

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter includes the research background which is intended to explain the issue discussed in this research. This chapter is organized into research background, statement of problem, research purposes, and research significance, definition of key terms, and organization of writings.

1.1 Research Background

In the research background section, the researcher introduces the research issue, explains the selection of the work based on specific reasons, and then presents topics such as narrative structure. The theory used is Genette's theory of narrative discourse, specifically voice and mood. This section includes an example of data from the literary work. Next, several previous studies related to narrative structure, mood, and voice, the literary work, and the identified research gap are included. Finally, a set of conclusions concludes this section.

Literary works have various characteristics such as originality, artistry, and beauty in their content and expression. Those characteristics make the literary work interesting in its intrinsic aspects, which construct the literary work itself. It is the aspect that causes a text to exist as a literary text and directly constructs a story, thereby giving existence to a literary work. For instance, contemporary literary studies help readers and researchers understand the aesthetic sensibilities of the present day, involving how texts address complex issues through narrative strategies, specifically a narrator that has various narrative perspectives and roles in the story.

One of the literary works examined in this study is *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* by Max Porter. This was published in 2015 by Faber and Faber Ltd in London. This literary work is the first verse novel of Max Porter and has some positive ratings 3,81/5 from Goodreads and 4,1 from Amazon UK. In 2016, the verse novel won the Sunday Times PFD Young Writer of the Year Award, the Books Are My Bag Readers' Award for fiction, the 2016 Dylan Thomas Prize, and the 2017

Europese Literatuurprijs. It has also been shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award and the Goldsmiths Prize for experimental writing. *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* tells a widowed father and his two young sons who are grieving after the death of the boys' mother. At the moment, they are visited by a mysterious bird called Crow. Throughout the story, Crow acts as a trickster, healer, and eventually, a caregiver during their grieving process.

There are several reasons why the researcher chose Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* as the object of this research. This verse novel is a prominent example of contemporary English fiction that presents a narrative in polyphonic form (involving three narrators) that has different perspectives and roles when narrating the story. Therefore, *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* becomes an ideal object for examining how this verse novel examines narrative structure in constructing its narrative.

Narrative structure is an important aspect of literary analysis because it relates to how a story is constructed and conveyed by the narrator. In literature, a story is conveyed not only through a sequence of events but also through narrative techniques that determine who is speaking, from whose perspective events are perceived, and how characters' experiences are constructed within the text. In literary works such as *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*, narrative structure becomes particularly important to examine because the narrative is delivered through several different narrators. Furthermore, each narrator has a different perspective, a distinct distance from the narrative, and a position in the narrating process. Therefore, this variety of voices demonstrates that the narrative is driven by the relationship between perspective, the narrator's position, and the emotional experiences conveyed by the narrator.

In analyzing the narrative structure in the verse novel *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*, the researcher uses Gérard Genette's narratology framework in his book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1990). The narrative structure in Genette's narratology is an organized system of elements and techniques that form a narrative with a focus on the relationship between the narrative and the story it

tells. Genette then offers five main categories, namely order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice. However, this study focuses on only two aspects, namely mood and voice. Mood relates to distance and focalization, which is the perspective from which events are seen and felt. Meanwhile, voice explains who is telling the story and from what diegetic level, as well as whether the narrator is also a character in the story. This theory was chosen because it provides clear, technical, specific, and proven categories for analyzing narrative structure in detail. Meanwhile, focusing on the categories of mood and voice allows researchers to examine how the choice of perspective and position from each of narrators. Moreover, each narrator has a different narrative that is delivered, both in mood and voice. Therefore, it has the potential to be examined in the context of the direct relationship between the narrator and the narrative.

The data in this study consists of text excerpts from Max Porter's verse novel *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* (2015), covering language units at the word, phrase, clause, and sentence levels. The data analyzed are text excerpts that representatively show the narrative structure, categorized into mood and voice in forming a verse novel and contributing to the development of the narrative. The following are examples of data from the verse novel *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*:

“I miss her so much it is a vast golden prince, a concert hall, a thousand trees, a lake, nine thousand buses, a million cars, twenty million birds and more. The whole city is my missing her.” (Porter, 2015, p. 50)

This passage already contains voice in Genette's narratology. This part is conveyed by an autodiegetic narrator who is also the main character with internal focalization. The narrator is inside the story, playing the role of a character in the story, where the reader experiences the intensity of longing only through Dad's perception. This example shows that Genette's choice of voice and focalization work together to produce an effect of grief that the narrator experienced and arrange the narrative.

