

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Literature can be regarded as the chief of art whether it is transmitted through spoken or written words. Literature contains the record of the people's values, thoughts, problems and conflicts, or in short, their whole life. Everything that happens in people's life, especially in a certain period, can be seen through literature. Lewis states, "literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become." Those lines show the reflection of life in literature (Shipley, 1962).

Danzigen and Johnson (1961) in *Introduction to Literary Criticism* state that literature is an imitation of varied experiences of living people. However, based on their opinion, the imitation of life has been the writer's reinterpretation and recreation of life. The purpose is to narrow the sense of life which is going to imitate.

As a work of literature, a novel is also an imitation of life. It contains many aspects of life in which the novel's writers have interpreted many aspects of life as a fiction narration. According to Graham Little (1981: 104-7), a novel has a great range. There are many kinds of genres novels which

characteristics are different to one another. The genres are self-fulfillment, the social criticism, the satire, the history, the romance, the adventure, the thriller-detective and mystery novel. However, the modern novel, especially, is more expressive and representative in reflecting human life.

*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane is one of the modern novels presenting naturalism. Naturalism is a term referring to a mode of representation that is detailed, detached, and objective. When applied to literature, however, naturalism refers to a literary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in America, England, and France that produced a type of “realistic” fiction (Ray, 2003). Naturalism is a literary movement taking place from 1865 to 1900s that used detailed Realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character. It is the concept that grew in the late of nineteenth-century in America after Realism. This concept offers something new and different from the others although some critics say naturalism is the continuation of realism. The term naturalism describes a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. In naturalism, characters can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings.

The novel’s first appearance was in 1893, the time of the beginning of naturalism. There was no publisher willing to publish Crane’s book. It is all because Crane’s work was so unfamiliar at that time. It perfectly reproduced

the ostensibly vulgar dialect of the persons portrayed. It was claimed as the first dark flower of American naturalism. The term 'dark' here can be an important clue for the readers about the controversial issues in this novel. Crane portrays the abject poverty exactly as it was. His work reveals the gloomy reality of life including poverty, sex, and prostitution that led to a harsh criticism for being so abrupt and outspoken in his writing. The world appears indifferent to its human inhabitants because Crane describes and exposes social evils revealing how people are helpless victims caught up in forces beyond their control with a dramatization of the loss of individuality culminating into a violent death.

“Maggie, *A Girl of the Street* was acclaimed as the first dark flower of American naturalism, a novel which emphasizes the oppressiveness of the slum environment and focuses on the basic drives of hunger, sex, and fears, yet was undoubtedly meant by Crane as testament to those ideals of magnanimous human conduct that in the bowery environment, and in society as a whole, are defined by their absence or impotence.” (Bassan, 1967: 2)

In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Stephen Crane depicts or describes the life in a slum area with its real condition in order to give a transparent depiction about the situation in the slum area. It conveys the poor living conditions of the lower classes. For the naturalist, it is the duty of the writer to present reality to the readers without illusion. It means that the writers in naturalistic genre offer a scientific and detached view of the reality rather than to adorn or mislead or simply please the reader. In this novel, every single thing is told in details. Crane describes the bad and cruel life in the slum area.

He tells it as close as possible to the reality. The story is told differently from the other novels when *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was published. This novel forces the readers to look at the power of one's environment and how that power ultimately influences an individual. The readers are invited to know more about the hard life in a slum area through this novel.

The most interesting part in this novel that has received huge attention is naturalism. There is a claim that *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* belongs to a modern novel presenting naturalism, but in reality not everybody knows why this novel belongs to such genre. The problem is whether everybody knows what naturalism is. They can get the definition about naturalism; they can search it in the internet or read it from books. However, the information found does not show a clear link to the naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Many people including the researcher are still confused about the reason why this novel is categorized as naturalistic novel. Most of them know what naturalism is, but they do not know how it is connected to *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. In this case, the researcher feels that the information is still far from being satisfactory. There must be some aspects which make this novel to be a naturalistic novel. In other words, it is needed to explore the aspects of naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* to categorize it as a naturalistic novel.

Scholars classify Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* as a "blend of realism and naturalism" (Keenan, 1997). It is set in a bowery district of 19<sup>th</sup>

century Manhattan. It conveys the poor living conditions of the lower classes. “This novel serves as a vivid illustration of the urban 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Tindal, 2009: 780). Despite its realistic depiction, Crane’s novel cannot merely be categorized as a work of realism. In fact, the dominant techniques of characterization make Crane’s novel tends to be called as a naturalistic novel rather than a realistic one. Frank Norris says Realism is the literature of the normal and represented “the smaller details of everyday life, things that they are likely to happen between lunch and supper” (1956: 16-17), but naturalism abstracts the best from realism-detailed accuracy and philosophical depth.

Thus, in this research, the researcher tries to show the readers some aspects of naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Finally, in the conclusion the readers can see how far this novel can fulfill the requirements or the characteristics of the genre of naturalism itself.

## **B. Research Focus**

This research focuses on the aspects of naturalism which appear in the novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The researcher thinks that the most prominent thing in this novel is naturalism. It becomes very important because the system of writing in this novel is different. It applies objectivity and detachment of its study of human being (Campbell, 2003).

The researcher decides to take *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* as her primary source because this novel is the perfect example to give a clear

depiction or illustration about naturalistic novel. The system of writing in this novel offers something new and different from the others; it gives an authentic depiction of the setting and the characters.

“*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was acclaimed as the first dark flower of American naturalism, a novel which emphasizes the oppressiveness of the slum environment and focuses on the basic drives of hunger, sex, and fear...” (Bassan, 1967: 2). It ensures the researcher of taking this novel as her research object. This novel can be the best example to show the readers about the system of naturalism.

In analyzing this novel, the researcher uses structuralism and genre theory to be her basic guidance. Structuralism is the idea of system. It is a matter of unity. There are some elements in a novel which cannot stand alone. In other words, they influence each other. An element needs the other elements to produce a whole story. That is the reason why the researcher decides to use structuralism to be her guidance. The researcher wants to show the readers that there are some aspects in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* which make this novel categorized as a naturalistic novel. Naturalism has some aspects and they relate each other. The analysis of this research focuses on two cases. The first case is showing to the readers about some aspects of naturalism that make this novel belongs to a naturalistic novel. The second one is giving more information about how far this novel can fulfill the requirements of the naturalistic genre.

### C. Research Objectives

1. To find some aspects of naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.
2. To prove and to give information to the readers about how far this novel fulfills the requirements of the naturalistic genre.

### D. Research Significance

1. Academically
  - a. Hopefully this thesis can give a deeper insight about the study of naturalism, especially the aspects of naturalism toward the work of literature itself.
  - b. It is hoped that the study will be a further reference and give better understanding on the use and the application of structuralism in analyzing a literary work.
  - c. It is also hoped that a deeper and broader understanding of naturalistic genre will be facilitated by this research study.
2. Practically
  - a. The analysis of the aspects of naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* can be able to motivate the readers in general to understand the various range of novels.
  - b. The analysis of the aspects of naturalism in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* can become the additional information for the readers who want to explore more about naturalism which appear in the novel.