God's Callgirl karya Carla Van Raay* was written by Farahanna Juliani (2018). This research centers on the role and position of women in the economic sphere, in the expression of aspirations, and in domestic life, as depicted in two novels: 'Para Pawestri Pejuang' by Suparto Brata and 'God's Callgirl' by Carla Van Raay. The approach employed includes Naomi Wolf's liberal feminist theory and Suripan Sadi Hutomo's comparative literature theory of affinity. The research reveals both similarities and differences in the forms of women's struggles, influenced by each cultural background Javanese and Australian. Key differences emerge in the ways women advocate for themselves across these spheres, highlighting how local cultural contexts shape women's attitudes and choices in asserting their rights (Juliani, 2018).

The fifth previous studies, titled *Transformasi Tokoh Perempuan Dalam Novel Dan Film Serial Gadis Kretek* was written by Devina Anabel Perlita (2024). This article examines the transformation of female characters in *Gadis Kretek* a novel by Ratih Kumala, and its serial film adaptation directed by Kamila Andini and Ifa Isfansyah. The study aims to analyze the characterization of female characters, identify the forms of transformation between the novel and the film, and describe the forms of gender injustice depicted in both media. The research focuses on five main female characters: Dasiyah, Rukayah, Roemaisa, Purwanti, and Arum Cengkeh. The transformations observed include negation and affirmation. Negation, or significant changes, is evident in the character Dasiyah, who is portrayed as cheerful and sociable in the novel but as a figure concealing her sadness in the film. A similar negation occurs with the character Arum Cengkeh, who shifts from being polite in the novel to outspoken in the film. On the other hand, affirmation, or consistency in portrayal, is seen in characters such as Rukayah, who remains lively; Roemaisa, who retains her courteous demeanor; and Purwanti, who continues to be depicted as a jealous woman (Perlita, 2024).

The sixth previous studies, titled *Resistance to the patriarchal culture in Why Women Kill (2019) by Marc Cherry* was written by Syahriyanu Syahidatul Kamil (2024). This thesis aims to analyze feminism in relation to patriarchal culture and

its resistance as depicted in the television series *Why Women Kill* (2019), directed by Marc Cherry. The series illustrates how patriarchal culture thrives in society, highlighting male dominance over women in various aspects of life. This dominance results in women facing setbacks and restricted access to multiple opportunities. The study examines how *Why Women Kill* (2019) portrays patriarchal culture and the ways in which female characters resist it. In their resistance, female characters challenge traditional norms by pursuing education, career aspirations, and independence. They also defy patriarchy by rejecting male-defined roles, asserting their autonomy, and making their own life choices. Furthermore, women are shown rebelling against male control. This study provides an interpretation of the series' title, *Why Women Kill*, suggesting that women seek to "kill" the restrictive norms and oppressive culture that limit them. Ultimately, only other women can truly understand the struggles they face (Syahidatul Kamil, 2024).

This study will provide a new contribution by selecting and comparing the novels '*Chains*' by Laurie Halse Anderson and '*Sapaan Sang Giri*' by Isna Marifa, by exploring how each novel depicts forms of modern slavery systems through characters and transformation of main characters through characters experiences. This approach is different from previous studies, which mainly focus on comparing characters from films or comics with a popular culture background. The description above shows that the selection of the novels '*Chains*' and '*Sapaan Sang Giri*' as research objects is very suitable for research in the field of comparative literature.

1.2 Statement of problems

The interaction between historical facts and fictional elements is closely intertwined in the historical fiction genre. This relationship allows authors to create literary works of novels that combine intrinsic elements of prose with historical features. Through this combination, the intrinsic elements of prose can support adding dynamism and complexity to the storyline while maintaining factual accuracy. Therefore, this study aims to answer the question regarding the comparison between Laurie Halse Anderson's '*Chains*' and Isna Marifa's '*Sapaan*

Sang Giri', related to comparing forms of modern slavery through the characters in the novels.

1. What is the modern slavery portrayed in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Chains* and Isna Marifa's *Sapaan Sang Giri*?
2. How are the main character's transformation towards modern slavery in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Chains* and Isna Marifa's *Sapaan Sang Giri*?

1.3 Research Purposes

Based on the problem formulation above, the aim of this research is to:

1. To find out the modern slavery portrayed in both novels.
2. To find out the main characters transformation in both novels.

1.4 Research Significances

This study aims to provide a new perspective in understanding the novel Laurie Halse Anderson's '*Chains*' and Isna Marifa's '*Sapaan Sang Giri*' focuses on the comparison of modern slavery through the characters in both novels. The researcher hopes that this study can be useful for other researchers who are interested in analyzing comparative literature on social issues or intrinsic elements in the novel. This study can also be a reference for other researchers who want to analyze comparative literature in the novel.

1.5 Definition of Key Term

In order to clarify the key terms used in this study, some definitions are put forward:

- **Modern Slavery:** Modern slavery refers to the situation of an individual being exploited, and unable to refuse or leave due to threats, violence, coercion, fraud, and abuse of power. Modern slavery is among the most serious human rights violations that deprive a person of their liberty for personal or commercial gain.

- **Feminism:** Feminism is the belief and advocacy for gender equality, focusing on eliminating discrimination and empowering women socially, politically, and economically.
- **Portrayal:** In literature refers to the ways in which literary works reflect, portray, or represent social reality. This context highlights that literature is not merely a creative product but also a reflection of the dynamics of society, culture, and its underlying values. In this regard, literature serves as a medium through which human experiences, social conflicts, norms, ideologies, or even critiques of societal structures can be conveyed.
- **Transformation:** In literature, transformation refers to a significant change or shift in character that acts as a crucial element in supporting the progress of a story.
- **Characters:** Characters depicted in dramatic or narrative works are interpreted by readers as individuals possessing specific moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities. These qualities are inferred from what the characters say and the distinctive ways in which they say it dialogue as well as from their actions. The underlying temperament, desires, and moral traits that drive a character's speech and actions are referred to as their motivation.