

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background of The Research

Religion is not something new for human life. Durkheim (in Datta and Milbrandt 473) states that religion is a consolidated belief system and practices that is affiliated to be sacred and has agreeable practices into a single moral community. Religion serves as a place to get inner peace for mankind. Religion can also be interpreted as a form that contains rules for humans to guide their lives. Religion is considered to stick in social and cultural life, therefore it has been implanted in a social tradition and supported by the relevant institution (Cloete 1). Religious institution then appeared as the necessary fulfillment in the society to keep the norms and values of religions to remain preserved. Religious institution is the visible and organized manifestations of particular practices and beliefs in particular social and historical contexts (“Religious Institution”).

Magdalen Laundry Home is firstly established in 1837 and finally closed by the end of 20th century. It is supervised by the Catholic Church and has generated a lot of controversies when it still operates. This place is initially aimed for self-improvement and self-purification for the ‘sinful’ women. Urban states on her article *‘The condition of female laundry workers in Ireland 1922-1996: A case of labor camps on trial’* that The Irish government took policy to make this institution due to the increasing rate of prostitution, premarital pregnancy, fallen and abandoned woman in Ireland at the time, which was considered as a violation of religious teaching (2). The fallen women who inhabit this place are called ‘the Maggie’. They are expected to redeem their sin and taught to learn new skill while they stay in this place. However, this place gradually shifts its original function and become somewhat a ‘prison’ for these women (Ruggles, 66). The women are forced

to work for the institution without being paid, and those who must stay in that place are somehow treated inhumanely.

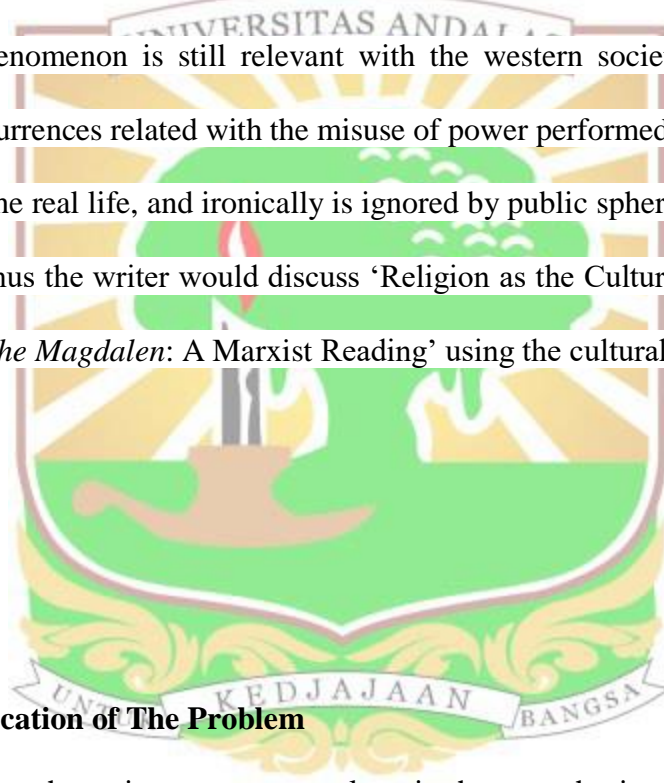
Marita Conlon McKenna depicted this issue in her novel *The Magdalen*, which was firstly published in 1999. She is one of Ireland's best authors. Her books are mostly enjoyed by readers across the world, with the impact of religion on women as the topic in her writings. McKenna grew up in Dublin, with much of her childhood spent in a house overlooking the sea in Greystones, Co Wicklow. McKenna also writes women's fiction and her novels mostly reach the top of the bestseller list and have been translated in several languages. *The Magdalen* is one of the best selling novels and gain huge success with respect to its discussion.

The novel *The Magdalen* is based on real story from Magdalen Laundry Home in Ireland. The novel portrays the lives of women in the Magdalen Laundry Home which reflect a poignant history of women's oppression in Ireland in the 19th century. In the novel, the maggies suffered for Magdalen Laundry Home's damaging system; the institution exploits the maggies (the fallen women who inhabit this place) to earn profit. As the result, the maggies have to work hard as they are always under the nun's surveillance. The nuns who manage the Magdalen Laundry Home mostly despise the maggies and treat them in a bad way. The bedroom for the maggies is not comfortable and the food are far from feasible. However, none of the maggies in the novel speak up regarding this damaging system. Both the nuns and the maggies can only accept this condition because the actions and the treatments done by the nuns to the maggies are considered as a price to pay for the sin of those maggies.

