

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of The Study

As a human, we are often confronted with problems that contradict our human nature. One of them is selfishness where every human being has potential to reach its peak. According to Stephanie Pappas (2017), the inherent of selfish toward human has been an age-old debate by the philosophers. As a discussion by Socrates and Glaucon, the existence of good behavior is only for self-interest: the right things are done because of the fear of being punished if they get caught. Based on an online article *Conflict of Interest: Are Human Inherently Selfish?*, Glaucon a philosopher says that even the fairest man in this world would instinctively act for himself and ignore if he harms others if only human actions are invisible (Pappas 2017). It means a person can be selfish depending on the conditions and things that happen.

Confirming to an online article entitled *Good, Neutral and Bad Selfishness* (2015) by John A. Johnson, there are three types of selfishness namely good, neutral, and bad. Good selfishness benefits both ourselves and other people. Neutral selfishness is taking care of our own without involving other people. Bad selfishness is a behavior that ultimately can convey the bad things for both the selfish person and the victim. A thesis by Rizki Fitriana entitled *Charlotte Usher's Egoism in Tonya Hurley's Ghost Girl: A New Criticism Study* (2019) discusses the effect of egoism on the destruction of self-image and relationships

with others. The selfishness is essentially having bad impacts if it is involving other people.

Selfishness is a synonym of egoism. Based on the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2000), selfishness is the condition or quality of being selfish; selfish disposition or behavior' regard for one's interest or happiness to the disregard of the well-being of others. Egoism means the ethical doctrine that morality has its foundations in self-interest; excessive preoccupation with one's well-being interests, usually accompanied by an inflated sense of self-importance. By the explanation about selfishness and egoism above, selfishness is the action while egoism is the concept. Selfishness tends to neglect other welfare.

Selfish is considered an immoral treatment marked by an action of a person who places his interests above everything. This type of person is categorized as a bad person in which a good person is prioritizing others. The nature of selfishness is an act based on a willingness to bring profit and happiness to oneself. It means happiness for ourselves is the priority. Without a sense of balance with others. Beside being considered immoral, selfishness can also damage our psychology. As mentioned in the article of the online magazine by Sonja Lyubomirsky *Happiness for a Lifetime* that helping others will reward you the lifetime happiness (2010). It means the selfishness will take one of the chances of being happy.

As one of human nature, selfishness cannot be separated from our everyday lives. We sometimes unconsciously prioritize ourselves and lay aside others' importance. For instance, we break through the queue when we are buying

ice cream because we are in a hurry. That simple example of selfishness would make satisfied but the other feel harmed. The selfish personality that happen in real life also has been reflected in several literary works. There are many literary works that contain the selfish character or theme. As humanity's foundation in cultures, beliefs, and traditions, literature emerges as the reflection of reality, a product of art, and a window to an ideology (Lorenzo 2000). The literature products such as poetry or prose provide insight, knowledge, and emotions towards the people who partake it entirely. The selfishness is reflected in a literary work by Stephen King in his *Pet Sematary* novel.

Stephen King is an American author of horror, supernatural fiction, and fantasy novels (T. King). He was born in Portland in 1947 with the real name Stephen Edwin King. He starts the career by writing a short story titled *The Glass Floor* then sells for *Startling Mystery Stories* in 1967. He writes 61 novels until today. One of them is the phenomenal *IT* novel which has been adapted into a movie. Either his literary works or himself has been nominated and win plentiful of awards. Stephen King manages to convey a fictional but realistic horror story. One piece of a quote from Stephen King, "It's probably wrong to believe there can be any limit to the horror which the human mind can experience" (S. King 1983) makes the writer want to explore more about the horror-theme literature that can bring the issue of human nature.

*Pet Sematary* is a famous literary work by Stephen King in the form of horror novel. The first publication was in 1983. The novel has still been republished in any language and kindle version (e-book). It was nominated for the

World Fantasy Award for Best Novel in 1986 and had been adapted into movies. This novel has the same concept as *The Monkey's Paw* by W.W. Jacobs that it is enduring a story about parents who wish their son to comeback to life (Winter 1983). Their sons come back from dead but in the zombie-like. The difference is *Pet Sematary* makes the father meets his son, unlike *The Monkey's Paw*. The interaction between the live one and the dead one is in the novel.

