

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Code is a set of letters, numbers, or symbols used to send messages to someone secretly. In literature, code can be explained as a system of verbal signs that used to convey information. The term “codes” was introduced by Roland Barthes, a structuralist, philosopher, and linguist from France. In his book, *S/Z* (1974), Barthes introduced a new theory in analyzing literature. It is called the five codes theory. According to Barthes, code is a perspective from which you can view a text. Barthes in his book said that “. . . listen to the text as an iridescent exchange carried on by multiple voices, on different wavelengths” (41-42). So, code also can be interpreted as a set of voices speaking at the same time.

Thirteen Reasons Why is an interesting psychological thriller novel which uses many codes in conveying the message. The novel is full of tragedy and mystery from the start of the story. Therefore, the author put many codes in this novel to make the story more interesting. For this reason, the reader must be even more critical in reading this novel to find the hidden meaning of the codes behind the characters, actions, dialogues, and other elements in the story.

The author designs the plot and the point of view in a complicated way. He has created the main character who died since the beginning of the story. Then he also tells the story through two points of view of the two characters at once. So, even though the main character is dead, she still feels very much alive through the

sound on the cassette that Clay listens. Gordon Korman, the author of *Son of the Mob* and *Jake, Reinvented*, said that *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a spectacular novel, who honestly tells his story so that the tragedy feels shatteringly real.

This book describes a girl named Hannah Baker, who committed to suicide. She left seven cassette tapes after her death. She told the reader thirteen reasons why she was dead. There, she talks about the truth in her life. Hannah tells about the abduction done by her classmates, who has spread bad rumors about her. Since the accident, she receives some unpleasant treatments. After that, she decides to kill herself by swallowing one handful of pills.

Thirteen Reasons Why was written by Jay Asher. Jay Asher is an American young adult novel writer. He was born in Arcadia, California, on September, 30th 1975. In the course of his career, Asher has published four books, namely *Thirteen Reasons Why* in 2007, *The Future of Us* in 2011, *What Light* in 2016, and *Piper* in 2017. From all of his works, his debut novel, *Thirteen Reasons Why* is the most famous work. He wrote this novel in the mid-nineties and published in 2007.

The novel has sold 158,000 copies since the first published in October 2007. Then, this work had won several awards, such as Barnes & Noble's "Top 10 Best Books", New York Public Library's "Book for the Teen Age", Chicago Public Library's "Best of the Best Books", and some other achievements. Because of this popularity, Netflix makes a series based on this novel with the same title and Selena Gomez as the executive producer on March 31, 2017.

In this research, the writer chooses to analyze codes in *Thirteen Reasons Why*. So, the writer decided to make a study titled "Five Codes in Jay Asher's

Thirteen Reasons Why". By doing this research, it will help people to find a deeper meaning to the story written by the author of the novel.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Sometimes, in literary works there are some difficult parts to understand. The readers get obstacles in interpreting literary work since they have a broad plurality of meanings that can not be ignored. It is difficult for the readers to understand the story because they can not get the meaning of a certain code directly. Sometimes the meanings stay behind the given situation of the events that occur in the novel. Therefore the readers have to analyze a novel deeply in order to get its vivid meaning.

In *Thirteen Reasons Why*, Jay Asher uses many codes in conveying the story. This story is full of psychological problems that began with the bullying received by the main character, Hannah Baker which then ended in suicide. Therefore, Asher put many codes to provide a more profound emotions in the story to highlight the message of the novel. In that case, the writer has to interpret the codes in order to get the meaning in this novel.

1.3 Scope of the Research

In this research, the writer only focuses on codes and those meaning in the *Thirteen Reasons Why*. The writer focus on the five codes that have been introduced by Roland Barthes. There are proairetic code, hermeneutic code, cultural

code, semic code, and symbolic code. Writer limit this research only on the elements of the novel, such as the characters, characterizations, plot, and settings that contained the codes.

1.4 Research Questions

In case to point out the focus of this research, the writer elaborates into these research questions:

1. What are the codes and the meanings of those codes used by Jay Asher in the *Thirteen Reasons Why*?
2. Does *Thirteen Reasons Why* include as writerly text or readerly text?

1.5 Objective of the Research

This research aims to identify and classify the types of codes contained in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*. The codes that will be analyzed are proairetic code, hermeneutic code, cultural code, semiotic code, or symbolic code. The writer also analyzes what cultures exist in America through the cultural code contained in the novel. The writer conducts this research to help the readers to understand about the codes and the meaning in the story. Moreover, this research also aims to classify the book, whether it is 'writerly' or 'readerly' literary works.

