

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Popular literature, often referred to as *poplit*, refers to literary works intended for mass consumption and entertainment, characterized by accessible language and engaging narratives. This category includes a wide range of genres such as romance, fantasy, science fiction, horror, and mystery, which are widely circulated through both print and digital media. According to Banerjee (2023) Popular Literature plays a vital role in conveying cultural and social values directly to readers through simple yet meaningful storytelling. Due to its accessibility, popular literature not only reflects public taste but also shapes perspectives on key social issues such as gender identity, power dynamics, and interpersonal relationships. One genre that has grown significantly in popular literature is detective fiction, known for its distinctive narrative structure and adaptability to changing social contexts.

The detective genre is a branch of popular literature that centers on the investigation of a mystery, typically involving a crime, a problem, or an unexplained event, gradually revealed through logical inquiry. According to Scaggs (2005), drawing on Todorov, detective fiction contains two narrative layers: the story of the crime and the story of its investigation. The detective genre has undergone a notable evolution in recent decades, particularly in the portrayal of female characters. Traditionally, female characters in detective stories were often portrayed as sidekicks, victims, or background figures.

However, they have increasingly emerged as central figures, characterized by intelligence, independence, and strategic thinking. In line with this shift, Lawlar (2023) explains that, from femme fatales in film noir to characters like *Nancy Drew*, *Miss Marple*, and *Veronica Mars*, female detectives have been gradually constructed as moral and intellectual anchors within crime narratives. This growing trend reflects broader changes in the way detective stories engage audiences through diverse character types.

The presence of female characters in the detective genre represents a significant development in popular literature and film. In earlier detective narratives, female characters were often marginalized or confined to passive roles; however, contemporary representations increasingly position women as central investigators who actively drive the investigative process. According to Lawlar (2023), explains that the female detective has evolved throughout history in response to changing cultural norms and social expectations. Contemporary portrayals increasingly reinvent female detectives as empowering characters who challenge traditional representations.

This development in the representation of female detective characters is reflected in the film *Enola Holmes 2020*, which presents a young female protagonist navigating and solving complex mysteries. Rather than relying on others, Enola builds her path using logic, determination, and emotional strength. As note by Assidiqi and Muttaqien (2025) the character of Enola is portrayed as choosing her investigative direction while demonstrating independence and rationality. Supporting this, Syahriyani and Novikasandra

(2022) explain that *Enola Holmes* represents feminist values through signs that show Enola's independence, intellectuality, freedom of choice, and the right to privacy. These narrative strategies invite further exploration into how *Enola Holmes 2020* aligns with or deviates from conventional detective story frameworks.

The popularity of *Enola Holmes* (2020) on Netflix, directed by Harry Bradbeer and adapted from The *Enola Holmes Mysteries* novel series by Nancy Springer, the film was released on September 23, 2020, and produced by Legendary Pictures in collaboration with Netflix. *Enola Holmes* can be classified as a detective and adventure film with a strong emphasis on a female-centered investigative narrative. The film was viewed by approximately 76 million households within its first 28 days of release and reached the Top 10 most-watched films in more than 75 countries, indicating its strong global reception and resonance with contemporary audiences, particularly younger viewers. These features position *Enola Holmes (2020)* as a rich text for analyzing detective plot structures within popular fiction through its portrayal of a young female detective. To support the analysis of *Enola Holmes (2020)* as a popular detective film, it is important to review how formula analysis has previously been applied to other popular literary and cinematic works. By examining earlier studies, this research can establish a clearer theoretical foundation for analyzing detective plot structures in contemporary popular fiction.

Several previous studies have explored the application of popular literature formulas in various film and literary works. Arianto and Ambalegin (2019), in their study *"The Analysis of Formula in the Legend of Japanese Samurai Rurouni Kenshin and Miyamoto Musashi"*, employed a popular literary approach to analyze the recurring narrative patterns and character archetypes in both legends. He concluded that, despite their distinct cultural and historical settings, the stories follow similar heroic-journey formulas, thereby reinforcing their status as popular cultural texts. Similarly, Salsabila and Assidiqi (2019) examined the thriller formula through the plot of Fede Alvarez's *Don't Breathe*. Their study found that the film's thriller formula appears through complicated storylines, frequent plot twists, violence, action, conflict, the protagonist's survival, and suspense. However, while these studies demonstrate that formula analysis has been widely used to examine recurring narrative patterns in various genres, the detective genre, particularly those featuring female detective protagonists, has received far less scholarly attention.

