

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Family becomes the most important institution whose role is to provide individual with rather common proper mental and physical background that prepared to face the society. Children's personality is affected by how their parents treat and teach them. Those who taught to be brave, they will be able to face the obstacle in life. While those who taught to be very careful in doing something, they will be a doubtful person. Even though there is a possibility that an individual parents put huge effort to shape their children, it may not show result as they expect, the explanation could be because the individual has mental disability or rather the way parents direct them may not suitable for them. As revealed by David Cohen in his book *Stranger in the Nest* that good parenting and child development correlation fails to explain how, of two children raised in a loving and supportive home, one grows up to be a pillar of the community, while the other becomes a drug abuser (1). This statment clarify the fact that same parenting method may give different results.

Each family has their own rules inside or outside the house. Some of them also have the rules in dealing with the larger range which is society. A family may have certain ways to deal with its neighborhood such as how to be polite and how to be selective in choosing friends. The rules made as a method to protect the members of the family and to keep them from doing any harmful actions.

However, the parents or family member that wishes to give strict ruling protection, possibly fail to recognize any symptoms that is shown by the protected subject, whether the protected subject feels comfortable or rather annoyed by the rules given. Those kind of parenting method claims that every children belongs to their own parents and may only their parents can decide what to do or what they believe which is considered as the best way of life for their children.

Inherent from the world, society may also face the rapid change of modernization, such economy, politics, industry, fashion, music, transportation, communication, etc. This change may or may not be acceptable for each different society. Each society perhaps tends to reach differently, as stated by Thomas J. Vicino in his *Transforming Race and Class in Suburbia* that the country's urban history hastily began to transform near the end of World War II.

The older suburbs, mostly those built in the 1950s and 1960s, were then no longer able to be a focus for new development or new residents. In many cases, these suburbs show signs of the very symptoms of turn down that U.S. cities experienced some three decades ago. In contrast, newer suburbs, or "outer suburbs," located further away from the core, are the primary sites of new development and investment (Vicino 5-6)

Vicino argued that the development of urbanization leads to different conditions which are very far from the traditional central part. A new metropolitan environment has been evolved in a very fast process of suburbs and it may lead to the loss of central city reputation (4). That advancement aims to deliver changes

and simplicity toward the society. On the other hand, it can also bring the issue on how society will react whether it is in a positive or negative ways. There are certain families in society that is willing to accept the changes while some other families choose to defend or avoid it.

Those who defend or avoid the changes may have the fear that their loved ones will be the victims of it. It is normal for the parents to feel the fear of the effects of technology and media advancement since children may be the victims of technology and media advancement as in parenthood360 website, Leigh Goessl has said, "Today the media thrives on generating fear and people are constantly bombarded with the negatives in society. While the expansion of the news due to technology doesn't directly impact children, it indirectly has a huge effect on their lives,". Because of negative public exposure delivered on the news, parents are fearful to let their children out and supply them with other entertainment sources that will make them stay at home.

Therefore, parents who are against the advancement may also have related to what they inherit to their children, parents may have the feeling that the changes in society will harm their children or will make their children harm others. The feeling make them have to arrange some guidance and rules to be obeyed by the children. Those rules are considered by the parents as the most suitable for their children although the children may receive it differently.

Rules made by parents may changes randomly, despite teaches and gives children a comfortable understanding that require encountering any information. It may rather become something that is preventing the children from receiving the

influence of the advancement which is scary for the parents. However, from the children's point of view, the belief that the parents tried to apply to them may seem like oppression.

The mother of five girls in Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Virgin Suicides*, Mrs. Lisbon, may be an example that people may react variously toward changes and advancement. Some people may accept the changes as a positive thing in life while Mrs. Lisbon refuses it since advancement that comes rapidly is believed as a threat. It can not support her traditional belief or may rather harm their children in some ways. Thus, the oppression started by the fact that the parents are unable to cooperate with the changes followed by the act upon restriction as the response of disagreement with the changes. Mrs. Lisbon tries to restrain her children from the outside influences, while her children, the Lisbon girls, feel unpleasant with those restrictions. They show their discomfort in several acts although the act may not perform in direct and open ways, rather in such a way where the oppressor acknowledges at the very end of the event or may slightly just show disobedience towards the rule. There is an act which is considered as a resistance in the novel. This act is done by Lux Lisbon, one of the Lisbon's daughters, she hangs her bra on a crucifix. Despite a good worship and devotion, a crucifix, an item that is used in religious activity, Lux's action is considered as disrespectful behavior.

The Virgin Suicides tells about a Catholic family with an ordinary life in Groesbeek, Michigan, in the 1970s. Ronald Lisbon, the head of the family, is a high school math teacher while his wife is a housewife. They have five

daughters who are in the beginning of their puberty; Therese (17), Mary (16), Bonnie (15), Lux (14), and Cecilia (13).

