

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature has become an important part of human life. Henry Van Dyke (1911) defines literature as those writing that interprets the meanings of nature and life, using words that have charm and power, are influenced by the personality of the author, and are served in artistic forms of permanent interest. In this sense, it appears appropriate to use the term "literature" in relation to literary art, or imaginative literature. There are certain issues with using the term in this way, but in English, alternatives like "fiction" or "poetry" are either already taken by specific definitions or, like "imaginative literature" or *belles-lettres*, are awkward and deceptive (Wellek and Warren, 1956). Literature, in general, is related to written texts, but it can also refer to writings that are intended for aesthetic and artistic purposes.

Charles Jenner (1770) asserted that it is okay to treat novels simply as pleasing and innocent amusements in this life full of cares and anxieties. Literature allows us to experience various excitement and discover new knowledge we might not even know existed before. Not only as entertainment, but it can also serve as a medium to read an author's thoughts and opinions on something after getting influenced by his life background like the place he was born in, the kind of world he sees, or the hidden emotions he kept. Even, one theory holds that literature "reflects" society, while the opposite is purportedly true—that literature "shapes" or "influences" society. A third perspective, sometimes referred to as the "social-control" idea, holds that literature has social purposes that help to uphold and stabilize the social order, if not to justify and sanctify it (Albrecht, 1954).

In modern times, it is safe to say that one of the most popular literary forms is a novel. Kennedy and Gloria (1995:272) define a novel as a book-length prose fiction in which the author attempts to give the impression that we are experiencing real life while reading. To put it simply, a novel is a form

of literary work that is written in a range of lengths and is aimed to make the reader imagine the story as if it is happening in real life. The primary criterion of the novel is that it is true to the individual experience - an individual experience that is always unique and therefore new (Watt, 2011).

The elements of novels include character, narrative point of view, dialogue, plot, and setting. There are plenty of genres we can find in novels, unlimited from the mundanity of life, heart-breaking love stories, and thrilling murder mysteries to the most bizarre adventures humans could think of and the invention of the most advanced technology to ever exist. Interestingly, no matter what the story is about, it would always have something the reader could learn, however subtle it is. For example, the culture and customs of the society. It was because the novel is a logical literary vehicle of culture which has set an unprecedented value on its originality (Watt, 2011).

As a part of society, we live with cultures every day. It influences our life to even the smallest part of ourselves. Culture defines who we are because we belong to that specific group. A literary work can be considered as a mirror of the author's background; it reflects societal life and other important aspects of the community such as its social and cultural references. It can also contain social context that directly relates to the culture itself, whether it is the tradition, custom, genre, symbol, myth, and many more. Hence, cultural representation in novels is important not only because it can show the community the author wished to, but also to spread the feeling of pride and connection among the members of the aforementioned community. There is also an argument that a writer of fiction should "represent" his characters as "conforming to the customs and beliefs of" the writer's own century (Chapelain, 1647).

In the world, there are countless cultures and societies existed. Interestingly, according to Koentjaraningrat (1990: 187), culture is universal; its aspects can always be found in all cultures around the world. He stated that culture is made by seven different elements, those are: (1) language, beautifully spoken utterances that work as the main property of human beings' attempt to continue and adapt their culture, (2) system of knowledge

and education, the skill of understanding nature and the tools they use, including ecology, time, space, and numeric, (3) system of kinship or social organization, the sense of belonging to society including heredity, nationality, groupings, and such, (4) system of tools and technology, the usage of skills and tools that support their overall life, like food, beverages, houses, and weapons, (5) system of work, activities done to earn such as hunt and gather, harvest, farm, fishery, and other economical transaction, (6) system of religion, the belief that is too Mighty to be understood by human, and (7) art, human's desire for aesthetical pleasures to satisfy their heart.

Hence, as a part of one society, it was necessary for one to learn about other cultures in order to understand the underlying message and values that differ significantly. Something that cultures A found interesting, might be seen as puzzling by Culture B, while Culture C was not used to it and Culture D has something similar in theirs, etc. Learning all these differences also helps someone to look at the world in a wider and more varied manner, to be empathetic, and develop a deep sense of tolerance that enables the world to establish peace and safety. Someone would benefit many things from learning about another culture than what they are accustomed to; they could have a better view of their life, unlocking all the potentials and opportunities that they might not know even existed before. Learning another culture also gives someone a chance to look back at their culture and reflect deeply; thus, appreciating them more can grow into the want to conserve their own culture.

The object of this research is the magical-realism novel *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* by Mizuki Tsujimura, first published in 2017 by Poplar Publishing. Originally written in Japanese, it is then translated into English by Philip Gabriel, a renowned Japanologist. The novel is very well received, placed first in Kadokawa's *Da Vinci* magazine "Book of the Year" list in 2017, and won the Japan Booksellers' Award in 2018. The novel tells a story about seven junior high school students who avoided school because of various reasons. Kokoro Anzai, the protagonist, met another six teenagers. There are two girls among them, Aki, and Fuka. While the rest are boys with the names of Rion, Masamune, Subaru, and Ureshino. They were gathered in

a Castle inside the mirror by a young lady with a wolf mask named Wolf Queen; They are tasked to search for a key hidden somewhere in the castle, and whoever finds it will have a wish granted. They were given some time to do so: until the next 30th of March. However, once a wish is granted, their memory of the castle, and each other, would also disappear completely.

Even though its genre is fantasy, the novel shows much cultural behaviour that was shown in the daily life of the characters. The novel was aimed to portray how properly cultured Japanese people, especially young adults, are expected to act. They were hoped to hold the cultural life values close to their hearts and behave accordingly. This is reflected in the main character of the story, who despite her imperfections and lacks, still does her best to follow the cultural life values like what she saw from others around her. In doing so, she was able to solve all her problems and changed her life for the better. The supporting characters also acted well as role models for her, showing that one's personality and behavior are closely influenced by the people closest to them. Traditional items and objects are sometimes being used in their daily life, too, showing that Japanese traditional culture was indeed still prominent even in the modern days.

There is a theoretical gap, meaning that this research would apply a certain theory to a certain research issue to generate new insight. The latest research about cultural representation is done by Krisna Arif (2021) who examined the representation of cultural behavior in the novel *Persiden* by Wisran Hadi. There is also Arifah Hilyati (2009), who examines the representation of Japanese Geisha in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*. In addition, there is not much culture representation research yet so it is important to study this topic more so that it is not under-researched. The topic is also particularly important to be understood since it has unlimited potential for subtopics that can be studied better in the future. This research would be focused on Japanese culture in a novel that has not been done before, with an emphasis on life values and items. For the specific *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* novel, however, not much research has existed yet since it is considerably a newly translated novel.

1.2 Research Question

How is Japanese culture in the terms of way of life and daily items portrayed in the novel *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

To find out about cultural descriptions and how Japanese culture is being portrayed in the novel *Lonely Castle in the Mirror*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

a. Theoretical

This research can be used as a reference for someone wishing to research literary criticism and culture studies, especially cultural portrayal in novels.

b. Practical

In addition, there are several practical significance the researcher hopes can be obtained by teachers, students, as well as general readers. Firstly, teachers can use the novel *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* as lecturing material for book reports, cross-cultural understanding, prose, and reading. Next, students, especially English Literature students can deepen their literary appreciation and learn about cultural traditions as well as broaden their vocabulary and improve their knowledge. Lastly, general readers can learn to like literary works and increase their literacy interest.