The novel, *The Magdalen* itself is also affected by McKenna's personal background. Noname in an article entitled *A Woman's Place* (1999) stated that she was adopted, and had two siblings who were also adopted. She never met her biological mother, and there were many

children who experience the same thing with her in Ireland. Her empathy toward other degraded women rised, and drove her to find several facts regarding their life in Ireland. After finding the truth about Magdalen in Ireland, she wondered why not many people discuss this issue.

The writer believes that the effects of religious institutions toward society are important to be discussed due to the importance of awareness towards the misuse of power performed by a religious institution. The lack of awareness regarding this issue, either by other people or the victims themselves, leads several people in jeopardy, as depicted in the novel. The writer also believes that this phenomenon is still relevant with the western society in 21st century and therefore, several occurrences related with the misuse of power performed by religious institution still can be found in the real life, and ironically is ignored by public sphere due to the lack of this kind of awareness. Thus the writer would discuss ‘Religion as the Cultural Hegemony in Marita Conlon McKenna’s *The Magdalen: A Marxist Reading*’ using the cultural Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci.



1. 2 The Identification of The Problem

The problem that the writer wants to analyze is the way the institution hegemonies the Maggie in the novel by using religion to justify their actions. In this research, the writer wants to expose the misuse of power, related to hegemony, and therefore cause laborers exploitation in Magdalen with ‘redeeming their sin’ as the institution’s reason on the surface.

1. 3 The Scope of The Research

In order to develop the study, the writer limits this study to analyze how the institution uses religious dogma to justify their actions in order to exploit the people who violate religious teaching in Ireland on the novel. After analyzing how the institution hegemonies religious dogma to exploit the others, the writer explain how the damaging system affect the maggies in the novel.

1. 4 Research Question

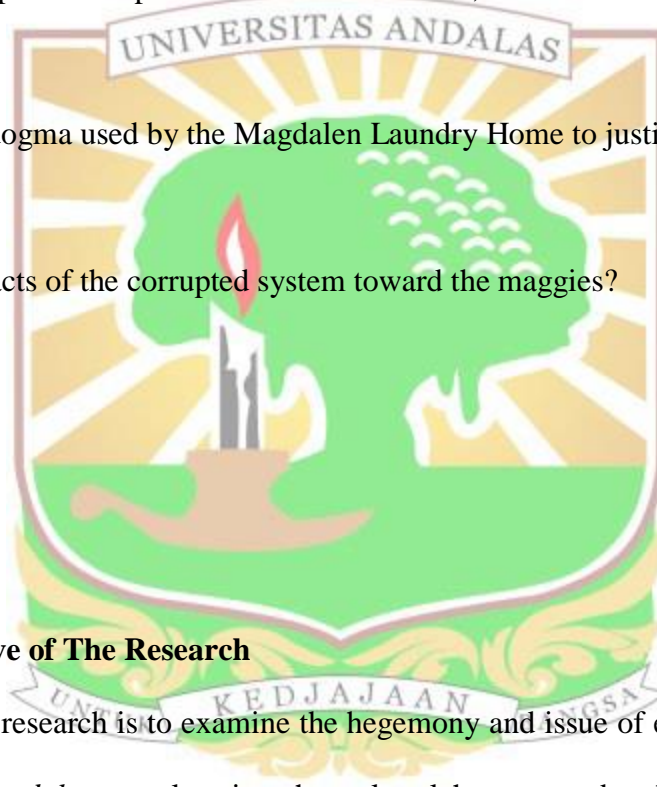
Based upon scopes of the problem above mentioned, there are several problems the writer needs to answer

1. How is religious dogma used by the Magdalen Laundry Home to justify its corrupted system?
2. What are the impacts of the corrupted system toward the maggies?

1. 5 The Objective of The Research

The aim of this research is to examine the hegemony and issue of exploitation of the main characters in *The Magdalen* novel, using the cultural hegemony by the religious institution. Additionally, the writer wants to see the reality of these women oppressed by their own country because of the sin that they had done in the past.

1. 6 Review of Related Study



In this study, the writer found some related articles that the writer considers useful for this research. All of the data are reviewed to obtain adequate information to the research study.