*Pet Sematary* tells the story of how a father, Louis Creed revives his son which brings disaster to his entire family and destructs himself. Starting with the killing of the Church – a family cat - by truck. Then, his second child, Gage was died from being hit by a truck front of the house. The father revives them by burying in the burial area that is controlled by the dark spirit called Pet Sematary. The corpse that has been revived is alive but it behaves strangely. However, the writer sees the irregularities in the character of Louis which become a major influence in the storyline of this novel. This study determines a 'bad selfishness' in Louis Creed's character. This type of selfishness is the worst one because it is detrimental to both parties. The main discussion of this study is how the selfishness of Louis Creed is depicted in the novel and its impact.

The previous studies that involve *Pet Sematary* have been conducted as the study of four series of King's horror novels. Aside from the horror fiction, in a study *Nightmares of Childhood: The Child and The Monster in Four Novels by Stephen King* by Sara Martin Alegre's (2001), it tells us that the relationship between children and parents in the four Stephen King novels (including *Pet Sematary*), is a constant criticism towards American lifestyle and shows that the

presence of children dominating is to examine the fault of adults (Alegre 2001, 106). *Pet Sematary* as a postmodern Gothic that takes ideas of Merry Shelley's *Frankenstein* is yet more sophisticated and reasonable (Nash 2007).

Those arguments from some studies show that *Pet Sematary* is mostly discussed by its theme of the parent-child relationship and zombie concepts which is the same as *Frankenstein*. However, the genre presented is not the same due to personal differences, culture, and perspective views. Therefore, this study carries the discussion *Pet Sematary* separately not related to *Frankenstein* and examine the main character's implicit selfishness that vaguely exists in the novel.

The theory used for this study is New Criticism. New Criticism is derived from formalism that is especially with regard to the structural objectives of certain texts. This criticism does not need the influences from outside of the text such as historical or the author's biography (Tyson 2015, 137). In the new criticism, the method offered is closed reading. The writer will look at the detail from the formal elements in a literary work. Formal elements are the former of literary work and they are related to how a literary work is written. In this study, the writer chose characterization, conflict, and irony as the formal elements of fiction. New Criticism is considered appropriate for analyzing the issues raised because of the freedom to process formal elements intrinsically. Therefore, this study will look more closely at the formal elements and the focus is mostly given to the characterization, conflict, and irony of *Pet Sematary*.

This study mainly analyzes the selfishness of Louis Creed as he confronted his family's death and its impact on himself and others. The writer

used New Criticism theory in which the formal elements of this novel will work together in elucidating the analysis by assigning which types of selfishness and its effect.

The reason why the writer chooses the selfishness as the main issue of this study is because this horror novel could deliver an idea of human nature. The previous studies on *Pet Sematary* only focus on the Gothic theme and compares it with another novel such as *Frankenstein*, *Monkey's Paw*, or the four series of Stephen King's horror novel.

### 1.2 Statement of The Problem

This study attempts to answer several questions. Following are some questions that will form the basis of the analysis of this study:

1. How is Louis Creed's selfishness depicted in *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King?
2. What are the impacts of selfishness in *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King?

### 1.3 Objective of The Study

This study's objective is taken from the problem statement that is:

1. To reveal the depiction of selfishness in the novel *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King.
2. To mention and explain the impact of the selfishness in the novel *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King.

#### 1.4 Significance of The Study

Theoretically, this study is supposed to be useful to add insight so that it is not focused only on the horror point brought by literary works. The writer places more emphasis on how selfishness of the main character affected the story.

Practically, this study can enhance the discourse about how to formulate the interpretation in literary works through formal elements of literary work such as characterization, conflict, and irony by using the New Criticism theory. This study will provide information on how to analyze a literary work using a New Critical approach. By analyzing its formal elements to find the grand idea or theme of the object that has never been found in the previous study. This study will evaluate the main data taken from formal element in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*.

For the field of science studies, it is used to add to the list of research in the UniversitasAirlangga repository where previously the *Pet Sematary* had never been discussed by the English Department of UniversitasAirlangga. Besides, interest in criticizing horror novels is also fairly low, therefore, this study can be considered useful for further research by English department students.

#### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1. Formal element: is the former of a literary work and related to how a literary work is written. It includes characterization, conflict, and irony.
2. New criticism: emphasizes explication, or "close reading," of "the work itself." It rejects old historicism's attention to biographical and sociological matters.

3. Selfishness: the immoral human behavior in which a person paying too much attention to his own wants, needs, and well-being. It also has three types: 1) good selfishness: benefit both parties; 2)neutral selfishness: looking after his own well-being and does not involve others; and 3)bad selfishness: bad for both the selfish person and the people victimized and exploited by the selfish person.