

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is introductory to the paper. It deals with the background of the research, statement of the problem, research objective, research significance, and the result of the previous studies.

A. Background of the Research

The term 'magical realism' is quite become a troubled one for literary theory. It is because the term does not originate from the world of literature. From the first period, magical realism attempting to define a return to a more realistic style after the abstraction of expressionism (Thamarana, 2015). Many people have been associated with the development of post expressionist painting which is first introduced by Franz Roh from 1920's Germany and modernist and postmodernist modes of writing from Europe in the early twentieth century, and Latin America and the English-speaking world in the second half of the twentieth century. Although it is now most famously associated with Latin America and continued to influence European literature also internationally (Bowers, 2004).

It is widely known as a technique of portraying magical or supernatural elements as a natural part in an otherwise realistic or mundane environment (Aljohani, 2016). "As a concept, Magical Realism gets drowned in related synonyms and related associations with terms such as the fantastic, myth, fabulation, and legend" (Rhit, 2019). In literature, it was first associated with Latin American literature, brought by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his very popular work, *One Hundred Year of Solitude*, bringing the narration which portrays fantastical events in a realistic tone based on folktales and myths of contemporary social relevance. Later on, lots of writers were influenced by him, such as Salman Rushdie with his *Midnight Childrens*, Isabel Ellen with *The House of Spirits*, Franz Kafka with *Metamorphosis*, Toni Morrison with *Beloved*, and many more. However all these writers had different times, nationalities, social, and political backgrounds; they could all create their

distinction in producing wonderful works of literature of which some would certainly come under the group 'Magic Realist Literature' (Thamarana, 2015).

In present days, this concept can easily be found in every genre of popular literature like movies. Some popular movies with magical realism are considered as the best way to allow the imagination of the audience leading into the wondrous world of the story being told. Some of them are; *Midnight in Paris* (Woody Allen, 2011); *Big Fish* (Tim Burton, 2003); *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (David Fincher, 2008); *Paddington* (Paul King, 2014); *The Shape of Water* (Gillermo del Toro, 2018); and many more. Lots of movie lovers knew about how these movies tend to have few magical events to make a story more understandable. In *Midnight in Paris*, the audience is given the story about how Gil Pender, a screenwriter, who travels back in time every midnight and got him met his role models like Ernest Hemingway. On the other hand, *Paddington* provided the story about a bear who able to talk like human beings and live like a human. The amalgamation of fantasy and reality also could be seen in *The Shape of Water* where Elisa fell in love with the 'amphibian man'. It could be said that in those movies, the audiences could see the common oppression of the Other (Ernest Hemingway/time travel, Paddington, and the amphibian man) with new eyes. In this case, magic is used as a tool to help the movie even better, thus the audience could experience looking at the world through a new lens.

In literature itself, nowadays, lots of writers also using magical realism as a narrative technique such as Haruki Murakami in most of his works like, *Kafka on The Shore* (2002) and *1Q84* (2011); Orhan Pamuk with *The White Castle* (1998) and *Snow* (2005); Eka Kurniawan with *Beauty is a Wound* (2002); Biyi Bandele with *The Man Who Came in From The Back of Beyond* (1991); and many more. All these writers had different nationalities, also social and political backgrounds, yet they were using the same narrative technique which could analyze various characters in their native land, whether it's political rebellion, deconstruction of historical events, or part of the lore and culture of their native lands. The story itself is the great combination of various historical and sometimes political or religious events with fantastical and

miraculous events. Sometimes, it was the combination of mythology, history, and politics with a sprinkle of fantasy. Thus, it becomes the fictionalization of history or the past events and become the new product of what Hutcheon's called polemic in postmodernism literature (Hutcheon, 1988).

The fictionalization of historical and religious narratives is possible within the postmodernist discourse. The construction of alternative realities in magical realism narratives does conform to postmodernist ideology (Wandama, 2017). However, postmodernism, concerning literature, has been discussed by many people because it has difficulties to be understood. Even though postmodernism is almost familiar, some people still do not know the meaning of postmodernism and its purposes. Postmodernism plays a major task in everyday experience yet still carried the ambiguity of its meaning. Known as a rebellious of modernism often makes postmodernism being misinterpreted. Despite all of the vague meaning of what many experts said, postmodernism is a connection between texts with its various ways so it can make one text as a reference one into another. It often describes as the range of conceptual framework which is the opposite of modernism. Besides it, postmodernism does not take a big role in boundaries as other movements. That is the reason many people defining postmodernism with its only characteristic rather than explaining the definition and its meanings.

