

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Someone who is alive definitely will be dead in the future. Death means a complete change in the status of a living entity characterized by the irreversible loss of those characteristics that are essentially significant to it (Beauchamp 22). Death itself happens in many ways such as illness, accident, even suicide. In this case the writer of the thesis will discuss suicide as one of the factor of death. Suicide is an act of a person who dies with takes their own life (Beauchamp 99). Suicide can be done by using many ways such as jumping from high buildings, drink pills, hanging her/himself, bombing, slitting the wrist, etc. A person who dies by committing suicide always has something in his/her mind that could not be explained implicitly. Suicidal people come from different kinds of ages such as male and female adults as well as male and female teenagers. In this case, the writer will choose the suicidal case happened on both male and female teenagers as the focus of this thesis. The writer chooses suicidal case on teenagers in order to find out the reasons behind the suicidal acts that are committed by the five characters in *"The Virgin Suicides"*.

“At the time when one by one the beautiful girls of that family committed suicide. The five mysterious girls commit suicide one by one was also with mysterious ways” (Eugenides 3). It is a cut off of *The Virgin Suicides* novel. This story happened in Michigan, at the beginning of 1970s. The Lisbon family is a very religious family. “The neighbor Mrs. Scheer tries to greet Cecilia. She saw Cecilia the day before she attempted suicide. She was standing by the curb, in the antique wedding dress with the shorn hem she always wore, looking at Thunderbird encased in fish flies. “You better get a broom, honey,” Mrs. Scheer advised. But Cecilia fixed her with her spiritualist’s gaze” (Eugenides 2). They have ordinary live until an accident happened with their girls. It is an unusual thing because they grow up in a religious family but they have mysterious behaviors. The Lisbon girls were Cecilia (thirteen years old), Lux (fourteen years old), Bonnie (fifteen years old), Mary (sixteen years old), and Therese (seventeen years old). The details explanation about the stories will be explained in chapter three of the analysis.

Based on the explanation, the research will be addressed in some intrinsic approach and suicide in teenage period as the addition of the critical theory to analyze this novel. It is also believed that the literary text can be easily understood mainly by understanding its shape or form (Tyson 118). It is interesting to analyze the five girls characters in this novel, because they have different behaviors compared to most “normal” adolescents. Adolescents that age are happier with their friends, their activities at school or

socializing with their friends but the five girls in this novel are much happier with their loneliness.

They always make a distance from their friend, they prefer to stay alone at the school's corridor during the break rather than gathering or having fun with the others. These are the reasons why the writer is interested to analyze why are these beautiful girls commit suicide, the factors that cause the suicide, their daily activities and their relationships with the parents and friends.

Jeffrey Eugenides, the author of the novel was born in Detroit Michigan on March 8th 1960. He is an American Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and short story writer. His first novel, *The Virgin Suicides*, was published in 1993. It has been translated into fifteen languages and made into a film in 1999 featuring Sophie Coppola is based on his first novel. From his first novel, Eugenides gets receives an awards as *The International best Seller Winner of the Whiting Award & ALA Book of the Year*. This novel also gets *New York Times 10 Best Book of the Year* in 2002. His fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Best American Short Stories*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *Granta's "Best of Young American Novelists."* In 2003, Jeffrey Eugenides received The Pulitzer Prize for his second novel *Middlesex* (2002). Eugenides is the recipient of many awards, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Whiting Writers' Award, and the Henry D. Vursell Memorial Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In January 2008 he

published an anthology, *My Mistress's Sparrow Is Dead: Great Love Stories from Chekhov to Munro* (Jeffrey Eugenides: Biography)

Jeffrey Eugenides's novel tells about a very religious family, that is the Lisbon's family. They have five beautiful daughters; all of them end their lives in mysterious ways. All of five girls are always stay in their house and have not permit from their parents to go outside besides go to school and church. They feel narrow and desperate if they have to stay at home for a long time. Whereas their home is a dark home and messy. This thing that makes them like prisoner in their own house and finally choose suicide for solve their problems. For instance, Cecilia, the youngest, slices her wrist when she is in the bath tub. The trial of her first suicide failed, but she does it in her second suicide, by letting her body falls from the upper floor of her house. Her suicide is followed by the other four siblings, but each with different ways.

This research is conducted because the writer wants to show and to uncover the five girl characters and the factors of their suicides. In the end of this research, the writer is of the opinion that the family of the girls is the one factor which makes them commit suicide. Further explanation will be discussed in Chapter III.

1.2. Statement of the problems

Based on the background of the study above, the writer is interested to analyze the problems as follows:

What are the reasons for the girls to commit suicide?

1.3. Objective of the study

Based on the statement of the problems above, the objective of the study is to uncover the factors of the five girls in this novel committing suicide.

1.4. Significance of the study

The purposes of writing this thesis are to give some information about the suicide of many people (mass suicide) especially in adolescent stage. The writer also hopes that this study will give more information and inspiration for the faculty and students of English Department who want to do research with the same issues. Hopefully, this research may also give valuable inputs to the readers.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

The scope and limitation is needed in order to make the analysis narrower and more specific. Therefore, the writer focuses only on the five girls characters as the main characters and the factors underlying of their suicides. The writer is going to find out why Lux as pretty girl who has boyfriend commits suicide and is then followed by her older and younger sisters.

1.6. Theoretical background

Since the writer is dealing with fiction as her object of thesis, she has to apply the intrinsic element such as character, plot, setting, point of view, etc. The intrinsic can attempts to make literary study better and so that the readers can also gives appreciate to the work because they have to read it more deeply. When reading a literary work, the reader has to read in a process to get the feeling of the story. The reading process is a strategy whereby the reader temporarily relinquishes his or her own identity in order to enter the world of the work and understand it (Buchbinder 25). It is important for the reader to enter the work, so that the reader can get the meaning of the work by the reading process.

However, the writer will only apply the character and characterization as the main concern because this thesis is about Lux as the main character and her four sisters' death. The behaviors of the characters will be applied as well to support the background of Lux and her sisters' suicide to look at the emotional aspects of the five characters. Behaviors aspect can help us better understand human behavior, and then it must certainly be able to help us understand literary texts, which are about human behavior (Brody 484).

1.7. Method of the study

In this study, the writer uses qualitative method to analyze the issue. Qualitative method is a way to conduct a research without calculating the data. In conducting this academic research, the first step that the writer has to

do is to collect the data or in this case the novel as the primary data. Then she reads the novel many times in order to understand the story in deeply so that she can find the feeling and also the factors that causes the characters in the novel to commit suicide. After reading with *close reading*, the writer is able to get the big issue to analyze.

The next step is to collect the data which is relevant with the issue. The data can be collected from articles, books, journals, the last research, and other kinds of materials related to the subject matter of this thesis. Then the writer starts to analyze it with the theories chosen.

1.8. Definition of key term

Suicide : an act of killing one self because of many things such as depression, alienation and many more. In this case, the suicide happens and done by more than one person (mass suicide).

Secluded : a place that is isolated or never been visited by many people. The five girls always stay at home and never get permission to go outside besides going to school and church.

Irresponsible : a person who does not think about the others. In this case, the mother of the five girls, who is a house wife but she does not do anything both of her daughters, husband, or her home.

Vintage : kind of style that make older for the person who wears it. In this case, the five girls are always wear dresses that make them look older than their age.

Uncomfortable : feeling of not suffering or worrying so much; feeling of being less unhappy. The Lisbon's home that looks dirty and dark make the five girls feel unhappy.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