1.6 Review of Related Study

To conduct this research, the writer reads several related studies to help the writer in doing this research. To achieve this research, the writer takes an article entitled " The Structural Analysis of *Thirteen Reasons Why* A Novel by Jay Asher" as a reference. This article written by Ifrah Ali and Tazanfal Tehseem from University of Sargodha Pakistan in January, 2015. This paper analyzed the structure of "*Thirteen Reasons Why*" in the following elements; plot, title, genre, setting, point of view, active details (symbol and symbolism), insight or theme or motifs, style (word choice and syntax), and characters. Ali using the theory of structural analysis to complete his research. In my opinion, the study conducted by Tazanfal is too short. In character analysis, Ali only discusses two characters, namely Hannah Baker and Clay Jansen. The review of the two characters only summarized in two short paragraphs. In the setting analysis, Ali only mention six places without explain the time when the story happened. Although the writer discusses the same object as Ali did, the writer's research will be different because it is more focused on the codes contained in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* while Ali only analyze the structure of the novel. Besides, the study conducted by the writer will be more detailed than the research conducted by Tazanfal such as in the character and setting analysis.

Another article is "Literature and Bullying: Teenage and Children Novels on Bullying Prevention" in 2017, written by Evangelia Raptou from Department of Science of Preschool Education and Educational Design, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece. Raptou analyzed three novels, and there are *Thirteen Reasons*

Why by Jay Asher, *Finding Audrey* by Sophie Kinsella, and *Together* by Eleni Priovolou. In this article, Raptou uses content analysis to write her research. Based on her study in the three of the novels, she concluded that the phenomenon of bullying appearing in teenage and children novels with the way that texts could illuminate and enlighten youth consciousness to become safe guides or useful paradigms in their everyday life. However, this study became less focused because there were three objects discussed at once. As a result, Raptou only shows a short analysis of each novel in her research. The writer's research will be different from Raptou because we use different approaches to analyze the story.

In this research, the writer also takes an article titled "*Thirteen Reasons Why: The Impact of Suicide Portrayal on Adolescents' Mental Health*" written by Gabriel Santana da Rosa, Gustavo Santos Andrades, Arthur Caye, Maria Paz Hidalgo, Melissa Alves Braga de Olivier, and Luísa K. Pilz in 2019. The researchers of this article use an online questionnaire in conducting their research. The primary finding of this study is there was a higher proportion of adolescents reporting worsening in mood after watching the web series *13 Reasons* among those who already had more severe or frequent feelings of sadness and lack of motivation. In my opinion, this is a good article because the researches show the reader to be more careful in interpreting the sensitive issues that arose in the *Thirteen Reasons Why* story. This article will be different from my research because this article is talking about the *Thirteen Reasons Why* web series, while in my study, the writer will discuss the novel, and we use the different theories and methods in conducting our research.

The next article is “Five Codes of Barthes in Shahraz’s Story *A Pair of Jeans: A Post-Structural Analysis*,” written by Sabah Zaib and Ghulam Mustafa Mashori from Pakistan in 2014. This article aims to discuss the application of five codes theory by Roland Barthes, namely; proairetic, hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural, on *A Pair of Jeans*. This article relies on text-based analysis, and researchers show that the target story has several words and dialogues that has many meanings. In my opinion, this article has detail information, especially cultural code analysis. All objects that have cultural elements are discussed, ranging from jeans, saris, scarves, dupatta. Unfortunately, the study of the proairetic code is not as detailed as the other codes because the author did not explain it clearly. This article will be different from my research because we analyze a separate literary work as the object of the study.

The last article is “Theory to Practice: Application of Five Roland Barthes Codes about 'Optimistic' Bina Shah,” written by Waseem Hassan Malik, Sabah Zaib, and Faraz Ali Bughio from University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan in 2014. This article discusses the five codes analysis on *Optimistic*, a short story written by Bina Shah, a promising Pakistani fiction writer of the younger generation. Relying on the textual analysis, it shows that all the five codes tangle the selected story, there are the proairetic, hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural codes. This paper showed that Bina Shah had created a delicate balance in the story through the contrasting of the two main characters. In my opinion, in this article, the authors did not give a clear explanation in the part of proairetic code analysis, while there is a clear and strong analysis in the hermeneutic and symbolic codes.

After the writer read five related studies, the writer concludes that the writer has different research from those related studies because of the object that the writer use is *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Then, the writer analyzes the novel from the structuralist perspective, especially about the codes and the meaning of those codes. The writer identifies and classifies the type of codes found in the *Thirteen Reasons Why* using Roland Barthes's theory.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

In conducting the research, the writer used structural literary criticism. According to Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* (2006), structural criticism in literature is an approach that focuses on the narrative dimension of a literary text (220). It means structural criticism is a theory focused on the intrinsic elements of a literary work to discover a finding beyond what is written. Tyson stated that structural literary criticism does not mean to be a tool to judge the meaning of the text but to notice how a text means what it means (209).