Hutcheon has provided a very detailed explanation in her book entitled *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, the researcher already said that she considered postmodernism as a polemic to define, it is not inferior to explaining history and politics. One thing that needs to be underlined is, that postmodernism raises historiography that is different from what modernist writers have done. Some postmodernist works have raised a new term in which Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction'. Their works are self-conscious about ancestral relics, thick mimesis, recorded history, but can still connect readers with the world outside the narrative without having to deflect the original history. "By this I mean those well-known popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, 1988).

For this reason, literary works in the era of postmodernism project the word 'world' in such away. They use one term that is well known but still difficult to understand, namely magical realism which is known as 'new multicultural artistic reality'. Categorized as a literary movement that developed quite rapidly. It brings narratives containing facts that are magical and also real. "magical realism are the meanings that the term is assumed to signify: ideas clustered around notions of narrative and representation, culture, history, identity, what is natural and what is supernatural" (Warnes, 2009).

One Hundred Year of Solitude (Gabriel Garcia Marquez) is one of the works known as postmodernist work that uses magical realism as a narrative technique. Originally from Latin America and has developed a literary culture in such away. Indirectly, Gabriel has developed magical realism terms and made other postmodernists begin to use them. Also, he has raised his own land's culture. "His masterful and fascinating imagination has made a name not only for himself but his native land as well...The myths, believes, and traditions of the people are given an aura of reality even though the events are extraordinary" (Wandama, 2016). In other words, magical realism can determine the history and culture behind the work.

There are many ways in which postmodernists use magical realism. One of them is figurative language. It is a metaphor. As the technical narrative that is widely known and used, magical realism developed a different technical narrative. Faris said there are much metaphor can be found in magical realism works. She called it as 'the poetics of magical realism' (Faris, 2004). One of the metaphor functions in magical realism is to obscure the narrative voice to make it unsure. Therefore, postmodernist work is known as the deception of narratives for its readers.

The use of metaphors in magical realism intends to conjure up the reality in the story. Consciously, the text used metaphor as its language to conclude the meaning. "The text is aware of the metaphorical literalizing process; such an awareness contrasts with other magical realist narratives in which marvels are reported without commentary...this technique that actualizes the magic of

metaphor updates a surrealist idea...” (Faris, 2004). Metaphors can be found in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It is considered an important thing in the novel. It has the consciousness to present the metaphor, in function, as the changes of Latin American history. “By representing historical reality through the magical and ahistorical frame of reference of the characters’ ideologies and thus obscuring the very reality it represents, the novel discursively dramatizes the ideological transfiguration of Latin American reality” (Erickson, 2009).

The readers will immediately remember the fairy tales that are often told during childhood when talking about magic. However, magic in magical realism is not a thing that can separate from realities. That is why magical realism tends to obscure the realities in the novel. Reality is depicted with a wider perspective so that the presence of magic cannot be separated from the logic. As can be seen in Franz Kafka’s work, *Metamorphosis*. The protagonist in the novel turns into an insect which is illogical in the real world but in novels can be considered as a reality, magical reality (Kamalakkannan & Kafka, 2006). Magical reality and reality become one real entity. This has been explained by Zamora and Faris,

“an essential difference realism and magic realism involves the intentionality implicit in the conventions of the two modes. [...] Realism intends its version of the world as a singular version, as an objective (hence universal) representation of natural and social realities, [...] realism functions ideologically and hegemonically. Magical realism also functions ideologically but [...] less hegemonically, for its program is not centralizing but eccentric; it creates space for interactions of diversity. In magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption; magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation” (in Tutan, 2016)

If magical realism in Gabriel's novel is a tool for the metaphor of Latin American identity and history, then other postmodernist novels that use magical realism may have the same purpose. Magical realism is used as a tool of metaphor in figuring the identity and the history of the novel itself. Therefore, the researcher holds a notion that some postmodernism works that

originate from many countries also reflecting the identity of itself with the use of magical realism.

