

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents five sub-chapters that consist of the background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literary works are full of "codes" that guide reading, and readers must decode these codes to understand their meaning. Codes are socially established rules that help people interpret signs (Eco 1979: 45). Eco explains that every code has many layers of meaning, which can only be accessed through understanding literary codes, both explicit and implicit. In life we are also inseparable from codes, for example perfume advertisements, often use images of glamour and sensuality, the meaning of this product not only sells a scent but also conveys an identity or lifestyle that consumers want to project. (Williamson, 1978: 25).

Roland Barthes (2002:19) in his book *S/Z* put forward the idea of five narrative codes that he uses to deconstruct literary texts. These codes include hermeneutic code, proairetic code, semantic code, symbolic code, and cultural code. For Example: In *Balzac's Sarrasine*, Barthes points to the mystery surrounding the character Zambinella's identity, which is gradually revealed throughout the text (Barthes, 2002:75).

The source of data in this study is a novel entitled *A Man Called Ove*, *A Man Called Ove* is a deeply touching novel that blends humor, grief, and human connection. The novel's protagonist, Ove, is an old man dealing with loss and loneliness, yet his story reveals the importance of community and relationships. According to Sandberg et al (2022: 1) *A Man Called Ove* contains humorous and hard-warming stories of older people as active protagonists who are often portrayed as grumpy but "usually turn out to have a hard of gold".

A Man Called Ove written by Fredrick Backman, Fredrik Backman is a renowned Swedish author known for his ability to craft emotionally compelling and relatable characters. The simplicity of the title reflects the straightforward yet profound nature of the novel, making it a strong subject for literary and semiotic exploration. This novel is a romance novel in which the author portrays the personality of the novel's a main character. Ove is an old man with an annoying character after the death of his wife Sonja.

A Man Called Ove has several codes that can be analyzed by using five narrative codes. A prominent French literary critic, Barthes (1972:82) states the idea that language is not fixed. There could be multiple meanings attached to a single language unit. Consequently, there could be more than one meaning attached to a single word. Roland Barthes rejects the hegemony of interpreting texts with traditional methodologies. He believes that a literary text can reflect multiple shades, due to the reader's involvement in the meaning-making process Roland Barthes (1986). For example, the interpretation of five codes in *A Man Called Ove*: the mystery surrounding Ove's backstory and why he behaves so grumpily intrigues readers. The gradual revelation of his past including the loss of his wife, his values, and his love for order and routine, keeps readers curious. Related to codes in the novel *A Man Called Ove*, the writer feels it is more interesting when the writer applies a different approach (semiotic approach).

To support and add to the writer's insight, the writer tries to trace several previous studies that have similarities with the topic of this research. The following are some previous studies on the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman: The first previous study is an article under the title "*Traumatic Experiences in Fredrick Backman's A Man Called Ove*" by Prastika Wulandari Hormati, Tini Moge, and Sanerita T. Olii. A Literary Psychology Analysis (2024). This study discusses the personality of the main character Ove with a literary psychology approach. The second previous study is an article under the title "*Bouncing Off Ove: Old Men's Readings of The Novel A Man Called Ove as a Cultural Representation of Aging Masculinity*" by Linn J Sandberg, Karin Lovgren, and Jeff

Hearn (2020). This study analyzes the narrative structure and characterization in this novel, highlighting Ove's character development.

The third previous study is an article under the title “*Personality Traits In Fredrick Backman’s Novel A Man Called Ove*” by Chintya Winda Natalia (2018). This research explores the themes of loneliness, community, and human connection depicted in the novel. The fourth previous study is an article under the title “*Tripartite Depiction On The Main Character In A Man Called Ove Novel*” by Amel Lia Cahyani and Eli Nurmaily (2024). The focus of this research is on the values of life and the changes in Ove's life perspective that are explored throughout the story.

The difference between this study and the previous study above is the theoretical framework. This study uses semiotics theory by Roland Barthes to analyze symbols in the novel *A Man Called Ove*.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of this study, the writer examines multiple layers of meaning by Roland Barthes' five codes in the novel *A Man Called Ove*, the issues are defined as follows:

What do codes signify in the novel *A Man Called Ove* based on five narrative codes theory?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To find the signified meaning of codes in the novel *A Man Called Ove* is based on the five narrative codes theory.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study is expected to support references and knowledge about the five narrative code theories by Roland Barthes. This study also contributes

to the broader field of literary studies by offering a semiotics analysis of a popular contemporary novel.

Practically, the writer hopes that the result of this study is useful to provide information to the reader of the novel *A Man Called Ove* about five codes. This study hopefully can increase better understanding in the five narrative codes by Roland Barthes', and can take the meaning and lessons contained in the novel, such as lessons about loss, happiness, sincerity, and accepting God's destiny. By utilizing semiotics theory, this study not only enhances the understanding of Backman's work but also demonstrates how literature can be a powerful tool for conveying complex human emotions and ideas through signs.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is the semiotic analysis of selected kinds of code in the novel *A Man Called Ove*. This study specifically focuses on five narrative codes by Roland Barthes (enigma, proairetic, symbolic, semantic, and cultural code). Meanwhile, the writer of this study limits the discussion in the characters and narrator's words which embody multiple meanings by using semiotic theory.