

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter discusses the main ideas of conducting this research. The subject is about magical realism as a result of Haitian beliefs expressed in the young adult novel depicted on *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi. This chapter consists of background of study, research problem, objectives of the study, and scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of the study

Humans live with their own belief. Patricia S. Churchland and Paul M. Churchland on Krueger F and Grafman J's book (2013) found that beliefs are states of the mind that can be true or false of the world, and whose content is specified by a proposition, such as the belief that the moon is a sphere or that ravens are black (p. 6). In other words, belief is something you believe or accept as truth. Human beings believe something based on facts, opinions or assumptions.

All people, whether primitive or civilized, have shared a particular philosophy that is central to their culture. People of all ages have ascribed to the idea that if they believe that something will happen, it will take place. It is the power of belief that causes things to happen in our lives. Beliefs as a component

of religiosity often reflect the degree to which people believe in supernatural explanations – such as creation myths, gods and spirits, beliefs about prophesy, supernatural rewards and punishments, and the accuracy or divine authority of sacred texts. Beliefs that adhere strictly to particular interpretations of sacred texts and that claim exclusive understandings of supernatural explanations are indicative of fundamentalist religiosity.

Religious beliefs serve a social function in human groups, providing a shared identity of where people came from and where they are likely going after death. Religious beliefs are beliefs in the reality of the mythological, supernatural, or spiritual aspects of a religion. Religious beliefs explain where the people fit in relation to the universe and how they should behave while here on Earth. Religious beliefs, which originate from ideas that are exclusive to religion, often relate to the existence, characteristics and worship of deity or deities, divine intervention in the universe and human life for values and practices centered on the teachings of spiritual leaders or groups. Because of variations in religious beliefs across and within traditions, most examinations of beliefs focus on common indicators, such as the belief in gods, self-perceptions as being a religious person, or the importance of religion in people's lives.

Religion is one of the concepts or guideline to live properly and often serves as a way to provide an explanation for unnatural events. By having religion, humans usually do healing power and spiritual guidance in order to motivate them to live their life based on the concept of what religion they profess,

although sometimes it is not proven in science. Geertz 1973's study that religion attempts to interpret the explicable dreams, suffering, death, human treachery, natural disasters, and so on. It helps adjust peoples' understanding of the way things are to the way we would like things to be (Geertz, 1973, p. 325). In other words, religion is a way to help human to understand what are their purpose in life, and the only one answer, is would be God.

In a matter of fact, a phenomena in which African belief is still alive and widespread in Latin America and the Caribbean is the existence of voodoo practices to this day. Voodoo is consider as a religious beliefs. It is the worship of the sun, the water and other natural forces, but the symbolism is no better understood than that of other religions and consequently is taken too literally (Hurstons, 1990, p. 113).

Vodou is a monotheistic religion. Followers of Vodou -- known as Vodouisants -- believe in a single, supreme godhead that can be equated with the Catholic God. This deity is known as Bondye, "the good god". Vodouisants also accept the existence of lesser beings, which they call loa or lwa. These are more intimately involved in day-to-day life than Bondye, who is a remote figure. The lwa are divided into three families: Rada, Petro, and Ghede.

The relationship between humans and lwa is a reciprocal one. Believers provide food and other items that appeal to the lwa in exchange for their assistance. The lwa are frequently invited to possess a believer during ritual so the community can directly interact with them.

This study will focus on magical realism term which will use to analyze the source of data. Voodoo is also one example of magical realism, which provides the cultural identity who contributed their own belief of existence the *lwa* or God. Magical realism is one of the most common term which are often used in literary works such as fiction and literature with magic or supernatural elements but is presented in a realistic world. Magical realism frameworks are made realistically, but there are contrasting elements such as supernatural, dreams, and myths. Magical realism is very different from fantasy or sci-fi seen from both settings are in a normal and modern world with authentic descriptions of humans, society, and conflict.

This study attempts to analyze the magical realism of African religions which known as voodoo practice implied in the novel entitled “American Street” by Ibi Zoboi, whom an immigrant from Haiti which tells about exploration of teen girl in America with magical realism and voodoo religion culture. As the concern in this study, both power and magic of voodoo will discuss in detail.

Therefore, *American Street* written by Ibi Zoboi is a good example of knowing the influence of voodoo as a reflection of African religion in the survival of the present. As in the fiction of Ibi Zoboi which tells Fabiola, a teenager of Haitian descent, move to Detroit and still being a Haitian girl with her Haitian heritage. Clearly, Zoboi wrote it with combining those two theories, namely postmodernism and magical realism. For reason, Zoboi has told myths, which is voodoo that is happening at the present time.

In Zoboï's fiction, there are several chapters which tell about human in religious beliefs aspects, besides, Zoboï added Haitian tradition in regards of voodoo practice which seems is nonsense by other. The novel *American Street* portrayed the spirit of Papa Legba's song and affect the plot of the story. The songs portrayed in a lyrics form as it sings to reveal the point of the resolution of the story.

The novel portrayed the magical power of voodoo in a narrative form as Zoboï tried to engage the world of voodoo and youth religious beliefs. Once, Fabiola the main character met Bad Leg who at all times sing nonsense lyric's song which then she believes that Bad Leg is Papa Legba, the deiti of crossroad as he give her a way to meet with her *manman*, Creole's word mean mother. As Fabiola laid her beliefs on Papa Legba, the story is engaged the relating time and the different world of both. Papa Legba known as the deity of voodoo which may exist centuries ago, also Fabiola is only a high school girl who lived in nowadays lifetime. It is weird enough, looking other teenagers enjoying the modern lifestyle but Fabiola still believes on voodoo.

At the end of the book, Zoboï added that the story in the novel *American Street* was drawn from her own memory of living on the sidelines of culture, the experiences she got in high school, and many tragic stories about the violence and trauma experienced by Haitian girl.

1.2 Research problem

Based on the phenomena above, several things are needed to know from this novel, namely:

1. How does the magical realism of Papa Legba presented in Ibi Zoboi's American Street?
2. How does the magical realism of Fabiola presented in Ibi Zoboi's American Street?

1.3 Objectives of the study

Conducting the research, the researcher formulates the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To explain the portrayal of magical realism of Papa Legba works in the novel.
2. To explain the portrayal of magical of Fabiola works in the novel.

1.4 Significance of the study

1. Theoretically

The results of the research can provide information in revealing magical realism by Maggie Ann Bowers. Furthermore, this study expected to strengthen

Maggie Ann Bowers's theoretical through the novel. Also, it can be an additional information for readers about magical realism.

2 Practically

This study could be a picture of literary works with magical realism genre. Also, some magical realism authors put the message into the story. Thus, the reader should be able to take the positives value of the message

1.5 Scope and Limitation

Regarding this topic as literature, this study also includes intrinsic elements, such as themes, points of view, settings, characters and plots as study material. The scope of this study is magical realism. The limitations are mythology and cultural beliefs in which Ibi Zoboi's *American Street* includes both