Consequently, the researcher paid attention to a novel titled *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri from Nigeria. It was published in 1993 and describes African culture. Ben Okri is one of the writers that used magical realism as a narrative technique. On the other hand, Indonesia also has a writer that usually used magical realism in their works, she is Dee Lestari. One of her famous works is *Aroma Karsa*, published in 2018. Although both come from two different countries, both of them represent the culture or identity of each land.

The researcher finds many interesting things to be analyzed, as the quotation below:

“In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry. In that land of beginnings spirit mingled with the unborn. We could assume numerous forms. Many of us were birds. We knew no boundaries. There was much feasting, playing and sorrowing. We feasted much because of the beautiful terrors of eternity. We played much because we were free. And we sorrowed much because there were always those amongst us who had just returned from the world of Living. They had returned inconsolable for all the love they had left behind, all the suffering they hadn’t redeemed, all that they hadn’t understood, and for all that they had barely begun to learn before they were drawn back to the land of the origins.” (Okri, 1993, p. 3)

In this quotation, the protagonist delivering the story of its beginning. As it can be seen that the text above is the description of something extraordinary and somewhat magical yet it explain the history of the protagonist which is considered as the reality in the novel. According to the explanation before, this excerpt fulfilled the characterization of magical realism. Which is the reality seems to be obscured with something magical like *spirit mingled with the unborn, numerous forms*, etc. Even though the quotations seem like the explanation about the magical world but the line between *the world of Living* and *the land of the origins* took an important part as the main idea of it.

In the other hand, *Aroma Karsa* by Dee Lestari also depicted magical story which is related to the history of Majapahit, one of Indonesian major Hindu-Buddhist empire.

“Dengan berapi-api Sudjatmiko lantas menceritakan penemuannya di Plangatan. Sebuah prasasti peninggalan Majapahit berisi cerita tentang seorang raja yang lengser keprabon, bahkan dihapus dari sejarah dan nama aslinya tak disebut lagi. Beliau cuma dijuluki Mpungku Pinaka Amongwana. ‘Ia yang turun dari takhta dan menjadi penjaga hutan’. Mpungku Pinangka Amongwana telah dipikat oleh seorang dewi bunga yang dipenjara di kerajaan hutan. Dewi bunga itu dipercaya memiliki kekuatan mengendalikan kehendak dan dianggap berbahaya oleh dewa-dewi lainnya. Wangi kembangnya sengaja disamarkan, tapi kesaktian penciuman Mpungku Pinaka Amongwana mampu menembusnya dan berhasil membawa dewi bunga tersebut keluar dari hutan. Dewi bunga itu mengubah dirinya menjadi seorang perempuan cantik agar dapat dipersunting oleh Mpungku Pinangka Amongwana.” (Lestari, 2018, p. 21)

In this quotation, even though the event is somewhat magical and unrealistic but it is about history after all. The story written in the inscription and the speaker is someone in real life. This excerpt fitted with the characteristic of magical realism. The reality being depicted with a wider perspective and it seems the reality cannot be separated from the magical thing.

With all the similarities between *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*, the researcher decided to take these two novels as the object of the research. By examining the magical realism used, it will be easier to get an overview of the myths and culture as its background. Moreover, this study has a significant purpose, that is, this study compares two works originating from different cultures. Also, this research will uncover eastern and western cultures from the use of magical realism as a narrative technique. Therefore, the researcher is interested in making a comparative study on how *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa* stand as metatext and act as representations of themselves and their culture.

B. Statement of Problem

With the background described above, the researcher intends to research two postmodernist works, namely *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*. The problem that can be raised in this study is how magical realism functions in both novels so that it can reflect self-identity. To be more detailed, the questions that can be identified in this study are as follows:

1. What are the functional equations of magical realism in the novel *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*?
2. How is cultural background reflected through magical realism in *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*?

C. Research Objective

This research was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To find out what are the functions of using magical realism narrative techniques in the novel *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa* and find the similarities of these functions.
2. To find out how magical realism able to reflects the ethnographic of *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*.

