

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

War has been an essential and significant part of human's life. Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that war refers to an armed conflict, whether it was between governments, societies, or informal paramilitary groups. War has often been identified with violence and aggression. The violence and aggression that war has proposes many challenges for many people. The war itself has inspired many litterateurs to write about it. War literature has been written since the beginning of days, and it has remained relevant and significant today. As time developed, many war literature writers aimed their novels towards young adults, bringing the issue of war into coming of age novels. Coming of age novels try to make the main protagonist during their adolescence to go through changes and progress to acquire knowledge and achieve maturity which can be said as mental development, self-education or self-understanding and preparation for impending adulthood (Millard 2007, 7).

Published in 2015, *Girl at War* by Sara Novic, an American writer and deaf activist, is one of many war literatures that provoke many discussions. Having the words 'girl' and 'war' together in the title has been both thrilling and terrifying. The *Girl at War* is a first-person point-of-view novel. Ana Juric narrated the novel as ten years old and twenty years old. The novel takes a fresh

view of war. Although the novel directly tells the reader of the war events, the novel mostly tells the reader about Ana Juric's journey of growing up as a survivor of the war. The novel also strays from the usual protagonist of war literature that is a soldier and uses a civilian girl instead. The different approach of telling the story of war has landed *Girl at War* many awards. The *Girl at War* became a finalist of Goodreads Choice Awards and LA Times Book Prize, American Library Association's Alex Award, and longlisted on the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize, the International Dublin Literary Award and the Baileys Prize for Women's fiction.

From the title of the novel, the reader would automatically assume that the novel belongs to the war literature genre. However, most readers are unaware of what elements or why this novel can belong in such a genre. Similar to other war and post-war novel, *Girl at War* gives an insight into the traumatic events that she had to face during the war. However, *Girl at War* differs in an important way. Even though the title of the novel uses the word 'at,' not all parts of the novel are set during the war. Instead, the novel focuses on the protagonists' effort to overcome the extreme violence, destruction and mortality that she had to face during her childhood. The word 'at' also implies Ana Juric's war in other ways. Ana Juric is most importantly in a war with both herself and others. She struggles with survival guilt. The *Girl at War* embraces the unique demands of what makes war literature as a genre successful. Sara Novic can invite the reader to witness to our ignorance, culpability, or both, which makes the reader vulnerable.

Having discussed element which differentiates *Girl at War* and other war literature novel has, it is now necessary to explain the target reader of the novel itself. Children and young adults become the target readers of this text. This implied that war is something that children have to acknowledge and be aware of. Hunt in his introduction argued that;

The question of how texts influence their audience has always been of particular interest for those in the field of children's books. The books have always had a strong element of the didactic, and they have generally been assumed to have directly beneficial effects on their readers (Hunt 1999, 163).

Children and young adult books must be beneficial for the reading children. Books written for these age groups seek to educate them in what can be considered as good and bad. The idea of war as a theme of children and young adult books can be one of the important values they can learn to create a better society. Writers of children and young adult books also must consider the entertainment value on top of the element of didactic in their books. The entertaining value of children and young adult books plays a major role in creating more effective instructions for the readers (Grenby 2014, 2). Thus, the writer believes that *Girl at War* tries to achieve its function of teaching good values that are believed by current societies.

With regards to the explanation before, the writer believes that this study is necessary to be conducted to reveal the importance of war for children and young adults in creating a better society. This study focuses to reveal the journey of surviving war depicted by Ana Juric in the novel *Girl at War*. Structures which

organized and are manifested in every events of the story needed to be revealed in order for the writer to analyze it properly. Therefore, the writer uses structuralist criticism due to the importance of structure in developing a narrative. The writer specifically uses structuralist narratology and equilibrium narrative from Tzvetan Todorov.

