

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides five parts of the introduction. They are the background of the study, statement of the research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In literary studies, the phenomena of Gothic elements is often linked to emotional experiences that arise from the tension between beauty and horror, Botting (1996, p. 3). The Gothic element highlights a gloomy atmosphere, mystery, and a sense of isolation that create both fear and deep fascination. In this context, Gothic works often show how darkness and mystery can attract as much as they frighten, revealing the complex emotions hidden within human nature. According to Cixous (2011, pp. 15-18), humans are social beings who sometimes feel something unfamiliar in what they know well. Everyday situations that seem ordinary can suddenly appear disturbing and mysterious. Walking down an empty street at dusk, entering an abandoned house, or looking at an old family photo that seems to come alive, such moments evoke simultaneous fear and fascination, tinged with nostalgia. These sensations disturb the normality of everyday life yet simultaneously attract and captivate because they awaken the imagination. Such experiences are often described as the uncanny, when reality appears to crack open and reveal something beyond what can be rationally explained by the human mind. This uncanny phenomenon is also reflected in literature, where the nature of doubtfulness in a text is approached by the reader with a sense of disbelief and fascination. According to Cixous (2011, p. 19) when readers interpret a text, ambiguous elements create doubt because the text always remains somewhat ahead of full understanding. Thus, the uncanny not only haunts everyday life but also enriches the reading experience by creating a tension between scepticism and imagination that leaves a lasting impression.

In the modern era, literature provides a vast space for readers to experience the atmosphere and passage of time imagined by the author. Through language and creativity, the setting, characters, and emotions within a story come to life, allowing

readers to encounter experiences beyond their everyday reality. According to Kamil (2024), themes such as death, dread, fear, and anxiety are prevalent in Gothic literature, which aims to evoke a sense of otherworldly mystery and terror through dramatic and unsettling narratives. In this way, literature functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for exploring complex emotional and psychological experiences. This creative power can be found across different genres, including works that address scientific ideas as well as Gothic tales filled with mystery and tension.

Among various literary forms, Gothic fiction stands out for its ability to evoke profound emotional and imaginative responses. Gothic elements such as old, decaying castles, surrounding darkness, unresolved mysteries, and supernatural aspects (like invisible creatures or magical forces) play an important role in creating a frightening atmosphere. They reflect the deepest human fears, such as the fear of death, loneliness, and the loss of control over reason or sanity. For example, an old castle often symbolizes a buried past and hidden trauma, which psychologically reveals the reader's inner conflict. The elements of darkness and mystery not only create tension but also serve as a critique of social norms, such as patriarchy or class oppression, by showing how unseen forces can disturb the stability of society. As Smith (2013, p. 4) observes, Gothic literature and art do not merely reflect reality but intensify it by highlighting deep emotions, fear, terror, and anxiety within mysterious and often uncanny environments that engage readers' inner imaginative worlds. Similarly, Wellek & Warren (2024, pp. 28–30) emphasize that literature acts as a bridge between reality and imagination, transforming human experiences into artistic and imaginative expressions. In line with this, Publishing (2011, p. 66) explains that imaginative fiction often relies on the strangeness of settings such as other worlds or different times and eccentric characters to create unique and captivating narratives. Through dark settings, symbolic depth, and emotional complexity, Gothic fiction blurs the boundaries between fear and fascination, reality and imagination. Thus, Gothic fiction can be understood as one of the creative pathways of literature that presents experiences distinct from everyday reality.