D. Research Significance

The researcher took interest in *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa* because both of them are the fuse of reality and magic. *The Famished Road* (1991) by Ben Okri is considered to be a classic and essential work in English Literature. It is the combination of brilliant narrative technique and a great description especially when it comes to the ancestral and mystic realm. Meanwhile, *Aroma Karsa* (2018) by Dee Lestari is a great combination of sains and myth. The novel portrays the mythology of Mount Lawu and combines it with a slice of life in a modern city. Both novels have unique characteristics and enchanting. Therefore, this research will have two research significance, as follow:

1. Theoretical Significance

This research aimed to the readers to show that narrative technique also can have its consciousness in building its character. It can show the reader about the history and culture. Magical realism work as the strongest cause to make these two novels stand as postmodernism works.

2. Practical Significance

This research is expected to be a good source for the student, especially English Literature student. Thus, the practical significance for this research, as follows:

- a. For readers, this research is expected to broaden knowledge about literature especially postmodernism works.
- b. For a further researcher, this research can be a reference to help in understanding magical realism and how it can affect literature.

E. The Result of the Previous Study

Previously, the researcher has found several studies on *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*.

1. Studies of *The Famished Road* has been done by Ikenna Kamalu in an article titled *Metaphor and the Rhetoric of Postcolonial Politics in Ben Okri's Fiction*. The article was published in 2008 by CONTEXT: Journal of Social & Cultural Studies. Kamalu not only analyzed one novel by Okri but three at a time, namely *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment*, and *Infinite Riches*. His research shows that Okri uses metaphors not only for an aesthetic but also for showing ideology and culture. The metaphorical technique that he uses allows the reader to know how politics, ideology are interconnected and shows the parallels of the three novels as postcolonial works. "Okri's literary style is essentially framed in metaphorical patterns that present new schemes,

categories and semantic domains that indicate the abiku-nation relationship.” (Kamalu, 2008)

The difference which distinguishes this research and Kamalu's research is the research that Kamalu does is research on postcolonial works, while this research is research on postmodernism works. Thus, he examines Okri's work from a postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial and postmodern works are different from each other. Therefore, it will affect the results of the study even though the work is the same. One needs to be underlined is this research examines *The Famished Road* from the use of magical realism as its narrative technique. Although both of these research are equally focused on the metaphor used.

2. The second study the researcher found is the article journal titled *Magic as Discourse Strategy in Ben Okri's The Famished Road* by Dr. Musa Idris Okpanachi and Dr. Muhammad Bello. It was published in 2015 by the International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education (IJMRME). This article examines *The Famished Road* within the framework of stylistic discourse which is used to investigate how the language can establish the theme of supernatural and social power semantic. In realization of how extraordinary this novel was, the observation shows that The novel serves a unique language and it serves as a vital instrument to establishing magical discourse (Okpanachi & Bello, 2015)

The difference which distinguishes this research and this article analyzed the novel in the lexical level analysis. Meanwhile, this research will be focused on the narrative technique, magical realism, which is leading to the use of metaphor.

3. The next study researcher has found is a thesis by Maria Ruth Noriega Sanchez titled *Magic Realism in Contemporary American Women's Fiction*. This thesis is proposed as a final assignment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Sheffield. Sanchez considered Magical Realism as men's writing and decided to write a study about it based on women's perspective. The aim is to illustrate

the importance of magical realism in American women's fiction in the late twentieth century. It intends to draw relevant comparative of magical realism and show various formal and thematic interactions between separate literary traditions. (Sanchez, 2001)

The researcher found similarities between Sanchez's study and this research. That is the researcher somewhat took an interest in women's writing, because one work in this study also woman's writing, *Aroma Karsa*. Though that is also several differences between these two studies. That is Sanchez focusing on various formal and thematic interactions meanwhile this study will be focusing on the narrative technique which is leading to self-identity.

