

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

Historical fiction as a genre has a fluctuating state of public acceptance and critical reputation for over the last century. Historical genre has remained to be characterized mainly by literary realism, genuineness, and historical accuracy. However, as the genre is broad and flexible, it grew alongside the other genres that contrast to its realism (Sheffer, 2020).

In the same manner, fantasy literature has received more recognition in critical studies and respect in the literary world as a whole in recent years. In spite of this matter, there is still a lack of recognition of the various kinds of modern fantasy novels and how the genre has developed over the past century and a half (Ordway, 2001). With many fictional novel genres regarded as something groundbreaking for their detailed storylines and psychologically fascinating characters, not much emphasis has been placed on how fantasy as a fictional genre may be in the same regards as well (Smit, 2020).

Previous study was conducted by Ryzhchenko (2018), dealing with the problem in defining and classifying the genre of fantasy. This study was able to highlight typical features of the fantasy genre, such as the mythological basis, adventure plots, the division of heroes into those who have superpowers and those who do not, the presence of magical items, and global opposition to evil. This study classified the genre into two sub-categories, which are; (1) fantasy works

that lean toward mythological and folklore bases, and (2) fantasy works that lean toward historical bases. The result of this study supported the current research for the sub-categories of fantasy works that lean towards historical bases.

Fantasy is a rather broad genre, including a wide range of works. There are numerous sub-genres of fantasy fiction, one of which is historical fantasy. Historical fantasy is similar to historical fiction. It is a cross between two seemingly opposing genres: fantasy, which explicitly rejects accepted reality, and historical fiction, which is based on realism and historically accurate events (Schanoes, 2012). Historical fantasy is a hybrid genre of the historical accounts and fiction. However, there is unevenness in how it is reviewed or considered, where checking on the historical accuracy was considered a priority and little attention paid to the purpose of the fictional elements that the author has chosen to include (Addey, 2021). Saldivar (2011) stated that historical fantasy can be used as a way of describing 'something more' in connecting fantasy, history, and the imaginary in the mode of speculative reality in order to remain true to the ideal faith of cultural literatures to social justice.

Kosgei (2020) conducted research of "Historical Sources and the Writing of Fiction: An Analysis of Valerie Cuthbert's *The Great Siege of Fort Jesus*", focusing on the relationship between its historical sources and its bias and omissions. This research concludes that the history Cuthbert relies on is notably one-sided, which potentially led to misrepresentation with possible harmful political consequences. This previous research supports the formulation of this current study with the description of the representation of the past in the novel

from its historical sources, including its bias and omissions by using a different approach.

The current research wants to conduct an analysis of how the novel represents the past as a historical fantasy novel from its historical sources. *The Poppy War* novel written by R. F. Kuang is one of the examples of the historical fantasy genre. *The Poppy War* novel drew inspiration and placed its plot and politics from mid-20th-century China and its aesthetic from Song Dynasty China, mirroring heavily on the Second Sino-Japanese War during the World War II (Pickens, 2018). *The Poppy War* was a multiple award winner and nominee that are 2018 Nebula Award, 2019 Compton Crook Award and Crawford Award. Several publications and organizations, including *The Washington Post*, *Time*, *The Guardian*, *Paste*, *Vulture Bustle*, and *The Verge* named the novel as one of the best books of the year in 2018. The researcher considers this novel fitted to be the data of the research as the popularity of this novel might raise readers' interest in the historical fantasy genre.

B. The Problem of the Study

The researcher formulates the problem of the study as follows:

1. How does *The Poppy War* novel represent the past as a historical fantasy novel?
2. How does the authenticity of the historical representation in *The Poppy War* novel?

C. The Objectives of the Study

The researcher formulates the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To describe how *The Poppy War* novel represents the past as a historical fantasy novel.
2. To explain the authenticity of the historical representation in *The Poppy War* novel.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study will explore how *The Poppy War* novel represents the past as a historical fantasy novel by using the theory as suggested by McArthur (2008) and the authenticity of the historical representation in *The Poppy War* novel by using the theory as proposed by Groce and Groce (2005). This study will not describe the intrinsic elements of the novel such as character and characterization, plot, theme, settings, etc., and neither the other sub-genre of fantasy such as classical fantasy, dark fantasy, science fantasy, etc. It will only focus on the elements of the story that represents the history.

E. The Significance of the Study

1. Theoretically

Theoretically, the significance of this study is to contribute in giving general knowledge about historical fantasy and to participate in critical studies and recognition of how the genre has developed in literary world.

2. Practically

a. For readers

This research is expected to introduce readers to the historical fantasy genre and to help readers to understand about how a literary work represents the past as a historical fantasy novel.

b. For other researchers

This research is expected to be a reference for other researchers in conducting research on historical fantasy studies.