The first study was a journal article written by Eva Urban (2012), she examines the class dimension of the unresolved issue of the unlawful detention of women as unpaid laborers in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries Home between 1992 until 1991. She analyzes the story of the real life of Magdalen Laundry Home in Ireland instead of the novel itself. In her article *'The Condition of Female Laundry Workers in Ireland 1922-1996: A Case of Labour Camps on Trial'*, she exposes several facts that happened in the Magdalen Laundry Home in Ireland. In her article, she stated that the discriminations, abuses, unlawful detention, violation of human rights, and the exploitation of unpaid labor are common in the Magdalen Laundry Home in Ireland in 19th century. However, the writer still has to verify the data that Urban serves because when the writer reads other related articles and compares with Urban's writing, the writer found some differences of the data such as the year, number of the volunteers as the victim and other things related to the Magdalen Laundry Home in Ireland. Even so, this article helps the writer to get the data of Magdalen Laundries Home in Ireland for this research. To some extent, the data in this article contribute to the analysis of this research.

The next study was conducted by Insani Djohar entitled *The Power of Hegemonic Classes in F.Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* (2013). He uses Marx's capitalist theory to investigate a range of authorial strategies for representing the 'haves' experiences and considers how this novel bears witness to the influential groups in the 1920s. Djohar introduces the notion of the dominant group's power to control society. By learning the struggle by the main character of the novel, Djohar says that the struggle to compete with the aristocratic it is not only happening in American society but also with the society in the world. Djohar's narration in his article is mostly about the

power of hegemony classes in real life. In his article, Djohar served a little data of the literary work that he chose as the object of his writing. However, the writer finds this article useful with her research since Djohar employs the same theory in analyzing the power of hegemony. Furthermore, the different object that both Djohar and the writer chose will fill the gap of the discussion related to this theory in literary works.

Another thesis entitled Cultural Hegemony in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series: A Marxist Reading conducted by Farda (2019) talks about the political issues and the hegemony in a Harry Potter series novel by J. K. Rowling. She discusses the 'dominant' and 'subordinate' groups on the novel and analyzes how the dominant group hegemonies the subordinate one. Farda uses Marxist perspective and Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory. She also uses political unconscious theory by Frederic Jameson to support her analysis related to the political issue. She found that 'pure blood' ideology causes prejudice to the subordinate class, which cause the class clash and rebellion from the subordinate group. Furthermore, she correlates her analysis of the novel into real life in British Society. The writer finds the similarity in terms of the theory in Farda's research, in which the writer considers, would be helpful to analyze her data.

Hasmi (2015) in her bachelor thesis 'Religion Influence of Fallen Women in Holy Saint Magdalen Home for Redemption of Sins In Marita Conlon-McKenna's *The Magdalen*' analyzes the same work with the one that the writer chooses. Hasmi uses post-structuralism theory especially in the verbal and textual stage. She found the dysfunction and those seven functions of religion in Magdalen Laundry Home institution depicted in *The Magdalen* novel. Besides that, there is one dysfunction of religion found in the research; there is religion as a justification for persecution. The writer argues that although Hasmi analyzes the same work, her research only discusses the dysfunction of religion on the surface. Furthermore, her writing also lacks of data,

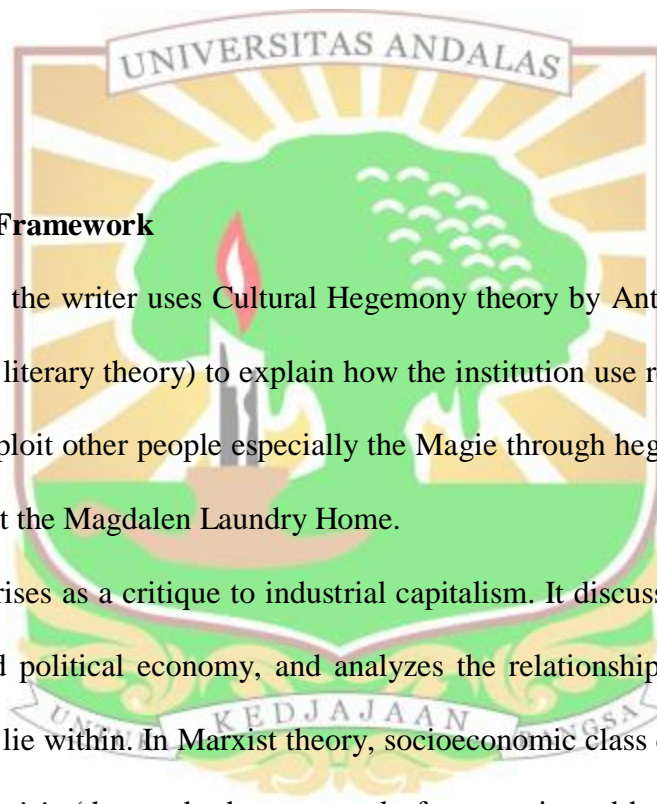
which is an essential part to assert in her analysis. Thus, there is still a gap that the author intends to fill.

