

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

When the word 'death' comes up, automatically the first impression usually concerns with something negative, something dark, and also the unpleasant feeling that come along with it. In general, death itself means the total cessation of life that will occur to any kind of living organism. Biologically, death means as the injunction of the instrument of the body inside of the body of a living organism that changes the state of the organism from alive become dead. After the death occurred, the remains of an organism become organic material that may then be further decomposed by microorganism, such as earthworms and woodlice, then eventually end up as a part of biogeochemical cycle (Grisez, Germain and Joseph M. Boyle Jr. 1979).

However, talking about the death of a human being will not be as simple as that. Death indeed has a relation with a society. Several experts even explain death as one of cultural phenomena that happens in the society itself. One of those experts is Khapaeva in her book entitled *The Celebrating of Death in Contemporary Culture* (Khapaeva 2017, 4) analyzed the changing of interpretation of death from an unmentionable word to be a celebration in contemporary era. Then another expert, Okechi, in his journal article entitled *Culture, Perception/Belief about Death and their Implication to the Awareness and Control of The Socio-Economic, Environmental Health Factors Surrounding Lower Life Expectancy in Nigeria* (Okechi 2017, 8) that examined the concept of

death across generations, religious and cultural attitude toward it. The finding that existing in both of the studies is the death considered as something unpleasant to be discuss around the society. However, the society is still discussing about the death because it is also included as a cultural phenomenon due to the evolving interpretation of the death in the society.

Meanwhile, from literary point of view, death could be interpreted into several meanings. Therefore the meaning of death in literary perspective is not always unpleasant and dark, but it could be the complete opposite from its literal meaning. Some authors give personal account of their impending death, some use the literature as a tool to structure and order our thoughts about death, and some other will treat death just as a literary device and use it, for example as a symbolic representation of the decay of society (Skelton 2003, 202).

Therefore, the interpretation of death in the literary world is quite diverse; for instance the image of death in some of literary genre such as in gothic literature, children literature, and young-adult fantasy literature. Bowers in her article entitled *Through the Opaque Veil: the Gothic and Death in Russian Realism* compared some gothic literary works to reveal the meaning of death in them. The finding of the article is the death is considered as 'the unknown' which mean that the death is a mysterious terms that cannot be explained with the scientific knowledge of the living. However, the image of death in here is not deviated from the real meaning of death, which is something fearful and evil; therefore, 'the unknown' could also be considered as fearful because we do not

have any explanation of the things that we have never experienced before (Bowers 2017, 159).

Meanwhile Sbroma (2018) in her thesis entitled *Intimation of Mortality: Death in Children's Fantasy* argues that in children's literature death is inevitable. The children literature usually let their protagonist, most of them are still considered as a child of course, experienced losing of something or someone, or worst make them as an orphan in the beginning of the story. If there is an orphan in the story, there will be at least two characters that die in the story. In here Sbroma tries to depict the death in children literature and its relation with how the author of these literary works, who is an adult, understands the world of childhood.

From the articles above, we could conclude that the interpretation of death in literature is quite extended, ranging from the genre of gothic literature to children literature. Therefore, the researcher is interested in the representation of the meaning of death from a new perspective of thinking, not only from an adult's perspective nor from children's perspective, but from the one who just one step away from adulthood, but still considered as a child; a teenager. From here onward, the researcher decided to analyze the genre of literature that concerns with the everyday live of a teenager, the young-adult genre.

Aside from the young-adult genre, the other genres that have a big chance to collide with the 'death' are the fantasy genre, in which a lot of unimagined things happen within the genre. Hence the researcher then decided to analyze a

literature works that combined these two genres which is the young-adult fantasy genre.

Young-adult fantasy genre is a genre that combines two genre of literature which is Young-Adult genre and Fantasy genre. Young Adult itself is a category of literary text that usually concern about the problems that faced by the main characters, who are usually a teenager around 12 – 18 years old (Wells 2003, 4), when they preach their adolescence and walk on their way to become a proper adult. Meanwhile the fantasy genre can be defined as a genre that concern about the things that beyond our understanding in the real world, or it could be refers to a genre of literature which contains elements that do not or cannot exist in reality (Fitzgerald 2008, 2). When these two genres are combined, they will create new understanding on how young adult genre, which usually very realistic because it contains teenagers' problems and how they live their everyday life, could portray the elements of fantasy genre which is not as realistic as what is portrayed as an everyday life of a teenager.