Koesoemah (2016) wrote a diploma thesis titled *The narrative structure on Nicholas Sparks' novel Dear John*. The purpose of this study is to analyze the narrative techniques and narrative structure of the novel *Dear John* using Gerard Genette's theory of narratology. The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive. The results show that there are 47 data points on narrative structure and narrative techniques in the novel *Dear John*. There are 7 data points on order, 5 data points on mood, 3 data points on voice, 17 data points on internal focalization, and 16 data points on plot in the novel. This study analyzes order, mood, voice, and plot in novels that are not specific to mood and voice.

Govindarajulu and Koperundevi (2016) wrote an article titled "An Application Of Gerard Genette's Narrative Methods Of Mood And Voice To Study Somerset Maugham's Short Story *The Pool*." This article applies Gerard Genette's categories, namely mood and voice. *The Pool*, the author tells the story only as an observer, which is internal focalization. The story's incidents are told by Chaplin, Miller, and also by Lawson, the hero. In the temporal distance, *The Pool* is categorized as the third category "simultaneous narrating". In the narration level, *The Pool* is categorized as Intradiegetic. Not only is the narrator's involvement in the story important to expose the implication but also the role of the narratee to interpret the story promptly and correctly to bring out the elegance of the story. This study only examines mood and voice, not the interconnection between them to develop the narrative.

Nibakure (2021) wrote an article titled "The Poetics of Fidelity in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* (2015) and Nicholas Royle's *Quilt* (2010)". Using Derrida's concept of "fidelity" and Ramazani's theory of modern elegy, Nibakure highlights how the grieving characters in both novels are caught between mourning and melancholia; he emphasizes the role of memory, memory failure, and the spectral presence of the dead. This article also touches on Porter's experimental techniques such as polyvocal narration, hybrid forms, neologisms, ellipsis, and typographical voids. Nevertheless, this study has not analyzed narrative structure by Gerard Genette.

Based on the above research gap, this study has several novelties. First, this research offers a structural reading of *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* using Genette's narratology framework, which is rarely applied to this verse novel. Second, not only examining voice and mood separately, this research integrates narrative structure aspects such as voice and mood and their contribution to narrative development. In addition, Gérard Genette's narratology explores the concepts of mood and voice, which are different but have an interactive relationship. This combination is theoretically significant because it combines two aspects of narrative structure (mood and voice) from each of the narrators, such as how they convey emotion in the narrative between the three narrators (Dad, Boys, and Crow). Therefore, this integrated approach provides a methodological contribution for examining the verse novel.

This study argues that *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* verse novel through Genette's narrative structure analysis (voice and mood). By understanding how mood and voice in the narrative structure are found and exploring how mood and voice are integrated, this study explores narratology and maps aesthetic strategy in the verse novel.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background in this research above, the researcher concludes that two questions will be the main focuses on this research; they are:

1. How are mood and voice from the narrators found in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*?
2. How are mood and voice from the narrators integrated in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*?

1.3 Research Purposes

Based on the formulation of the research question above, this research is intended:

1. To understand how mood and voice from the narrators are found in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*.

2. To explore how mood and voice from the narrators are integrated in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*.

1.4 Research Significances

This study can hopefully offer a contribution to expand contemporary English literary studies by demonstrating how Genette's concept of narrative discourse can be applied to the verse novel. Therefore, this study offers a bridge to narrative structure aspects such as voice and mood for showing how mood and voice are integrated in developing the narrative and mapping aesthetic strategy in the verse novel. By examining the narrative structure by Gerard Genette in the verse narrative, this study might give some perspective on the importance of examining literary works in the intrinsic aspect itself. It is because the intrinsic aspect builds the literary work to give it existence. In addition, the study is expected to serve as a reference for further research that analyzes literary works in the narrative structure aspect. Moreover, the study can be a way of developing literary appreciation, especially in the intrinsic aspect.

1.5 Organization of Writings

The research will commence with a preface, abstract, and thereafter will be separated into five chapters. The first chapter is Introduction. The second chapter is Theoretical Foundation of Narrative Discourse. The third chapter III is Research Methodology. The fourth chapter IV is Findings and Discussion of Narrative Structure in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*. The last chapter is Conclusion and Recommendation.

Chapter I is the Introduction. This chapter presents the research background, statement of problem, objective and research significances, definition of key terms, and organization of writings.

Chapter II is the Theoretical Foundation. This chapter explains the theory that is applied in this research. It contains structuralism, narrative discourse, narrative structure, and two areas in narrative discourse by Gérard Genette that will be discussed in this research.

Chapter III is Research Methodology. The chapter explains the research design that contains the type of research, data, sample of data, and technique of analyzing data.

Chapter IV is Finding and Discussion. The chapter contains the analysis and the explanation of the narrative structure, especially mood and voice in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*.

Chapter V is Conclusion and Suggestion. This chapter contains the conclusion from this research and suggestions for future researchers.