Based on this imaginative and emotional background, Gothic fiction shows its strength in exploring the thin line between logic and the supernatural. As this genre often explores the tension between rational understanding and the inexplicable, it naturally invites readers to question where the boundary lies between the real and the unreal. In connection with this, Todorov, p. (1975, p. 41) introduce the fantastic and categorizes the fantastic into two possible responses: the uncanny and the marvelous. The uncanny refers to events that initially seem supernatural but are later explained through rational or natural causes, often evoking unease or strangeness. Uncanny is referring to an emotive experience that causes emotions of uneasiness, strangeness, or eeriness, even if it is unrelated to beliefs in supernatural beings (Royle, 2003, p. 1). In contrast, the marvelous embraces occurrences that remain beyond logical explanation and are accepted as genuinely supernatural. Something extraordinary and unprecedented, yet to come in the future (Todorov, 1975, p. 42). Gothic fiction usually combines strange mental experiences with supernatural events. This mix makes readers feel unsure about what is real, which increases the tension and builds the dark, mysterious feeling typical of Gothic stories. Gothic literature, therefore, becomes a narrative space where the uncanny and the marvelous come together, allowing readers to experience the tension between logical explanation and strange or unexplained events that shape the genre. This theoretical perspective also opens the way to connect classical Gothic concepts with their transformation in modern and popular culture.

The uncanny and the marvelous are no longer confined to traditional Gothic literature but continue to influence modern storytelling and cultural forms. Today, the same conflict between the real and the supernatural that defined early Gothic narratives has been transformed within contemporary media and popular culture. In recent years, popular culture has increasingly been characterized by a growing fascination with narratives that contain darkness, mystery, and the uncanny. Brown (2004, p. 2) stated many individuals recall experiences in which reality seemed to shift into something not entirely rationally acceptable. The sensation of being in an unfamiliar place that somehow feels familiar, perceiving objects that seem alive, or

sensing an invisible presence such as a ghost often leaves a lasting impression. These experiences are not confined to myths or folklore but also appear in contemporary popular culture. Horror films, supernatural television series, and darkly atmospheric novels provide spaces for projecting these strange yet captivating human experiences. Literature, therefore, becomes a medium to reflect and even shape ideology through the delivery of ideas in written form (Bertens, 2001, p. 22).

One work that intensely represents this phenomenon is Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. The novel blends fictional narrative with vintage photographs that generate a sense of strangeness and authenticity at once. For many readers, engaging in this novel feels ambiguous, both unsettling and captivating, uncanny yet familiar. This distinctiveness sets it apart from conventional fantasy novels, as it not only provides entertainment but also invites readers to reflect on the blurred boundaries between reality, imagination, and the strange.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children has been chosen as the source of data of this research because of its uniqueness in terms of narrative, presentation, and reception among readers. First, the novel combines fantasy with the historical setting of World War II, telling the story of Jacob Portman who discovers an orphanage for extraordinary children under the protection of Miss Peregrine. The blending of history, fantasy, and authentic vintage photographs distinguishes the novel from most young adult fantasy works. Second, the novel has attracted wide attention since its publication, becoming a New York Times Best Seller in April 2012 and selling more than two million copies worldwide within a few years of release. Reader ratings on literary platforms such as Goodreads and Amazon also demonstrate consistently high appreciation, signaling its positive reception and lasting appeal. Third, the novel raises universal themes such as identity, courage, loss, and self-acceptance that enrich its symbolic depth and make it relevant for literary analysis. Moreover, Ransom Riggs himself is a well-known author and filmmaker, recognized for works that often embrace fantasy, and this novel, as one of his most popular creations, has received significant acclaim. With its

combination of narrative uniqueness, symbolic strength, and commercial success, Riggs' work is an appropriate and compelling object of study.

This complexity makes Riggs' work particularly compelling to study. Its uniqueness lies in the way it presents Gothic elements interconnected with the presence of both the uncanny and the marvelous, creating ambiguity that cannot be effectively measured through quantitative methods. Because this ambiguity involves personal interpretation, emotional experience, and reader imagination, qualitative research is essential to uncover and interpret the deeper meanings within the text.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study can be enriched by two frameworks. The first is Robert Harris's concept of Gothic elements, which identifies common features in Gothic novels such as dark settings, unusual characters, and emotional conflicts that evoke both fear and wonder. The second is Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic, which differentiates between *the uncanny* (events that are strange yet explainable), the marvelous (events that are entirely supernatural). These frameworks allow the analysis to go beyond identifying Gothic conventions, toward examining how the uncanny and the marvelous operate in shaping the unique reading experience offered by Riggs' novel.