One of the popular structuralists is Roland Barthes, who introduces a new theory called five codes to analyze the meaning of literary work. This theory is used for readers to have a better understanding of the signs implied by the author. So, the reader can interpret the codes well and understand the story. In understanding the codes in literary works, Barthes classifies the codes into five groups. The five codes are proairetic, hermeneutic, cultural, connotative, and symbolic code.

The first type of code is proairetic code or the code of action. According to Guerin in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, this code focused on

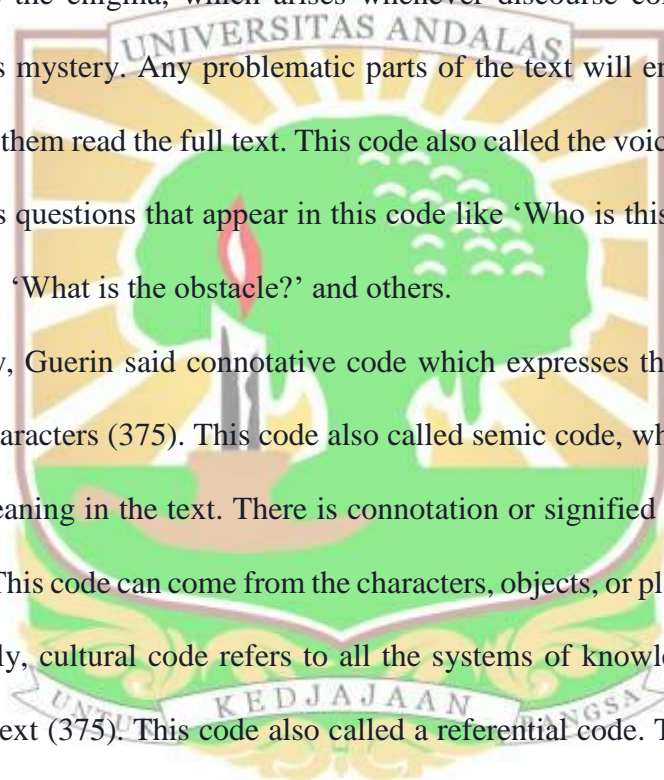
the meaning of the sequence events (375). This code concerns those elements that create suspense in the text and catches the reader's interest. So, the reader will try to guess what happened next? What will be the reaction of a particular action? This code signifies that something is going to happen as a result of the action.

Secondly, hermeneutic code or code of the puzzle is a code that raises the questions to be answered by the reader (375). According to Selden, the hermeneutic code concerns the enigma, which arises whenever discourse commences (152). Enigma means mystery. Any problematic parts of the text will engage the reader and will make them read the full text. This code also called the voice of truth. There will be various questions that appear in this code like 'Who is this about?', 'What is happening?' 'What is the obstacle?' and others.

Thirdly, Guerin said connotative code which expresses themes developed through the characters (375). This code also called semic code, which means there is a hidden meaning in the text. There is connotation or signified meaning behind the narrative. This code can come from the characters, objects, or places in the story.

Fourthly, cultural code refers to all the systems of knowledge and values invoked by a text (375). This code also called a referential code. This code can be analyzed by understanding the particular culture-related to the story in that literary work. This culture can be a literal cultural country, nationality, ethnicity, or culture at the specific age group, gender, or historical period.

Lastly, symbolic code concerns the polarities and antitheses, which allow multivalence and reversibility. Geurin said that the symbolic code also refers to the theme (375). Although both are related to the issue, semic code and symbolic code



are different. Symbolic code has a broader scope than the semic code. The word 'symbol' means an image that has come to represent something else. This symbol comes from the antithetical and contrasting elements of the text. So, in this code, the reader will be focused on binary polarities.

According to this theory, a text can be divided into two, writerly text and readerly text. Writerly text means a text that is difficult to understand. In writerly text, the reader is invited to be an active participant in the construction of the meaning in the novel. In contrary, readerly text means a text that is easy to be understood.

1.8 Method of the Research

In conducting this research, the first step is collecting the data. The primary data of this research is the work itself, and the secondary data taken from various sources related to this research. The writer applies library research method to collect the data for this research. The writer read some books, journals, articles, and online resources related to this research.

The second step is that the writer identifies the code by reading the book in detail. After the writer identifies the code, the writer classifies the data, which is assumed to contain the code. Then, the writer interprets the meaning of the codes based on writer interpretation by relating the codes with Roland Barthes's theory. The writer also analyzes the extrinsic elements of the novel, such as the culture mentioned in the novel. The writer read the related books and articles which support the analysis. Then, the writer will select and draw a conclusion about the dominant



code found in the story and classifies the work, does it include in 'readerly' or 'writerly' novel.

The final step of this research is presenting the data from analysis. The writer describes all of the results that have found in this research. The writer presents in a descriptive form to provide understanding and explanations according to the question categories contained in the problem statement.