4. The fourth study the researcher been found is a thesis that explores the importance of tolerating and facilitating the uncertainty in British magical realist fiction. The title is *Surviving Our Paradoxes: The Psychoanalysis and Literature of Uncertainty* by Michael Szollosy. It was submitted for the degree of Ph.D. Department of English Literature and Centre for the Psychotherapeutic Studies University of Sheffield. Szollosy offering some theoretical investigations which are arguing postmodernism work and psychoanalysis discourse based on Lacanian psychoanalysis (Szollosy, 2002)
5. The next studies the researcher have found is an article title *Prospects of Studying Magical Realism in Nigerian Literature* by Wadinga Wandama. It is published by the International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH) Bahir Dar-Ethiopia, Vol. 5(3). The paper itself reviews some of the important things in magical realism, especially in Nigerian literature. Wandama also exposes the importance of magical realism in literary studies nowadays (Wandama, 2016)
6. The sixth study is from Galuh Farah Rahma Yunita and Sugiarti. The title is *Kajian Mitos dalam Novel Aroma Karsa Karya Dewi Lestari Perspektif Ekologi Budaya* and published in *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, dan Budaya* Vol. 9 No. 2. The purpose of this study is to describe the myths in the novel related to the culture. This study using

structuralism by Claude Levi-Strauss which is to describes the littlest things in myth. The fact of those myths in the novel is described as a series of events, the character is shown, their lives, behaviors, and things which is part of the character itself. (Yunita & Sugiarti, 2019)

7. The seventh study is a study about the meaning of semic and symbolic code in *Aroma Karsa* based on Roland Barthes semiotic. The title is *Makna Kode Semik dan Simbolik (Semiotik Roland Barthes) Dalam Novel Aroma Karsa Karya Dee Lestari* by Rokhyanto. It is an article which is published by ALFABETA: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra dan Pembelajarannya, Vol.2 No.2.

In this study, the meaning of semic refers to things that have connotative relations. Meanwhile, the symbolic code refers to schizophrenia suffered by one of the characters in the novel which is considered as one of the deuteragonists. (Rokhyanto, 2019)

8. The next study the researcher have found is an undergraduate thesis from Muftia JB titled *PERAN PEREMPUAN TERHADAP ALAM DAN LINGKUNGAN DALAM NOVEL AROMA KARSA KARYA DEE LESTARI (KAJIAN EKOFEMINISME FRANCOIDE D'EAUBONNE)*. This research highlights the role of women in the novel *Aroma Karsa* using an ecofeminism study by Françoise d'Eaubonne. The result of this research shows the big role of three woman character in the novel and it holds a big key part in the novel as originators of the story (JB, 2019)
9. The researcher also found one study on the novel *Aroma Karsa*. Written by Annisa from Muhammadiyah University of Malang titled '*Representasi Mitologi Gunung Lawu dalam Novel Aroma Karsa karya Dee Lestari*'. The research was conducted to get an overview of the myths and culture found on Mount Lawu. She used the anthropology of literature as an approach. The results of her research show that the myths and culture on Mount Lawu make the community guard the area of Mount Lawu because of their association with other creatures (Annisa, 2018)

The difference between this research and Annisa's research is that she did not examine the magical realism used by Dee in *Aroma Karsa*'s narration. By examining the magical realism used, it will be easier to get an overview of the myths and culture as its background. Moreover, this study has a significant difference from the two previous studies, that is, this study compares two works originating from different cultures. Therefore, this research will uncover eastern and western cultures from the use of magical realism as a narrative technique.

10. The last study the researcher been found is from ZEYNEP İNANÇ with the title *THE FUNCTION OF MAGICAL REALISM IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S FICTION: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S THE PASSION, LAURA ESQUIVEL'S LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE AND ISABEL ALLENDE'S THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*. The research aims to discuss the function of magical realism as an emancipatory literary mode worldwide to make the voices of the oppressed heard regarding the novels of three contemporary women writers from different geographies, *The Passion* by the British Jeanette Winterson, *Like Water for Chocolate* by the Mexican Laura Esquivel and *The House of the Spirits* by the Chilean Isabel Allende. The thesis claims that although these writers focus on different problems existing in their societies, through magical realism they unite to struggle against patriarchal totalizing discourse, to refute dominant notions of reality, and to be the voice of the repressed. (İNANÇ, 2020)

By looking at these previous studies, the researcher can see that each study has provided an overview of the novel *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa*, or even the magical realism itself and represents what it be, even though the methods and approaches used are different from each other. Therefore, the researcher is interested in making a comparative study on how *The Famished Road* and *Aroma Karsa* stand as metatext and act as representations of themselves and their culture.