Based on the literature review above, the writer can say that there are several gaps that are needed to be filled since nobody has ever analyzed the topic that the writer chooses in the same works by employing the same theory.

1. 7 Theoretical Framework

In this research, the writer uses Cultural Hegemony theory by Antonio Gramsci (which is derived from Marxist literary theory) to explain how the institution use religion as a justification of their action and exploit other people especially the Magie through hegemony which cause the damaged the system at the Magdalen Laundry Home.

Marxist theory rises as a critique to industrial capitalism. It discusses the relation between social occurances and political economy, and analyzes the relationship among socioeconomic classes and the issues lie within. In Marxist theory, socioeconomic class divides people based on the 'haves' or *bourgeoisie* (those who have control of economic and human resources) and the 'have-nots' or *proletariat* (those who performs the labour). Marx believes that getting and keeping the economic power is the underlying motive behind all social and political activities (Tyson, 2006: 53). Conflicts and class struggle tend to rise as the *proletariat* experience oppression resulted by the *bourgeoisie* maintaining their economic power.



Antonio Gramsci analyzes the problem of class struggle by addressing the relation between culture and power under capitalist society with his *Cultural Hegemony* concept, which derives from Marxist criticism. The traditional definition of ‘hegemony’ is political rule or domination of one group over the other group (Farda, 2018: 10). Cultural hegemony is characterized by the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great number of people in society to the general direction which is imposed in social life by the dominant group (Lears 568).

The essence of this concept is not manipulation but legitimation. The ruling group does not maintain their hegemony merely by domination; they also need to win the society consent to social order that they impose for their interest. The ideas, values, and experiences of dominant groups are validated in public discourse; those of subordinate groups are not, though they may continue to thrive beyond the boundaries of received opinion (Lears, 2016: 574). The role of ideology and its complex development are crucial in this part. Gramsci states that as a given group develops in economic sphere and find some values more resonant and congenial for their interest, they might selectively refashion the ‘spontaneous philosophy’ (sentiments and prejudices that are proper to everybody) and develop their own particular world view. The group will achieve cultural hegemony only if their world view appeals to a wide range of groups in society, or at least their interest are those of society at large.

The conflict between social classes can be found in literary works as it reflects the reality in human life. Literary work is contextual with the social situation at a given time; literature has a social function as can be an answer to a social question, such as the question of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols, and myths (Wellek and Warren 89). Through literature, we could see how the author depicts the society and their social circumstances. As a reflection of society, literature can be considered as an imitation of life, life in large measure, and social reality,

even though it uses the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation (89).

Marx regards religion as “opium” in the sense that religion can be used by an individual or group to be the ultimate justification of action, as depicted in the novel where a religious institution in Ireland uses religious dogma to justify their actions (Surin 10). Marx also calls religion as an illusion in which the religion is used as a form of projection of human essence into one entity that is considered sacred and then given the properties of power that exceed human beings (Pals 132).

For people who do not feel the bitterness of oppression, religion is a beneficial tool of power. The parties who have power will always be on top by legitimizing their opinion supported by religious teaching as the justification, while those who do not have the power to fight will always be oppressed with this legitimation and blinded by the justification of the religious dogma.

1. 8 Methods of The Research

In conducting this research, the writer applies the library research. According to Elmer E. Rasmuson Library in *Research, Instruction, and Library Research Process Outreach Services*(2016), Library Research involves the step-by-step process use to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. As you progress from one step to the next, it is commonly necessary to back up, revise, add additional material or even change your topic completely. Three steps are followed, they are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting the data.

1. 8.1 Collecting Data

There are two types of data used for the analysis; primary and secondary data. Primary data are taken from *The Magdalen* by Marita Conlon McKenna and the secondary data are taken from journals, articles, literary books, thesis, and critical essays in line with the study's primary purpose.

1. 8.2 Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony theory is used to analyze how Magdalen Laundry Home justifies their action by using religious dogma to exploit the women who violate religious teaching. The writer then explains how the actions conducted by the nuns affect the maggies in the novel.

1. 8.3 Presenting The Result of Analysis

In presenting the data, the writer uses the descriptive and qualitative method. According to Hancock et al (2007) in an online book entitled *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, qualitative research attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world. It proves the analysis by emerging arguments and opinions since the data are worlds, statements, or paragraph and not in the form of numbers.