Therefore, in this study the researcher analyzes and finds the meaning of death in *Vampire Academy*, a novel that published in 2007 and written by Richelle Mead, a famous novelist in Young-Adult Fantasy genre. This novel is considered as an interesting subject to be analyzed because its unique and interesting plot and characters that could be distinguished from other novels with the same genre and the same topic made the novel becoming more irresistible. For example when the other books told that the vampires usually created by other vampires by biting a human being, in this novel they stated that the vampires are born to be a vampire

who called as *moroi*, and they have some kind of power that could control one element of nature such as fire, air, water, and earth. The other is if these vampires drinking another living being's blood until the living being is died, the *moroi* will be turned into a *strigoi*, a bad vampires that kill *moroi*, *dhampir* (half human half vampire, also born not created) and also human (Mead 2007).

In his book entitled *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov (1975) described the term of fantasy as something that has a strong relation to ghost and gothic stories. Because in Todorov's perspective of fantasy, there must be a concept of *l'hesitation* or some uncertainty about the truth from the story of ghost and gothic or 'the story beyond the grave' and of course no one knows the truth that happens beyond the grave. In relation, the death could be considered as something that happens beyond the grave. Therefore, in conducting this study, the researcher chooses the structuralism approach which was proposed by Tzvetan Todorov in order to reveal the meaning of death that underlies in *Vampire Academy* novel.

In accordance with this research, there are some previous studies which used *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead as their object of study. However, the researcher found all of the previous studies are using comparative analysis on their research and they are tend to be more focused with the development of the portrayal of 'vampire' in the novels that being used as the object of their studies.

Several previous studies which share the same object are Michele J. Smith and Kristie Moruzi research published in (2018) entitled *Vampire and Witches Go*

to School: Contemporary Young Adult Fiction, Gender, and the Gothic. This journal article discuss about how the school story setting enables Gothic female protagonists who are very unique, disruptive, and potentially transformative, despite of the limitation enforced by the heterosexual romance plot. The finding of this article is the female protagonists become the 'heroes' of their story. However, these female protagonist remain constrained by conservative, heteronormativity ideals that privilege romance on top of every thing else.

The second is a thesis by Berglind Guðmundsdóttir which was published in (2015) entitled *The Vampire's Evolution in Literature: The Influence Bram Stoker's Dracula Has Had on the Works of Writers of Modern Young Adult Vampire Fiction*. It tends to be more focused on the development of Gothic Novel especially on the Young Adult Fantasy genre, in which the readers were trapped between childhood and adulthood and they were very interested in the mysteriousness, supernatural, monstrosity, and romance that offered by the novels, especially the one that discuss about vampire and other supernatural creatures.

We can conclude that from the previous studies, they only use comparative analysis that has been done to the novel. In accordance with that, the researcher conducts a research that only focuses in this novel as its own, without comparing the novel with other novels. Furthermore, this research analyzes the meaning of death that is interpreted from the formal elements of the novel. The approach of this study is the structuralism approach using Todorov's three aspects of

structuralism alongside with qualitative descriptive method to seek the meaning of death portrayed in the novel's formal elements.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

In order to analyze the meaning of death that is pictured in the novel, the researcher would like to state two questions to elaborate the analysis:

1. How are Todorov's three aspects of structuralism portrayed through the formal elements of Mead's *Vampire Academy*?
2. How do Todorov's three aspects of structuralism signify the meaning of death in Mead's *Vampire Academy*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

1. To reveal Todorov's three aspects of structuralism on the formal elements of the novel
2. To examine the underlying meaning of death interpreted through the formal elements of the novel using Todorov's three aspects of structuralism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In conducting this research on the novel *Vampire Academy*, the researcher hopes that there are some of significant points that could be derived. The first point is the researcher sincerely hopes that this research will have any contribution

in the future research that use *Vampire Academy* as the object of the study or Todorov's structuralism as the approach of the study.

Second, the researcher also hopes that this research will cause a better understand both on the object of the study and the approach of the study that had been used in this research. Lastly, the researcher hopes that by conducting this study, it could enrich the library collection of Airlangga University and later on there will be more research about Young-Adult Fantasy genre that will be conducted by English Department students.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Death : The total cessation of life that occurs to any kind of living organism (Grisez, Germain and Joseph M. Boyle Jr. 1979, 59)

Gothic : A literary genre that developed in England in the end of 18th century. It is also known as a genre that blends fiction with horror and combined them in a new genre. (Abrams, 78-79)

Young-adult fantasy : Young-adult fantasy is a category of fiction that is concern about the experiences of the protagonist who are usually portrayed as a teenager around 12 – 18 years and contains

fantasy elements in which do not or cannot exist in reality (Fitzgerald 2008)

Vampire

: A being who comes back from its grave, and lead a dissolute life, even violent, who committed suicide or buried with no religious rite (Tiziani 2009, 134)