Cecilia, the youngest, tried to kill herself by slashing her wrists while she was taking a bath. The suicide attempted failed and her life is saved, but later Cecilia threw herself from the top floor of the house and stuck in the fence, she died immediately (Eugenides 4-31)

After the death of Cecilia, Lisbon family, especially the daughters of Lisbon, became the center of attention in society. The Lisbon girls have reached their depression of being restrained and ruled by their mother. Lisbon girls are not only forbidden to go to school, they are also disallow to leave the house. Mrs. Lisbon declare such rules because she is afraid of outer influences which may affect her daughters. As the result of being restrained, Therese, Mary, Bonie and Lux finally committed suicide in several different methods.

The Virgin Suicides is the debut work of American author Jeffrey Eugenides who was born in Detroit, Michigan, March 8, 1960, he and his family is now settled in Princeton, New Jersey. Jeffrey Eugenides is then known as a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2003 for his fictive memoir entitled *Middlesex*. *The Virgin Suicides* have been translated into 16 languages and became a bestseller in many countries.

In *The Virgin Suicides*, Eugenides discovers the theme of innocent failure in a suburban family. The novel blend the history of individuals and the country, it is a searching of the vulnerability of youth, but also that of America after the euphoria of post-World War II, an evaluation of the tough classic picture of quiet

suburbia whose glaze is in fact cracking, parting actual confusion to show. After that novel, Eugenides has not release any work and stayed out of the community eye for ten years (Egs.edu 1).

Because the novel is structured as an investigation report, *The Virgin Suicides* has five parts which are rich in detail. Not surprisingly, like a report, Eugenides uses long sentences to explain everything. Only, it can be said, this novel is 'an investigation that failed'. The experience of the investigators in adolescence, a bunch of interviews, and stuffs that considered as the evidences does not provide a definitive answer to the mystery of the Lisbon girls death until the novel ends.

Broadly speaking, the disclosure of the contents of the novel is just the reasons behind suicides of the Lisbon girls. About two decades after all of the Lisbon girls died, several men who were teenagers at the time of the incident to investigate the mysterious death. They do a lot of interviews and gather some evidences. Lisbon house has been sold, Ronald and his wife had left the East Side, even divorced. The results of the investigations made with the experiences and observations as teenagers, outlined in a report by a collection of names and a lot of evidences. The evidence consists of newspaper articles, photos of the house and family , Cecilia diaries , personal items Lisbon daughters such as cosmetics , basketball shoes , candles , glass , and even bras.

Construction of how male and female should be, religion and beliefs in the old ways, become the main source of explanation why the Lisbon girls receive such restriction to keep them from the influences of advancement. Their parents

may think that by giving them the rules, their girls will obey and be safe from the bad things outside.

On the other side, they also fail to acknowledge that their children already hit puberty, now they are teenagers, which hormones may reach the highest tide in life. As stated in the *everydayfeminism* website that actually whether boys or girls typically experience depression at the same frequency before they hit their puberty. But when they reach their puberty, girls get the greater social pressures mixed with the impact of hormones and emotions. Depression may happen easier to girls rather than to boys since it can be caused by genetic factors, environmental circumstances and also hormonal issues. (1)

The writer of this thesis chose *The Virgin Suicides*, by Jeffrey Eugenides since it propose the issue that becomes such everlasting subject in any society lifetime, the process of growing up and parents role regarding the development of their children, how the involvement of the parents can provide sufficient guide needed for their kids also how parents' reaction and filter towards advancement that occur in the place they lives are. While it is clearly explained in *The Virgin Suicides* novel, the parents may fail to accept changes and handle the children, in their puberty stages. The children may receive what to be called as mistreat from parents who incapable to hold better development for their children.

This novel explores detail in how the conflicts happened inside and outside Mrs. Lisbon character. The conflicts are related to some aspects in the plot such as the area and the era of the story and especially to the character and how the character depicted in the novel. This study aims to examine the main

character; Mrs. Lisbon through the formal elements in the novel which are setting, conflicts and characterization. Moreover, the writer wants to reveal how those formal elements can affect the fear felt by Mrs. Lisbon character.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Reading the novel and determining the topic as it has already been explained above, there is a question which appears. The question is:

How do the setting, conflict and characterization reveal Mrs. Lisbon's fear of changes in *The Virgin Suicide* novel?

1.3. Objective of the study

In organizing this study, the objectives that purposed to be reached is:

To analyze how the setting, conflict and characterization create the fear of changes experienced by Mrs. Lisbon in *The Virgin Suicide* novel.

1.4. Significance of the study

The writer is doing the analysis to acknowledge the internal and external conflicts that experienced by Mrs. Lisbon. . Moreover, this study is trying to reveal how Mrs. Lisbon's fear of the outside world and how the neighborhood and environment affect it. This study also analyzes the effects of the conflict experienced by Mrs. Lisbon towards her decision and rules over the Lisbon girls.