Previous studies also demonstrate the relevance of Gothic analysis across different contexts. First, an article entitled *Between Reality and Fantasy: Home in Ransom Riggs's Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Hawk Chang (Chang, 2022) examined *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* from the perspective of home and space, investigating how the novel negotiates the boundary between reality and fantasy. Second, an article entitled *Exploration of Gothic Elements in Allen Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher* by Xiaoli Zhang (Zhang, 2022) analyzed Gothic elements in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, emphasizing atmosphere and symbolism as tools of psychological horror. Third, an article entitled *The Gothic Novel: Exploring the Dark Side of the Human Psyche* by P. Prasantham (Prasantham, 2024) discussed the Gothic novel as a reflection of the human psyche's dark side, illustrating how the genre delves into

internal conflicts and hidden fears. Fourth, an article entitled *Unveiling the Uncanny: A Study of Gothic Elements in Jinnistan by Ayesha Muzaffar* by Mah e Kamil (E Kamil, 2024) investigated the uncanny in Ayesha Muzaffar's *Jinnistan*, underscoring the central role of strangeness and mystery in Gothic traditions. Fifth, an article entitled *Gothic Elements in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables* by D. Gayathri (Gayathri, 2024) investigates the Gothic features in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), aiming to reveal how Hawthorne combines Gothic conventions with social and moral critique

While these studies enrich the discussion of Gothic literature, there remains a research gap in connecting Gothic elements with the interplay of the uncanny and the marvelous within Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. From the previous studies, it can be observed that scholars have examined Gothic elements in literature and film, as well as themes such as home, symbolism, or the uncanny in various works. However, there is still a gap since no previous research specifically investigates the intersection between Gothic conventions and Todorov's concept of the fantastic particularly the uncanny and the marvelous in Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by combining the Gothic characteristics proposed by Robert Harris's with Todorov's theory of the fantastic. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on how Gothic elements not only structure the narrative but also interact with the uncanny and the marvelous, thereby shaping a distinctive reading experience that reflects the continuing relevance of Gothic literature in the 21st century.

Based on this background, this approach provides a fresh contribution to Gothic studies, showing how a contemporary young adult novel revitalizes classical Gothic traditions. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting research on the novel using gothic element analysis and the fantastic analysis.

“Gothic Elements in Novel Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*.”

1.2 Research Questions

There are two questions in this thesis as limited discussion in Ransom Riggs's novel *Miss Peregrine Home's for Peculiar Children*. The following of the questions are:

1. What Gothic elements are found in Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*?
2. How are the gothic elements categorized based on the fantastic genre?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of this study are formulated as below:

1. To identify the Gothic elements in Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*.
2. To uncover how Gothic elements categorized based on the fantastic genre are represented in the novel.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The results of this study are expected to have a positive impact both theoretically and practically. First, this study is theoretically to be able to contribute to the development of literature and literary criticism by applying the Gothic characteristics proposed by and Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic, thereby enriching the understanding of how Gothic elements particularly those categorized as *uncanny* and *marvelous* are represented within the fantastic mode of the novel. Second, practically this study is expected to be a reference for students who will investigate in the field of literature, especially regarding the issue of gothic elements, the uncanny and marvelous in the same theory but different source of data. In addition, this study can arise information and knowledge related to the issue.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The researcher specifies that the scope of this study is applying the theory by Robbert Harris “Gothic Element in Novel” that discusses gothic element to examine the gothic atmosphere. Furthermore, the researcher uses the theory by Tzvetan Todorov “The Fantastic” to analyse the uncanny and marvelous in the novel. The limitations of this study are the main text of the novel *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* such the character’s utterances and the narration, which is related to gothic element, the uncanny and marvelous. and does not include sequels or film adaptations. The analysis only uses two theoretical frameworks, namely Gothic elements and the concepts of the uncanny and the marvelous, without involving other literary theories such as psychoanalysis, feminism, or postcolonialism.