Unlike other structuralists, much of Todorov's understanding of literary discourse comes from the work of the Russian Formalists. In *Poetics*, Todorov discusses more a program for a poetics rather than a fully elaborated system. Todorov considers three principal aspects of texts that any competent reader activates as templates of organization and meaning that is the semantic, verbal, and syntactic aspect.

Todorov's arguments developed into a more detailed discussion of narrative syntax, which under his guidance has become part of what the French called 'narratology.' The narrative is very suitable for syntactic analysis because the accomplishment of a narrative action almost of necessity takes the form of a sentence (T. Todorov 1981). He believes that narration is often the result of the untold cause, which means that there is something unstated under the surface of the narrated text that sets it in motion. The writer believes that Todorov's theory of narrative equilibrium applicable to this novel to find the underlying meaning of the novel itself. Thus, the functions of war in children and young adult books can be revealed.

In analyzing the novel, this study used related studies as references and to support the arguments the writer proposes in the study. A considerable amount of literature has been published on narratology to define the genre of a text. As the object has never been formally analyzed on a study before, the writer used many studies that apply structuralism, Todorov's narratology, and Todorov's genre studies to support the arguments proposed. Meta Michond Cooper, in her dissertation *Anne Moody's Coming of Age in Mississippi: Furnishing a Paradigm for Inquiry* (2009) used a structuralist approach to support her analysis. That study used intertextual reading to examine Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* as it follows canonical autobiographies in the African American literary tradition. The study found that the story follows African American autobiographical traditions of slave narrative while adding other elements that are the use of inquiry as a rhetorical strategy. In 2001, Geoff Fox and Kate Agnew published a compiled research, namely *Children at War: From the First World War to the Gulf*. They examined many war literatures starting from the First World War to the gulf. In their research, they believe that war literature develops overtime. The development of war literature correspondence with the functions of the war literature itself at the time it was published. They believed that conventional war literature focuses on bringing aggression while recent war literature focuses on bringing a sense of humanism towards the reader.

The writer believes that this study is different from previous studies mentioned above. The novel *Girl at War* itself has never been formally researched

before. This study tries to reveal the functions of war literature for children and young adult reader by analyzing the structure of the narrative. In terms of Fox and Agnew's research, this study tries to use an object from a decade that they never examined. The writer try to find the difference of functions of war literature by using an object from a decade that never been research before.

1.2 Statement of Problems

On this research, the writer wishes to answer:

1. How does the narrative of *Girl at War* develop according to Todorov's equilibrium theory?
2. How does the narrative structure of *Girl at War* reveal the functions of war literature?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem stated below, these research analyses are as follows:

1. To explain the development of the narrative in *Girl at War* according to Todorov's equilibrium theory.
2. To interpret the narrative structure of *Girl at War* to reveal the functions of war literature.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research will redound to the benefit both the writer and society to enrich our knowledge about war literature is categorized. The research will help scholars learn more about the application of structuralist criticism when doing literary research. Theoretically, the writer expects to widen the knowledge and give the readers more insight into further studies about how to distinguish genres based on the structure of the story.

Practically, the research is done in the hope that it can be used as a reference for further structuralist researchers through the application of the structuralist approach to war literature. This research may also give benefit ordinary people in understanding how a structure that governs a text can constitute the meaning and functions of a narrative.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Equilibrium : A state of balance between notions that is assimilation and accommodation (Jardine 2006).

Structuralism : Structuralism asserts wholeness and importance to every form of communication and social behavior, which is based on structural linguistics or the study of language. Structuralism offers a scientific view on how humans achieve meaning not only in literature but also in cultural aspects (Bressler 2007, 102).

- Narratology : Narratology is a branch of the discipline of humanity that is dedicated to the study of logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation. Derived from the structuralist approach, narratology's focus shifts from the surface level of text-based narrative to the general logical and structural properties of narrative as a *univers de representations* (Meister 2011).
- War literature : War literature concerns not only the cause and conduct of armed conflict or individual battles but how they are lived, felt, used, and transformed by participants (Brosman 1992, 85-86).