Despite the broad application of formula analysis to various popular genres such as action, thriller, and adventure very few have specifically focused on the detective genre, especially in the context of female detective protagonists in contemporary films. In addition, limited attention has been given to how detective fiction formulas evolve to reflect modern values such as feminism, individualism, and intellectual autonomy. This study intends to fill that gap by analyzing how the popular fiction formula, particularly that of detective fiction,

is applied and adapted in a modern film narrative that centers on a young female detective figure.

To support this objective, this study employs the theory of detective fiction proposed by Scaggs (2005) as the primary analytical framework. Scaggs explains that detective fiction operates through recurring structural conventions, including the presence of a mystery or crime, a detective figure, an investigation process, and a narrative resolution. These elements form a recognizable detective fiction formula that guides audience expectations while allowing variation and innovation. This framework is particularly useful for analyzing contemporary detective films, as it enables the examination of how traditional genre conventions are maintained or modified through modern narrative perspectives, including the portrayal of female detective.

B. Research Focus

This study focuses on analyzing the detective fiction formula in *Enola Holmes* (2020) based on Scaggs' (2005) framework. The analysis is directed toward understanding how the detective fiction formula is constructed through the elements of crime, investigation, and resolution within the film. In addition, this study examines the representation of Enola Holmes as a female detective figure within the conventions of detective fiction. Furthermore, it aims to identify whether *Enola Holmes* (2020) follows or modifies conventional detective fiction formulas in a contemporary context.

C. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to analyzing the detective fiction formula in *Enola Holmes* (2020) as the primary object of analysis. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach and uses the detective fiction framework proposed by Scaggs (2005) as the main theoretical lens. The analysis is confined to the film's plot structure and characterization, particularly focusing on Enola as the female detective protagonist. Therefore, this study does not examine other film adaptations, sequels, or the original novel series in detail, nor does it aim to generalize the findings to all female detective films. Instead, the study emphasizes how the classical detective formula is represented and potentially modified within this specific contemporary film narrative.

D. Statement of the Problem

This study analyzes the detective fiction formula in *Enola Holmes* (2020) based on Scaggs' (2005) framework to identify how the film constructs and modifies conventional detective fiction conventions. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the detective fiction formula constructed in *Enola Holmes* (2020) based on Scaggs' (2005) framework?
2. In what ways does *Enola Holmes* (2020) follow or modify conventional detective fiction formulas through its female detective protagonist?

E. Purposes of The Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To examine the contraction of the detective fiction formula in *Enola*

Holmes (2020) based on Scaggs' (2005) framework.

2. To identify the ways *Enola Holmes* (2020) follows or modifies conventional detective fiction formulas through its female detective protagonist.

F. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the theoretical development of popular literature analysis, particularly in understanding how plot structures in detective fiction reflect or transform established genre conventions. Furthermore, it can serve as a practical reference for students and researchers interested in analyzing narrative structures in popular films, especially those focusing on plot formula within the female detective subgenre, and support the application of detective fiction theory proposed by Scaggs (2005) in modern film studies. In addition, the findings of this study can be applied in English language teaching, providing authentic material for teaching narrative texts, enhancing students' comprehension of plot structures, character development, and narrative conventions, as well as supporting the development of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills in English classrooms.

G. Definition of Keyterms

1. Detective Fiction Formula refers to recurring narrative conventions in detective fiction, including the presence of crime or mystery, a detective figure, an investigation process, and narrative resolution.
2. Female Detective means a female character who serves as the central figure in a detective narrative and is responsible for solving the mystery. In

this study, the term refers to Enola Holmes as the main female detective character whose traits and role are discussed in relation to conventional detective character conventions.

3. Popular Literature means works of fiction that follow familiar narrative formulas and conventions, designed to appeal to a wide audience. In this study, the term encompasses stories, films, or texts that employ recognizable patterns.