The significance of this study is to be able to understand the main character deeply through the setting and conflict happened in the novel. Based on

the proposed object above, when the purposes of this study are achieved, it is hoped that it can be understood by the reader how conflict may happened inside and outside the character.

This study also intends to give benefits and contributions for the students of English Department Airlangga University majoring in literature, especially to those who interested in learning about the character and conflicts by using New Criticism.

1.5. Scope and limitation

In gaining comprehensive analysis, the writer needs to focus the study on significant range, a scope and limitation will be applied for analyzing the novel.

This scope and limitation is important to be applied in order to keep the analysis stays on track. This study focuses mainly on the setting, conflicts and the characterization of Mrs. Lisbon in *The Virgin Suicides* novel. The writer will analyze the way setting, conflicts and characterization support the theme of Mrs. Lisbon's fear of advancement. The conflicts that will be examined are the internal conflicts which happened between Mrs. Lisbon and the feeling she experienced inside herself and the external conflicts which happened between Mrs. Lisbon and other characters or society.

Additionally, to acknowledge more about the character, the writer will trace the circumstances that experienced by the character and the respond towards the situation occurs. The writer limits the analysis only in one of the characters

which is Mrs. Lisbon since she is the most influencing character in dealing with the Lisbon girls' suicide.

1.6. Theoretical background

In composing the analysis, the writer of the thesis starts from analysis of anything that related with Mrs.Lisbon character. Therefore, the writer will use a theory that can be used to analyze the formal elements such as setting, characters and conflicts. The writer of this thesis will use one major theory New Criticism which definitely formalist.

New Criticism state that the analysis approach to literature that is required is an intrinsic approach that emphasizes the structure of the literary work itself and it is not applicable to examine the reader's point of view. The gap between the reader's emotions and meaning of the work can not be connected by literary critics with the tools given, the work of the text itself. New Criticism suggest that in approaching or analyzing literary works, we have to do the microscopic reading at first. This method is known as a close reading which is considered as a method of reading the literary works that tried to examine the elements in a text as detail as possible. It is intended that no one piece of literature that was observed regardless of the observation, because all parts of the literature , no matter how small the part, a part that may not be separated (Tyson, 136-137)

Moreover, the writer decides to use the intrinsic approach to analyze the novel. Intrinsic approach takes part from the literary work itself and emphasizes the analysis intertext by describing the elements. Intrinsic approach applied by the

writer since it concerns with the literary elements of the novel, such as plot, theme, setting, character and conflict. Later, the writer will analyze how the conflict and counteract by Mrs. Lisbon and her daughters happened in the story. Therefore, the most appropriate theory in analyzing the problems is New Criticism. The writer also uses New Criticism theory in order to see the role of those three formal elements in finding the theme of this study. Those approaches and concepts are applied to help the writer to get a deeper analysis in this thesis.

1.7. Method of the study

This study will be doing in certain method. The method will be divided into two parts which are data collection and data analysis. In the process of writing this thesis, the writer uses the novel itself as the main source, *The Virgin Suicides*. The writer will read it using close reading in examining the setting, conflicts and characterization of Mrs. Lisbon character.

The writer will also collect data from essays, critics, dictionaries, encyclopedia, online library, and literary books which have a closer interpretation and related to the issues that appear in the novel, that are associated with this subject. After collecting and identifying the qualitative data, the writer applies the data analysis.

In analyzing the data, the writer uses New Criticism theory and interpretative analysis. This method is considered suitable to be applied in the analysis because it supports properly the description of the topic which is going to be analyzed. To interpret something is to put it in words that the reader can better

understand. To analyze is to examine the parts of a work with the goal of determining the nature of the whole. Interpretive analysis can help discover the meaning of certain actions or conversations occur in the novel.

The writer will analyze the setting, conflicts and characterization of Mrs. Lisbon. Furthermore, the writer will examine Mrs. Lisbon's character particularly about how the fear felt by Mrs. Lisbon and the doubt she felt through the way she thinks of female sexual desire begin to be experienced by her daughters depicted in the novel. The writer will also reveal about other characters and society roles in forming the conflicts felt by Mrs. Lisbon. After that, the writer will analyze how the setting, conflicts and characterization can reveal single best interpretation of fear experienced by Mrs. Lisbon.

Finally, the next step after making the analysis is drawing the conclusion in order to reach the finding of this study which is the novel's theme. Therefore, the study is complete based on the research requirements.

1.8. Definition of key terms

To get more comprehension to the study, there are terms of guidance:

- Changes** : A transformation or transition from one state, condition, or phase to another
- Characterization** : the way to describe certain character in a plot both physical appearance and behavior
- Conflicts** : An expressed struggle or chaos which happen both inside a character and between a character and other characters or society
- Fear** : A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger.
- Setting** : the explanation of the place and time of the story
- Society** : the community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW