

**THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN ALICE SEBOLD'S *THE
LOVELY BONES***

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UIN MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG
2021**

**THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN ALICE SEBOLD'S *THE
LOVELY BONES***

THESIS

Presented to
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.)

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled “**The Portrayal of Women in Alice Sebold’s *The Lovely Bones***” is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 19 May 2021

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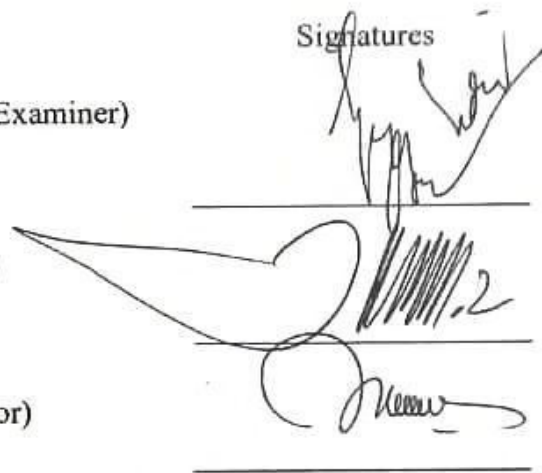
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MOTTO

“That’s what the world is, after all: an endless battle of contrasting memories.”

Haruki Murakami

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated for my beloved family: my father, Ahmad Muslim; my mother, Mukmina; my younger sister, Solehatuh Zakiyah; and my younger brothers, Muhammad Holil Askarullah, Muhammad Asyraf, and Muhammad Tsaqib Ramadhan.

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I realize that this thesis might be far from perfect. Therefore, suggestions and constructive criticism are always welcome from the readers. Lastly, I hope that this thesis would be beneficial for the readers, especially the students of the Department of English Literature in upcoming generations.

Malang, 23 June 2021

Muzliya Pertiwi

ABSTRACT

Pertiwi, Muzliya. 2021. *The Portrayal of Women in Alice Sebold's The Lovely Bones*. Minor Thesis (*Skripsi*). Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Advisor : Dr. Hj. Istiadah, M. A.

Keywords : Women portrayal, the feminine mystique, feminist literary criticism

This study aims to, first, describe the characteristics of women, and second, analyze the portrayal of women in Alice Sebold's novel entitled *The Lovely Bones*. The unrealistic portrayal of women has been a concern in the male-dominated literary tradition. Due to the lack of women's roles in literary production, women characters in literary works are frequently portrayed biased and one-sided. Thus, it is important to discuss women's experiences through the works of female authors, since female authors have firsthand experience in portraying the life of women.

The method used in this study is feminist literary criticism, because it focuses on analyzing women's roles in a literary work. The main data of this research were taken from the novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. The data collected from the novel were in the form of words, sentences, dialogues, and phrases related to the characterization and portrayal of women in the novel. This study used Ruthven's theory of feminist literary criticism to describe the characteristics of women and Betty Friedan's theory of the feminine mystique to analyze the portrayal of women in the novel.

The result of this study shows that there are five female characters with diverse and complex characteristics: Susie Salmon, a gentle and affectionate daughter; Lindsey Salmon, a strong and brave teenage girl; Abigail Salmon, a misguided mother; Ruth Connors, a subversive painter/poet; and Ruana Singh, a beautiful but lonely housewife. There are two types of women portrayed in the novel: the trapped housewives and the new women. The trapped housewives are represented by Abigail Salmon and Ruana Singh. Meanwhile, the new women is represented by Susie Salmon, Abigail Salmon, and Ruth Connors.

ABSTRAK

Pertiwi, Muzliya. 2021. *Penggambaran Perempuan dalam Novel The Lovely Bones Karya Alice Sebold*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Advisor : Dr. Hj. Istiadah, M. A.

Kata Kunci : Penggambaran perempuan, *the feminine mystique*, kritik sastra feminis

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk, pertama, mendeskripsikan karakteristik perempuan, dan kedua, menganalisis penggambaran perempuan dalam novel Alice Sebold berjudul *The Lovely Bones*. Penggambaran karakter perempuan yang tidak realistis telah menjadi persoalan dalam budaya sastra yang didominasi laki-laki. Karena minimnya peran perempuan dalam produksi sastra, karakter perempuan dalam karya sastra seringkali digambarkan bias dan sepihak. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk membahas pengalaman perempuan melalui karya penulis perempuan, karena penulis perempuan memiliki pengalaman langsung dalam menggambarkan kehidupan karakter perempuan.

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kritik sastra feminis, karena berfokus pada peran perempuan dalam sebuah karya sastra. Data utama penelitian ini diambil dari novel *The Lovely Bones* karya Alice Sebold. Data yang dikumpulkan dari novel berupa kata, kalimat, dialog, dan frasa yang berkaitan dengan penokohan dan penggambaran perempuan dalam novel. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori kritik sastra feminis oleh K. K. Ruthven untuk mendeskripsikan karakteristik perempuan dan teori *the feminine mystique* oleh Betty Friedan untuk menganalisis penggambaran perempuan dalam novel.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat lima karakter perempuan dengan karakteristik yang beragam dan kompleks, yaitu: Susie Salmon, seorang putri yang lembut dan penyayang; Lindsey Salmon, seorang gadis remaja yang kuat dan pemberani; Abigail Salmon, ibu yang kehilangan arah dalam kehidupan; Ruth Connors, seorang pelukis/penyair yang subversif; dan Ruana Singh, seorang ibu rumah tangga yang cantik tapi kesepian. Ada dua tipe perempuan yang digambarkan dalam novel: *the trapped housewives* dan *the new women*. *The trapped housewives* direpresentasikan oleh Abigail Salmon dan Ruana Singh. Sedangkan *the new women* direpresentasikan oleh Susie Salmon, Abigail Salmon, dan Ruth Connors.

مستخلص البحث

فرتيوي، موزليا. 2021. *صور النساء في رواية أليس سيبولد "العظام الجميلة" (The Lovely Bones)*. البحث الجامعي. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي ، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج.

المشرفة: الدكتورة استيعادة الماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تصوير المرأة، الغموض الأنثوي ، النقد الأدبي النسوي.

تهدف هذه الدراسة ، أولاً ، إلى وصف خصائص المرأة ، وثانياً ، تحليل تصوير النساء في رواية أليس سيبولد بعنوان "العظام الجميلة" (*The Lovely Bones*). فأصبح التصوير غير الواقعي للشخصيات النسائية مشكلة في الثقافة الأدبية التي يهيمن عليها الذكور. نظرًا لدور المرأة الضئيل في الإنتاج الأدبي ، غالبًا ما يتم تصوير الشخصيات النسائية في الأعمال الأدبية على أنها متحيزة ومنحازة. لذلك من المهم مناقشة تجارب النساء من خلال عمل الكاتبات لأن الكاتبات لديهن خبرة مباشرة في وصف حياة الشخصيات النسائية.

تستخدم هذه الدراسة أسلوب النقد الأدبي النسوي ، لأنه يركز على دور المرأة في العمل الأدبي. البيانات الرئيسية لهذا البحث مأخوذة من رواية "العظام الجميلة" (*The Lovely Bones*) للكاتب أليس سيبولد. البيانات التي تم جمعها من الرواية هي في شكل كلمات وجمل وحوارات وعبارات تتعلق بتوصيفات وصور النساء في الرواية. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نظرية النقد الأدبي النسوي لـ K.K. Ruthven لوصف خصائص المرأة ونظرية السحر الأنثوي لـ Betty Friedan في تحليل تصوير المرأة في الرواية.

وأظهرت النتائج أن هناك خمس شخصيات نسائية ذات خصائص متنوعة ومعقدة، وهي: سوزي سالمون، ابنة لطيفة ومحبة. ليندسي سالمون، فتاة مراهقة قوية وشجاعة؛ أبيجيل سالمون، الأم التي ضلت طريقها في الحياة؛ روث كونورز، رسامة / شاعرة تخريبية؛ وروانا سينغ، ربة منزل جميلة ولكن وحيدة. هناك نوعان من النساء الموصوفات في الرواية: ربوات البيوت المحصورات والمرأة الجديدة. وتمثل ربوات البيوت المحاصرات أبيجيل سالمون وروانا سينغ. في هذه الأثناء، مثلت النساء الجديديات سوزي سالمون وأبيجيل سالمون وروث كونورز.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research background, research questions, research objectives, significances of the study, the scope of the study, definition of key terms, previous studies, and research design.

A. Background of the Study

In the first phase of English literature, literary history related to writing and cultural production was rarely associated with women. Prior to 1150, there was no female name in the list of literary writers who are known for writing in the ancient English language, or better known as Anglo Saxon. Although literary works produced during this period were often written anonymously, literary critics and historians alike have become accustomed to viewing texts from the Old English period as literate products from male authors (Lees & Overing, 2012). In this way, it has become a common assumption that women play minor roles in the production of literary works.

Even now, let's say, as we enter our university library and look at the anthology books of English poetry, short stories, or dramatic scenarios, it may be readily concluded that the greatest writers in the history of English literature were. Female writers were "greatly outnumbered", even absent at certain periods. The absence of female writers in the English literary tradition, or literature in general, have subsequently influenced the portrayal of women in literary works; how women are represented, and how women's perspectives are delivered in literary works.

Driven by this situation, as well as the fact that in the early years of the emergence of written literature, literature was very restricted and most people who could write were men, the portrayal of women in literary works was inescapably biased and one-sided. The Victorian era was dominated by writers who described women as angelic figures: innocent, physically weak, and nothing more than household attributes. In Medieval Era, women were seen as either saints that are capable of restraining their sexual desires, or, otherwise, dangerous temptresses. Meanwhile in the seventeenth century, women were commonly stereotyped as shy mistresses. (Marfleet, n.d.)

Starting from the 18th century, the portrayal of women began to be more complex and realistic in prose narratives. Female novelists started to show up and depicted society from women's perspectives. For example, in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte portrays a woman who is able to take control of her own destiny. Most of the writings they produce are fictions, because "fictions are the easiest things to write for women" (Woolf, 1966). Their fictional writings were written based on their daily experiences and depicted their deep agitation. But at first, women's opinions and views were considered unimportant, insignificant, and emotional from male's point of view. No wonder, since all the rules regarding the writing of literary works were regulated by men (Chen, 2010).

In the last 150 years, literary writers, both male and female, have been doing a deep exploration in respect of the role of women in literary works, whether psychologically or socially. The feminist movement had also encouraged awareness for a more realistic depiction of women's roles. The birth of the

feminist movement gave rise to a new voice protest from women who began to realize their marginal position in this male-dominated society. After that, stories that placed women not only as objects of a narrative, but become 'subjects of agitation in their own right', began to emerge (Gupta, 1991).

To write a literary work in the form of a novel, it is not limited by who the author is and how the author's life background is. Men and women writers have the same rights to convey their ideas and imaginations into a literary work. However, from the two kinds of authors, the difference in the way they express their ideas will be clear. One of the obvious differences between the two types of writing written by men and women is when they write stories about the life of a woman as the main character in a novel. Male writers who still use traditional cultural depictions of their female characters will be seen biased from the readers' thoughts, especially if the reader is a woman. They will feel that there is something strange and untrue about the story, because they will assume that the stories do not always match the real situation of women's lives. It is different with female writers, when they bring up the story about the life of a woman who is also the main character, they will understand much more about the forms of experience and the true nature of a woman. This can happen because the writer herself is a woman (Noviyanti, 2019: 5).

The descriptions of the life story and experience of women will be further represented clearly by a woman writer. Women who are also the creators of literary works will be more likely to draw the story of a woman's life through a

more open and reliable depiction. Therefore, in this study, the writer prioritizes a woman who is a writer or creator of a literary work in the form of a novel.

One of the literary works, especially those produced by women, that portrays a deep exploration of women's perspectives and experiences in this contemporary era is Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*. Alice Sebold is an American writer. She had published a total of two novels and a memoir, but her most well-known published book is her first novel, *The Lovely Bones*. In some interviews, Alice Sebold had stated that *The Lovely Bones* is particularly influenced by her real life experience. When she was a freshman in college, she had been brutally raped in a tunnel while walking back to her dormitory one night. In the same tunnel, she learned that another girl had been raped too, and even murdered after that. The main character in *The Lovely Bones*, Susie Salmon, was also raped and murdered. Whereas *The Lovely Bones* is a fictional book, it is the work of a writer who has direct experience with rape and its aftermath. The trauma that Susie suffered in the course of her rape is written by a woman who has personally lived through the horror.

I first became "acquainted" with the story of *The Lovely Bones* when she was in junior high school. At that time I was watching the filmed version of the novel (the novel was adapted into a movie with the same name directed by Peter Jackson in 2009). I just had the opportunity to read the novel thoroughly about a year ago, when I was already in the fifth semester of college. As it turned out, the novel version was far more stunning than the film version. Not only the main character, every other characters in this novel were also given fair parts to

describe their characteristics as whole. And most importantly, its female characters are portrayed not only as stereotypical companions or objects to men's lives, but as self-sufficient, independent individuals who are able to determine their own life decisions. Each of them has their own story. And they are not depicted in a rigid and one-way manner; or to roughly be labeled as good or bad; or as the “decoratives” of the (mostly male) main characters. They are round and dynamic characters who are able to experience changes and development in their respective personalities.

The Lovely Bones was first published in 2002. It tells the story of Susie Salmon, a 13 year old middle school girl, who was murdered after being brutally raped by George Harvey, an old man who lived next door. Her body was never found, and her family continued to wait in hope that Susie will come back alive and safe. As time passed, they began to realize that their waiting was in vain. They soon were forced to move on their lives by accepting the fact that one of their family members had been murdered. Susie, being the key narrator of the story, watched from the afterlife as people who were closely related to her (her family, friends, and neighbours) experience mental changes and developments throughout the novel. Although *The Lovely Bones* was Sebald's first published book, this novel was very much praised at the time it was released and became instantly popular.

There are a total of five female characters in this novel, without including the minor characters whose names were only briefly mentioned in the novel. They are Susie Salmon, Lindsey Salmon, Abigail Salmon, Ruth Connors, and Ruana

Singh. Abigail Salmon is a married woman who, upon Susie's death, began to realize that she had been pretending to be someone else throughout her married life and, therefore, made a brave decision to travel thousands of miles away to live alone in California for many years in order to discover her true self. Lindsey Salmon is a teenage girl who felt that she had always been an underdog, especially after her sister's death, and in the end proved that she had her own ability, as well as also being the most influential person in uncovering her late sister's death case. Each female character has their own story premise. Each of them also experiences a complex inner turmoil that is narrated in remarkably detailed descriptions that make us (the readers) able to stand on their shoes and understand the choices they make. And it is also these details that make this novel one of a kind.

This research will begin with describing the characteristics of the five female characters above, before moving on to analyzing the portrayal of women in this novel as a whole. I aim to analyze this novel using Ruthven's feminist literary criticism and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. *The Lovely Bones* is used as an object of this study because of several reasons: (1) The novel is written by a female author, (2) Literary works produced by female authors are different from those produced by male authors, because female authors are more relatable and realistic in describing a woman due to her experience and direct involvement in the culture that surrounds them, (3) There is concern that the assessment of literary works based on the experience of men may not present the identity of women as producers of texts, and (4) In order to find and understand women's

problems, it is necessary to use texts related to female experience, including literary works produced by female writers.

Several researchers had also used this novel as an object of their study. However, these previous studies mostly used a psychological approach in researching this novel. Therefore, research of this novel with a feminist approach becomes something new and different. Oksa Hidayat (2018) conducted a research on Jack Salmon's stages of grief in accepting his daughter's death using psychological approach, Ardilles Americo Sonambela (2019) identified depressive symptoms in the Salmon family and how they cope with their depression using the theories of depression by Bhowmik et. al., and Shahid Ahmad and Shanti Nadarajan (2020) analyzed the thought presentation of Susie Salmon and Mr. Harvey using stylistic approach.

Most of the research conducted on this novel were focused on psychological states of the major characters (Mr. Harvey, Susie Salmon, and the Salmon family). The study that was closest in topic with this research that I found was conducted by Rizki Arrida (2013) titled "Maturation Beyond the Grave: A Narratology Reading to Susie Salmon in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*". In this thesis, the writer discussed about the use of narratology in studying the main protagonist, Susie Salmon. However, this research took no account of the rest of the female characters. It only focused on Susie's character development. This study also used a different analysis approach with this research.

Several research which are particularly concerned with the portrayal of women in literary works were also found. For example, in 2019, Devi Noviyanti

conducted a research concerning the representation of women by women in the novel *Nglari Woting Ati* by Fitri Gunawan. This study used Ruthven's theory (1984) of feminist literary criticism to find the representation of women, while the approaches used were the objective approach and gynocriticism. This study has the same theory as this research, but it differs in the object and the context. This study's object was a Javanese novel that used a setting in Java. Thus, the context used in this study was also derived from Javanese background. Meanwhile, *The Lovely Bones* has a setting in the United States and a context of American culture in the 1970s.

Then, in 2020, Dr. K. Jayalakshmi analyzed the plays of the famous playwright, Jai Shankar Prasad, in portraying the female understanding and ideology through a research titled "The Portrayal of Women in Jaishankar Prasad's Plays". This research showed that women in his plays are individuals who in her own way, are independent, self-sufficient and unconventional. Although in this study, the researcher only stated that the method used is descriptive and systematic, from the aim and the focus of the study, we can readily conclude that this study used a feminist approach.

The two last research used the same approach, which was the feminist approach, but this research will be different because it intends to employ K. K. Ruthven's theory of feminist literary criticism and Betty Friedan's theory of *the feminine mystique* on an American novel entitled *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. This research is intended to demonstrate how emerging women writers in modern literature have been actively challenging the traditional patriarchal gender

norms, and show how important it is to portray women and their experiences as realistically as possible in literary works.

B. Problems of the Study

In light of the discussion above, this research aims to answer these following questions.

1. What are the characteristics of women in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*?
2. How is the portrayal of women in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*?

C. Objectives of the Study

Concerning the previous research questions, this research attempts to focus on the following objectives.

1. To describe the characteristics of women in *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold.
2. To analyze how women are portrayed in the novel.

D. Significances of the Study

Given the proposed subject, this study seeks to be conducted with theoretical and practical contributions in the area of feminist study. Theoretically, this study is expected to expand to previous studies and feminist findings on the subject of women portrayal in literature, especially in the terms of combining two theories (feminist literary criticism by K. K. Ruthven and the feminine mystique by Betty Friedan) in order to answer the problems of the research. From a

practical standpoint, this study illustrates how emerging women writers in the late centuries have been actively challenging the traditional male-centered perspectives in the literary canon. In addition, the results and discussions of this study might be useful for English literature students who are particularly interested in the subject of women portrayal in literature. Students and researchers of future generations could use the results and discussions of this research for other studies to expand similar frameworks in a variety of fields.

E. Scope of the Study

This research attempts to investigate the portrayal of women in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*. The data are limited to the intrinsic elements of the novel, specifically those surrounding the female characters—dialogues, descriptions, and/or narratives. I will not pay attention to the extrinsic elements of the novel—the author, the background of the author, and/or the background of the novel.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To prevent misunderstandings, the terms employed within this research are defined as follows.

1. **Portrayal:** a depiction of someone or something in literature; the ability of using language to show someone or something.
2. **Characters:** someone or something who carry out events in a fictional story so that the event is able to form a narrative.

3. **Characteristics:** a feature or quality belonging typically to a person, place, or thing and serving to identify it.
4. **Femininity:** a set of socially constructed characteristics (attributes, behaviors, and roles) generally associated to girls and women.
5. **Feminist literary criticism:** one of the types of literary criticism that utilizes the theoretical framework of feminism in interpreting and evaluating literary works
6. **The feminine mystique:** an assumption the highest achievement of a woman is being a mother and a wife; a belief that women who were actually feminine should not have wanted to go to work, get an education, etc.

G. Previous Studies

This study review is provided in order to avoid repetition of the study. Several previous studies have dealt with the portrayal of women in literary works. However, the studies that used Alice Sebold's novel *The Lovely Bones* as their objects primarily focused on the psychological development of the characters. Below are some important examples.

The first one was conducted by Oksa Hidayat in 2018, entitled "Jack Salmon's Stages of Grief in Accepting Susie's Death as Seen in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*". The aims of the study are: first, explaining how Jack Salmon's characteristics are presented in the novel; and second, showing the stages of grief experienced by him during the death of his daughter, Susie. This

study applied psychological approach because the research topic (grief) is related to human's behaviour. This study used several sources for the data of the research: the novel, reference books, and the internet. The results show that: (1) Jack Salmon is an enthusiastic, strict, and loving father, and (2) There are four stages of grief experienced by Jack Salmon; denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. Jack Salmon experienced all four stages before he finally comes into acceptance of his daughter's death. (Hidayat, 2018). While this study was using the same object with this research, it attempted to analyze the novel's character using a different approach—psychological approach.

The second one was conducted by Rizki Arrida in 2013, entitled "Maturation Beyond the Grave: A Narratology Reading to Susie Salmon in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*". In this thesis, the researcher examined the maturation process experienced by Susie Salmon, the narrator who has died, in the afterlife. The author used self-actualization theory by Maslow as an instrument to support the hypothesis. The problem of this research is "How does narratological analysis prove the maturity of Susie Salmon, the narrator who has died, in the afterlife?" Using narratology, this study aims to prove how *The Lovely Bones* describes the development process towards maturity through its main character, Susie Salmon. To analyze Susie Salmon's maturation process, the researcher used three key plot elements to prove it. The first key element is Susie's past mistakes (her curiosity, her inability to make good decisions, and her inability to accept the fact that she is dead). The second key element is Susie's reversal of fortune (Susie's bond with Ruth Connors, Lindsey and Samuel's relationship, and Ray

Singh). The third key element is realization. The results of the study concluded that Susie Salmon has succeeded in achieving a state of self-actualization so that she can be identified as a mature person (Arrida, 2013). This study is quite similar to this research because it analyzed female characters in the novel, but this study has a different focus and approach. This study focuses on describing the development towards maturity experienced by the main character using self-actualization theory, not analyzing the portrayal of the female characters in the novel using feminist approach.

Several studies conducted on the portrayal of women in literary works were also found. The first one was conducted by Devi Noviyanti in 2019, titled “Representasi Perempuan oleh Perempuan dalam Novel *Nglari Woting Ati* Karya Fitri Gunawan”. This study used objective approach and gynocriticism. The result of the study showed that in the novel *Nglari Woting Ati*, Fitri Gunawan represented a variety of urban women that, while being devoted to their family and children, still maintain their career and social life professionally. This study has the same approach as this research, but it differs in the object and the context. This study’s object was a Javanese novel that used a setting in Java. Thus, the context used in this study was also derived from Javanese background. Meanwhile, *The Lovely Bones* has a setting in the United States and a context of American background in 1970s.

The second one was executed in 2020, when Dr. K. Jayalakshmi analyzed the plays of the famous playwright, Jai Shankar Prasad, in portraying the female understanding and ideology through a research titled “The Portrayal of Women in

Jaishankar Prasad's Plays". This research showed that women in his plays are individuals who in her own way, are independent, self-sufficient and unconventional. Although in this study, the researcher only stated that the method used is descriptive and systematic, from the aim and the focus of the study, we can indirectly conclude that this study used a feminist approach. The result of the study concluded that all of Prasad's female characters were manifestations of moral determination, solidarity and skills. They had the courage to sacrifice everything to become an ideal role. Although Prasad is a male writer, he managed to convey the psychology of women, especially their deeper feelings. He also dared to introduce radical ideas about feminism to Indian society, which is believed to be the domain of male patriarchy.

The two last research used the same approach, which is the feminist approach, but this research will be different in that it employs Ruthven's feminist literary criticism and Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*..

H. Research Method

This sub-chapter explains the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

H.1. Research Design

This study attempts to uncover the portrayal of women in the novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. Since it is a literary study, I applied the method of literary criticism to answer the problems of the study. Wellek (1978) argues that literary criticism is a concrete study of literary works with an emphasis on its

assessment. This opinion is in line with the opinion of Abrams (1981) and Pradopo (1994) regarding literary criticism. Abrams (1981) states that literary criticism is a study concerned with limiting, classifying, analyzing, and evaluating literary works. Pradopo (1994) states that literary criticism is the science of literature to "judge" literary works, to give judgments, and to make decisions about whether or not a literary work has a certain quality.

Feminist literary criticism is the further development of literary criticism. It will be applied to analyze the characteristics of women in the novel and how women are portrayed in the novel as a whole.

H.2. Data Source

In this research, I took the data entirely from the novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. The novel consists of 24 chapters, 328 pages, and was published by Little, Brown and Company in 2002. The selected data was acquired from the text of the novel, specifically those surrounding the major female characters in the novel.

H.3. Data Collection

In data collection, I implemented these following procedures. Firstly, I read the novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold thoroughly. Secondly, I identified the novel's major female characters using intrinsic approach. Thirdly, I highlighted and wrote down the text of the novel related to the portrayal and characteristics female characters. Finally, I classified the text of the novel into five parts according to the five female characters.

H.4. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, I began identifying the data that were related to the topic of this research, that is the portrayal of women in the novel. Therefore, I only focused on the text of the novel surrounding the major female characters, whether it is their dialogues, the narrator's descriptions of these characters, or the thought processes of the characters. I highlighted these texts. Then, I conducted a literature review to understand a number of theoretical concepts related to the focus of the problem and the writings of previous critics and researchers discussing similar problems. The theory of feminist literary criticism by K. K. Ruthven is used to describe the characteristics of women in the novel. The theory of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan is used to analyze the portrayal of women in the novel.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter covers the explanation of theories that are relevant to the present study. Theories regarding the main topic of the research, which is the portrayal of women in literature, are put in the first place, followed by the explanations on characters, feminist literary criticism, the feminine mystique, and synopsis of *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold.

A. The Portrayal of Women in Literature

In most cases, literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word. The definitions, therefore, usually include additional adjectives such as “aesthetic” or “artistic” to distinguish literary works from texts of everyday use such as telephone books, newspapers, legal documents, and scholarly writings (Klarer, 2004: 1).

Literature is a reflection of society. It portrays the condition of society and human lives through its characters. It is the expression of life in the world of truth and beauty. According to Mursal Esten (1978: 9), “Literature is the expression of artistic and imaginative facts as a manifestation of human life (and society) through language as a medium and have a positive effect on human life (humanity).” According to Plato, literature is the imitation of life or description from the reality (mimesis) (Abrams, 1958: 8).

Literary works are inseparable from their authors. Each author's style of writing is different. One of the factors that differentiates each author's work is the gender of the author. Gender differences in literary works are evident. Literary works born from men are still superior in the world of literature compared to literary works written by women. Sometimes, women are only used as objects because of the beauty they have. Women are considered weak, although not all men consider women as weak.

Since a long time ago, literary works have become a culture regime and have strong power on gender issues. The notions of women as gentle, caring, and submissive individuals, and men as intelligent, active, and dominant ones always color the literary world. Such image of women and men seems to have taken roots in the minds of literary writers. The Victorian era was dominated by writers who described women as angelic figures: innocent, physically weak, and nothing more than household attributes. In Medieval Era, women were seen as either saints that are capable of restraining their sexual desires, or, otherwise, dangerous temptresses. Meanwhile in the seventeenth century, women were commonly stereotyped as shy mistresses. (Marfleet, n.d.)

Throughout the Middle Ages, women were underestimated and considered incompetent. Their freedom of speech was restricted, so there were hardly any approved female writers at that time. Due to the lack of female authors in the early years of the emergence of written literature, the portrayal of women in literary works was inescapably biased and one-sided. Starting in the early 20th century, there were major changes in women's daily life, both in the private and public

sphere. After that, many female writers whose works were approved and recognized began to appear. Several reputable ones are Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Atwood, etc. Their fictional writings were written based on their daily experiences and depicted their deep agitation. But at first, women's opinions and views were considered unimportant, insignificant, and emotional from male's point of view. No wonder, since all the rules regarding the writing of literary works were regulated by men (Chen, 2010).

In the last 150 years, literary writers, both male and female, have been doing a deep exploration in respect of the role of women in literary works, whether psychologically or socially. The feminist movement had also encouraged awareness for a more realistic depiction of women's roles. The birth of the feminist movement gave rise to a new voice protest from women who began to realize their marginal position in this male-dominated society. After that, stories that placed women not only as objects of a narrative, but become 'subjects of agitation in their own right', began to emerge (Gupta, 1991).

With the birth of the feminism movement, the issue of women has become an interesting subject, especially from people who consider women to be treated unfairly in the family and society. In relation to literature, the existing problems are not limited to the involvement of women in the world of creating, criticizing, or reading literature, but what is no less important is how women are portrayed in a literary text, especially in comparing texts created by men and women (Anderson, 1988: 10-12).

In accordance with the emergence of literary studies that make women the object of the research, there are also female authors who elevate women as main characters in literary works with various aspects of their lives. This phenomenon is a new treasure in the world of literature because so far the world of literature has been dominated by men, so when people talk about the literary canon, the works of male writers are used as a standard (Djajanegara 2000: 17-18). The image of women as portrayed by male authors is usually determined by traditional approaches in the patriarchal culture, which do not match the situation experienced by women because the judgments given to women are often considered unfair and inaccurate (Qomariyah, 2011: 2).

The emergence of many female authors, increasing numbers of female readers, and frequent presence of female characters in literary works, especially those in English, are worth observing in the context of applying feminist literary criticism. The portrayal of women in literary works is important to study because it can reveal views or ideas about women, the position and role of women in society, and the potential that women have in the midst of patriarchal power in literature (Ruthven, 1986: 24)

B. Characters

A fictional work consists of two main elements: intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements are several aspects that are referred to as the building blocks of literary works and are contained in the stories presented by the author themselves (Nurgiyantoro, 2009: 23). In literary works, intrinsic elements consist of theme, plot, characters, characterization, setting, point of view, language style,

scene (in drama), etc. Extrinsic elements are the facts and information that surround the story. Thus, these elements do not come from the literary work itself, but from the world outside the text. Examples of extrinsic elements in literary works are the author's life, the historical background, the social background, and the cultural background of the text.

Characters is one of the intrinsic elements in literary works. Characters are someone or something who carry out events in a fictional story so that the event is able to form a narrative. Characters are usually used in two contexts. In the first context, character refers to individuals who appear in the story such as when someone asks, "How many characters are there in the story?". In the second context, character refers to the mixing of the various interests, desires, emotions, and moral principles of these individuals, as implicit in the question: "How would you describe his character?" (Stanton, 1965: 17). In most stories, one can find one 'main character', a character who is associated with all the events that take place in the story. Characters can be observed through their traits, their development, their attitudes toward other characters, or the effect these attitudes have on them (and vice versa).

Characters, as individuals created by the author, are classified by how much their presence affects the plot of the story. Characters are divided into main character and additional (peripheral) characters. The main character is defined as the person who has the most influence over other characters. They have the potential to change the story plot, create conflicts, and even solve the problems. Meanwhile, additional characters do not get much attention compared to the main

character. In other words, even though there are a few roles from additional characters in the story, they are still considered not as influencing as the main character to the storyline.

In addition, characters are also divided into three types based on their characteristics, namely the protagonist and the antagonist. In reading a story, readers often identify themselves with certain characters, provide sympathy and empathy, and engage emotionally with these characters. Characters to whom the reader responds such is called the protagonist. The protagonist is a character we admire, or commonly referred to as a hero. They are the embodiment of ideal values and norms in society. (Altenbernd & Lewis, 1966: 59) Meanwhile, the antagonist is a character who causes conflict. They are often in opposition to the protagonist, either directly or indirectly (Nurgiyantoro, 1998: 179).

In analyzing character, Stanton (1965: 18) said the main thing was dialogue and behavior. In good fiction, every word, action determines not only the plot but also a manifestation of the character. According to Edgar V. Roberts in his book *Writing Themes about Literature* (1983: 41), there are four ways to analyze a character, namely: (1) What the character says about her/himself, (2) What the character does, (3) What other characters say about that character, and (4) What the author says about the character.

C. Feminist Literary Criticism

Wellek (1978) argues that literary criticism is a concrete study of literary works with an emphasis on its assessment. This opinion is in line with the opinion of Abrams (1981) and Pradopo (1994) regarding literary criticism. Abrams (1981)

states that literary criticism is a study concerned with limiting, classifying, analyzing, and evaluating literary works. Pradopo (1994) states that literary criticism is the science of literature to "judge" literary works, to give judgments, and to make decisions about whether or not a literary work has a certain quality.

Although there are differences between each of these meanings, they substantially have the same point. It can be said that all these meanings are derived from their etymological origin, which is related to the act of judging (etc. judging whether or not an art quality is good or bad) literary works. These limitations of the definitions of literary criticism show us that literary criticism is a branch of literary study that is directly related to literary works through interpretation, analysis, and assessment (evaluation). This means, in conducting literary criticism, we will pass through these three stages (Wiyatmi, 2012).

Along with the development of literary theory, which is used as a basis for studying and assessing literary works, various kinds of literary criticism have emerged. By following the division and development of literary theory made by Abrams (1981), based on the orientation and focus of his criticism, there are four types of literary criticism, namely expressive literary criticism, objective literary criticism, literary criticism, mimetics, and pragmatic literary criticism.

Expressive literary criticism analyzes and evaluates literary works oriented towards the author as the creator of the literary work. Objective literary criticism is oriented towards the literary work itself, without being understood in its relation to the author, the society behind it, and the reader. Mimetic literary criticism is oriented towards literary works in relation to the reality that occurs in society.

Meanwhile, pragmatic literary criticism is oriented towards the reader of literary works.

Feminist literary criticism is the further development of a combination between expressive theory (women writers), mimetic theory (how women are depicted in literary works, in relation to men and society), and feminism. According to Humm (2007: 157–158), feminism combines the doctrine of equal rights for women into an organized movement to achieve women's human rights, with an ideology of social transformation that aims to create a world for women. Feminist literary criticism can be defined as a literary criticism that uses a feminist framework in assessing and evaluating literary works.

Feminist literary criticism is a tool for observing in a new concept of knowledge by restoring the invisible component of gender in all writings produced by humans and social science (Ruthven, 1986: 24). In the paradigm of literary criticism in general, the existence of feminist literary criticism is considered revolutionary, because, as Ruthven (1986: 6) argues, feminist literary criticism aims to subvert the dominant discourse formed by traditional patriarchal voices.

The birth of feminist literary criticism cannot be separated from the feminist movement that initially emerged in the United States in the 1700s (Madsen, 2000: 1). Feminist literary criticism, in the paradigm of literary criticism development, is considered a revolutionary criticism that aims to take down the dominant discourse that is formed by traditional patriarchal voices (Ruthven, 1985: 6). The main objective of feminist literary criticism is to analyze gender

relations, socially constructed relationships between women and men, which, among other things, describe situations in which women are dominated by men (Flax, in Nicholson, ed., 1990: 40).

At the beginning of this movement in the late 1960s, thematic issues such as the portrayal of women in literary texts by male authors stood in the foreground. These early attempts of feminist literary criticism concentrated on stereotypes or distorted portrayals of women in a literary tradition dominated by men. One of the main issues of this reader-centered attitude is the identification of the woman reader with fictional female characters in literary texts.

Apart from these two types of feminist literary criticism, Humm (1986) distinguishes between three types of feminist literary criticism, namely: 1) psychoanalytic feminist criticism, with pioneers including Julia Kristeva, Monique Wittig, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Mary Daly; 2) Marxist feminist criticism, with pioneers including Michele Barret and Patricia Stubbs; and 3) black feminist and lesbian criticism, with pioneers including Barbara Smith, Elly Bulkin, and Barbara Greir.

Psychoanalytic feminist literary criticism focuses on the study of women's writings because feminists believe that female readers usually identify with or place themselves on the female character, while the female character is generally a mirror of the creator. The emergence of psychoanalytic feminist literary criticism originated from feminists' rejection of Sigmund Freud's complex theory of castration (Tong, 2006: 196–197). Castration complex, according to Freud (2006: 106), is anxiety or emotional shock experienced by boys who have the wrong

view when they see differences in their genitals with their sisters. The difference between female and male genitalia, especially because women do not have a penis, according to Freud, raises women's inferiority, which results in the jealousy of girls for penises (penis envy) (Tong, 2006: 196). Feminists, such as Betty Freidan reject Freud's theory and argue that the position and social powerlessness of women towards men has little to do with women's biology, but is closely related to the social construction of feminism (Tong, 2006: 196).

Marxist feminist literary criticism examines female characters from a socialist point of view, for example the social classes of society. Critics try to reveal that women who become characters in literary works are an oppressed class of society (Humm, 1986: 72). Using the basis of Marxist theory and class ideology of Karl Marx, Marxist feminist literary criticism will identify classism as the cause of oppression towards women. In this case, oppression of women is not the result of a deliberate act of one individual, but a product of the political, social and economic structure in which the individual lives.

Black feminist and lesbian criticism tries to pay attention to black women and lesbians who have been marginalized, especially in relation to white women and men and heterosexuals. This feminist criticism pays attention to the existence of black women and lesbians characters in literary works who have been victims of oppression by men and women, especially whites (Humm, 1986: 73).

According to Ruthven (1986: 74), the steps for researching literary works with a feminist approach are as follows: (1) identify the female characters, (2) determine the role and position of the female characters in a relationship (with

family, environment, and/or society), (3) pay attention to what other characters say about the female characters.

D. The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan

The Feminine Mystique is a book written by Betty Friedan which was first published in 1963. In 1974, it was republished by the Dell Publishing in New York. It talks about the condition of American women in the middle of the twentieth century who turned out to be facing a similar problem. Friedan then continues to refer to this problem as “the problem that has no name”. It is because most of these women could not even describe what is actually the root of their problems.

Friedan interviewed eighty women at several crucial moments in their life cycle--high school and college girls who are still figuring out about themselves; young housewives and mothers who, according to the feminine mystique, should not face the problems raised above; and women in their early 40s. And after she began interviewing them with an increased intensity by days, Friedan started to see the puzzle fit together. (Friedan, 1974: 8).

Friedan (1974: 11) explained that “the problem that has no name” is problems that had been left behind, buried, and left untouched for years. It is often the strange annoyance, dissatisfaction, and desire that women in the United States suffered in the mid-twentieth century. Every wife who lives in the suburban fights alone. As they make their bed, grocery shopping, washing dishes, ironing clothes, and lying next to her husband at night, they are afraid to ask even themselves--Is this my whole life?

For a dozen years, no words could describe the feelings these women felt, for in magazines, books and other writings written by experts, they were told that the greatest accomplishment of a woman is to be a mother and a wife. They learned that women who are truly feminine don't want careers, higher education, and political rights. Thousands of experts glorified their femininity and their adaptability, saying all they have to do is dedicate their lives to their husbands and children (Friedan, 1974: 12).

Women who face this problem often experience a crisis in identity. In chapter three of her book, Friedan recounts her experience of giving up her career as a professional psychologist in order to live according to the feminine mystique:

I never could explain, hardly knew myself, why I gave up this career. I lived in the present, working on newspapers with no particular plan. I married, had children, lived according to the feminine mystique as a suburban housewife. But still the question haunted me. I could sense no purpose in my life, I could find no peace, until I finally faced it and worked out my own answer. (Friedan, 1974: 63)

The feminine mystique allows, even encourages, women to ignore questions about their identity. It assumes they can answer the question “Who am I?” by saying “Robert's Wife”, or “Elle's mother”. But the feminine mystique would not have had such power over American women if they were not afraid to face this terrifying void that leaves them unable to see themselves after the age of twenty-one. Truth is, an American woman no longer has the personal image to tell her who she is, can do, or wants to be (Friedan, 1974: 63).

It was the need to acquire a new identity that drove women, a century ago, on a journey away from home. In recent years, feminism has often been ridiculed as one of history's dirty jokes. They ridiculed earlier feminists who fought for women's rights to higher education, careers and voices. They say these feminists

are neurotic victims of the jealousy of the penis of women who want to be men. In fighting for women's freedom to participate in work and society's decisions as equal to men, they deny their female nature, which fulfills itself only through sexual passivity, acceptance of male domination, and motherly nurturing (Friedan, 1974: 73).

Friedan (1974: 73) then stated that the problem of identity at that time was new for women, completely new. Feminists were pioneering at the forefront of the evolution of women. They had to prove that women are also human. They must destroy, if necessary, the decorative Dresden figure representing the ideal woman of the last century. They must prove that women are not passive and empty mirrors, not useless decorations, not careless animals, not something that others have to throw away, and not capable of expressing their own opinions. Before they can even begin to fight for their rights, women need to be humans who are equal to men.

In the last chapter of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan offered a solution or alternative for women to face the problems. Friedan (1974: 326) said that facing a problem was not solving it. But once they started dealing with it, as women today all over America do without much help from experts, when she asked herself what she wanted to do, she began to find the answers on her own. Once she started thinking beyond the feminine mystique and realized that neither her husband nor her children, or the things in her house, or sex, or being like other women, could not give her a true self, she would find the solution much easier than which she predicted.

Friedan (1974: 330) revealed that there are two main steps that women can do to face the problem. The first step is to see housework as something as it is, not as a career, but as a job that is simply done as quickly and efficiently as possible. Housewives don't need to feel guilty about using electronic devices like the dishwasher and the vacuum cleaner just because people think they make women less feminine. By not dedicating their time fully to household chores, they will have more time doing the creative things they want.

The second, and perhaps more difficult, step is to see marriage as it really is, setting aside the veil of exaggeration imposed by the feminine mystique. Many women feel oddly dissatisfied with their husbands and constantly resentful with their children when they see marriage and motherhood as their ultimate fulfillment. But when they begin to use their abilities for their own sake in society, they not only get a new feeling of "excitement" or "perfection" in themselves, but also a new difference, though difficult to define, in how they feel towards their husbands and their children (Friedan, 1974: 330).

E. Synopsis of *The Lovely Bones*

The *Lovely Bones* tells the story of Susie Salmon, a 14-year-old girl who died of being raped and murdered. Susie is depicted as being in the in-between phase, which is a place between the earth and the hereafter. She refused to continue her journey to heaven because she thought she still had unfinished things that she needed to solve on earth. During her time in the in-between world, Susie witnessed how her friends and family have struggled to cope with their grieves since her departure.

Susie's family experienced a split that has become more and more evident over the years. The climax occurred when Susie's mother decided to leave her family. Although this decision could not be justified, she had her own reasons for doing so. Susie's mother finally decided to return to her family after years with a new feeling and strength to accept her daughter's death. When Susie's family began to find a speck of hope since the return of Susie's mother, Susie finally decided to break away from the earth by making her kiss with Ray Singh, the boy she loved, a medium for her transition to the afterlife.

The Lovely Bones was published by Little, Brown and Company in 2002. Although it was Sebold's first novel, it became very popular during its time. This novel has also been filmed in 2009 by director Peter Jackson and starred big actors such as Stanley Tucci, Saoirse Ronan, Susan Sarandon, and others.

In some interviews, Sebold had stated that *The Lovely Bones* is particularly influenced by her real life experience. The main character in *The Lovely Bones*, Susie Salmon, was also raped and murdered. Whereas *The Lovely Bones* is a fictional book, it is the work of a writer who has direct experience with rape and its aftermath. The trauma that Susie suffered in the course of her rape is written by a woman who has personally lived through the horror.

In an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, Sebold said that she was motivated to write about violence because she believes it is not unusual. She sees it as a part of life, and, according to her, it becomes a problem when we distinguish between those who have experienced violence and those who have

not. Even though it was a terrible experience, violence has already affected many of us (A. Darby, personal communication, 2002).

CHAPTER III

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. **Analysis of Female Characters in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones***

According to Ruthven (1986: 74), the steps for researching literary works with a feminist literary criticism are as follows: (1) identify the female characters, (2) determine the role and position of the female characters in a relationship (with family, environment, and/or society), (3) pay attention to what other characters say about the female characters. By focusing on these points, I will describe the five female characters and analyze each of their characterizations in this novel one by one.

1. **Characteristics of Susie Salmon**

Susie Salmon is the main character in this novel. Her character is associated with all the events that take place in the story. She is also the most influential character compared to other characters in the novel. Apart from being the main character, she is also an all-around (omniscient) narrator who tells all the events in this novel. That makes her a character-narrator. Based on her character's nature or characteristics, Susie can be classified as a protagonist, because Susie's character is a character with whom readers identify themselves, provide sympathy and empathy, and engage emotionally. The fact that Susie tells the events in this story using the first-person narrative also helps readers understand her feelings and sympathize with her character.

There are not many descriptions of Susie's physical appearances from the author. At the beginning of the story, Susie described herself as a white girl with grayish-brown hair.

“In newspaper photos of missing girls from the seventies, most looked like me: white girls with mousy brown hair. This was before kids of all races and genders started appearing on milk cartons or in the daily mail. It was still back when people believed things like that didn’t happen.” (The Lovely Bones, p. 5)

When introducing herself, Susie expresses her dislike for structured surroundings (her classroom) and mainstream things, such as writing quotes derived from rock bands in junior high school yearbooks that most of her friends do. She admits that she prefers to be considered “literary.”

“In my junior high yearbook I had a quote from a Spanish poet my sister had turned me on to, Juan Ramón Jiménez. It went like this: “If they give you ruled paper, write the other way.” I chose it both because it expressed my contempt for my structured surroundings à la the classroom and because, not being some dopey quote from a rock group, I thought it marked me as literary.” (p. 5)

Susie's interest in anti-mainstream things is also shown when she talks about her two friends, Ruth and Clarissa. She likes Clarissa because Clarissa can do things that she is not allowed to. She admires Ruth and considers her unique because she thinks Ruth is subversive and secretly rebellious. So, even though she isn't outright rebellious, she has a bit of a rebellious streak.

“According to my mother, Clarissa’s penchant for baby blue eye shadow was an early warning sign, but I’d always liked her for just this reason. She did things I wasn’t allowed to do: she lightened her long hair, she wore platform shoes, she smoked cigarettes after school.” (p. 39)

“I realized how subversive Ruth was then, not because she drew pictures of nude women that got misused by her peers, but because she was more talented than her teachers. She was the quietest kind of rebel.” (p. 77)

However, despite her somewhat rebellious streak, Susie still gives some respect to the elders. When Ray Singh calls one of her teachers, Mrs. Dewitt, “a bitch”, she disagrees with him. She does admire Ray for being calm and

intelligent, and she feels thrilled to be experiencing “one day in life of being a bad kid” with him, but Susie respects Mrs. Dewitt as a teacher.

“I’ve seen every Shakespeare play put on by the Royal Shakespeare Company,” Ray said. “That bitch has nothing to teach me.”

I felt sorry for Mrs. Dewitt then. If part of being bad was calling Mrs. Dewitt a bitch, I wasn’t into it.” (p. 74)

Having respect for the elders may be the bare minimum for typical teenagers, but Susie also respects the man who had murdered her, Mr. Harvey. As she recounts the tragedy that got her killed, she describes how from the start, Susie was reluctant to talk to Mr. Harvey, but because the man was close to her family and had chatted with her father, she respected him and responded to his questions. She even said she felt sorry for him due to Harvey living alone and never being married.

“Fine,” I said. I was cold, but the natural authority of his age, and the added fact that he was a neighbor and had talked to my father about fertilizer, rooted me to the spot.” (p. 7)

“I don’t think I believed this even then. I thought he was lying, but I thought it was a pitiful lie. I imagined he was lonely. We had read about men like him in health class. Men who never married and ate frozen meals every night and were so afraid of rejection that they didn’t even own pets. I felt sorry for him.” (p. 11)

This character trait is also related to her most prominent personality: affectionate. Even though she was only 13 years old, Susie had learned to build compassion for those around her, even those who have wronged her. Through her narratives, Susie has expressed her affections to her mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother, Ruth, Ray, and even Len Fenerman, the detective who once had an affair with her mother. Here is the evidence of her affection for her mother:

“I was too little to know what she was really saying to me, but I loved to be hushed to sleep by the soft lullaby of her words. One of the blessings of my heaven is that I can go back to these moments, live them again, and be with my

mother in a way I never could have been. I reach my hand across the Inbetween and take the hand of that young lonely mother in mine.” (p. 150)

Susie's father, Jack Salmon, is the one who experiences the most significant loss over Susie's death. As a father, he feels that he had failed in doing one of his responsibilities, which is to protect his children. He is the most persistent in looking for Susie's killer until he finally gets a clue, or some kind of revelation, that his neighbor, George Harvey, was the one involved in Susie's death. He feels frustrated when there isn't enough evidence to support his suspicions. To keep his mind sane, he often tries to get closer with his remaining children, Lindsey and Buckley, despite frequent rejections. Susie, who could only watch her father from the afterlife, feels hurt seeing her father's despair but could do nothing about it.

“I wanted to lift him up, like statues I'd seen in art history books. A woman lifting up a man. The rescue in reverse. Daughter to father saying, “It's okay. You're okay. Now I won't let anything hurt.” (p. 61)

We can see Susie's affection for her younger sister from Susie's concern that her sister, who is left alone, might do something that could hurt herself, even though she finally realizes that her sister is stronger than she thought.

“I worried that my sister, left alone, would do something rash. She sat in her room on the old couch my parents had given up on and worked on hardening herself. Take deep breaths and hold them. Try to stay still for longer and longer periods of time. Make yourself small and like a stone. Curl the edges of yourself up and fold them under where no one can see.” (p. 29)

Susie also often identifies herself with Lindsey, so she feels happy whenever Lindsey feels happy. Compared to watching other people, it is easier for Susie to sink into the moment when she watches Lindsey.

“At twenty-one Lindsey was many things I would never become, but I barely grieved this list anymore. Still, I roved where she roved. I collected my college diploma and rode on the back of Samuel's bike, clinging on to him with my arms wrapped around his waist, pressing into his back for warmth . . . Okay, it was

Lindsey. I realized that. But in watching her I found I could get lost more than with anyone else.” (p. 232)

Susie's youngest brother, Buckley, is also the closest to Susie during her life. Susie spent a lot of time with Buckley as she is assigned to look after Buckley while Lindsey focused on studying. One time, Susie even saved Buckley's life when he accidentally swallowed a wooden stick and almost died from choking. Grandma Lynn told Susie that she might live a long life because she had saved someone's life, but her guess turns out to be wrong.

“My brother did not ask what a saxophone was. He knew what Lindsey was being. She was being what I called snooty-wooty, as in “Buckley, don’t worry, Lindsey’s being snooty-wooty.” Usually I’d tickle him as I said the word, sometimes burrowing into his stomach with my head, butting him and saying “snooty-wooty” over and over until his trills of laughter flowed down over me.” (p. 68)

During her life, Susie never thought of her grandmother as someone who should be a role model. All she knew was that her grandmother is a short-minded alcoholic. However, as Susie watches her from the afterlife, she becomes even more fond of her grandmother. The latter has tried her best to comfort her family with her sense of humor, and begins to accept that her grandmother's habit of drinking alcohol was one of the things that gave her a likable personality.

“My grandmother stepped back into the kitchen to get their drinks. I had come to love her more after death than I ever had on Earth. I wish I could say that in that moment in the kitchen she decided to quit drinking, but I now saw that drinking was part of what made her who she was. If the worst of what she left on Earth was a legacy of inebriated support, it was a good legacy in my book.” (p. 316)

Susie expresses her affection for Ruth when Ruth walks through the cornfield one morning. Since Susie's death and her experience of bumping into Susie when Susie came out of the Earth, Ruth has been obsessed with Susie that she writes dozens of poems inspired by her. Ruth has a higher sensitivity when

trying to communicate with the dead, bringing Ruth and Susie closer together after Susie's death.

“I grew to love Ruth on those mornings, feeling that in some way we could never explain on our opposite sides of the Inbetween, we were born to keep each other company. Odd girls who had found each other in the strangest way—in the shiver she had felt when I passed.” (p. 79)

Susie's affection for Ray Singh is very clearly expressed in several parts of this novel, considering that Ray was the only man Susie has had a crush on during her life. Because of her unfinished love, Susie often watches Ray differently than when she watches other people: a look of longing and a desire to touch him.

“I would watch Ray with a longing different from that which I had for anyone else. A longing to touch and hold him, to understand the very body that he examined with the coldest of eyes”. (p. 224)

From her previous acts of affection, Susie's compassion for Len Fenerman is more like sympathy. She realizes that Len has never intended to destroy her family. Instead, she sees Len as a lonely man who had tried to love her mother but inevitably failed.

“I had come to both pity and respect Len in the years since my mother left. He followed the physical to try to understand things that were impossible to comprehend. In that, I could see, he was like me.” (p. 273)

From these narrations, I can conclude that Susie is someone with a big heart, who is able to understand someone's actions and choices without judging them. Susie always loves her family even after she died. She also learns to understand other people's actions as she watches them from the in-between. Perhaps because Susie knows the thoughts of others, she becomes more careful in judging their actions and finds it easier to sympathize with them. Susie did die at the age of fourteen, but her maturity continues to grow while she is in the afterlife.

2. Characteristics of Abigail Salmon

Abigail Salmon is the mother of Susie, Lindsey, and Buckley, as well as the wife of Jack Salmon. She has complex characteristics and often makes reckless decisions in dealing with her grief after Susie's death. Like other family members, the young mother also experiences a difficult situation because of the tragedy, but she is the most difficult in accepting and coming to terms with the situation. From the beginning of the news when the police found evidence of Susie's death, she still naively hopes that Susie is still alive. As long as Susie's body is not found, she would not believe anything the police say.

“What?” my mother said impatiently. She crossed her arms and braced for another inconsequential detail in which others invested meaning. She was a wall. Notebooks and novels were nothing to her. Her daughter might survive without an arm. A lot of blood was a lot of blood. It was not a body. Jack had said it and she believed: Nothing is ever certain” (p. 27)

Abigail used her skepticism to protect herself from the grief of her daughter's death. However, when the police finally brought evidence in the form of Susie's hat that she had made herself, her defensive wall collapsed. From this, we know that although she is trying her best to remain skeptical, she is actually a very emotional person.

“But when they held up the evidence bag with my hat inside, something broke in her. The fine wall of leaden crystal that had protected her heart—somehow numbed her into disbelief—shattered.” (p. 28)

Through Susie's narrative, we can find out that Abigail has an attractive physical appearance. Susie reveals that her mother is actually one of the beautiful mothers in their neighborhood.

“My mother was, in her need, irresistible. As a child I had seen her effect on men. When we were in grocery stores, stockers volunteered to find the items on her list and would help us out to the car. Like Ruana Singh, she was known as one of the pretty mothers in the neighborhood; no man who met her could help but smile. When she asked a question, their beating hearts gave in.” (p. 148)

Through one of her early conversations with Len Fenerman, readers can also find out that Abigail is a person who doesn't talk much. This conversation was also the beginning of Len's interest in Abigail, who says that she reminds him of his late wife.

"You remind me of my wife," Len said after a long silence, during which my mother had drawn an orange poodle and what looked like a blue horse undergoing electroshock treatment.

"She can't draw either?"

"She wasn't much of a talker when there was nothing to say." (p. 89)

Abigail is shown in most parts of this novel as a lonely mother who slowly loses her own identity during her marriage. Since childhood, she was always alone, being an only child, and her father died when she was little. All she had was her mother, but she wasn't that close to her mother either. During one of her conversations with her mother, Grandma Lynn, she expresses how she always feels alone all the time.

"Do you know how alone I've always felt?" my mother asked her mother.

"That's why we're walking, Abigail," Grandma Lynn said.

My mother focused her eyes in front of her but stayed connected to her mother with her hand. She thought of the solitary nature of her childhood." (p. 169)

Susie had also stated that when she looked back to the moments she spends with her mother, she notices that her mother had become lonely ever since they moved into their new house.

"Luckily, I always won this. When I look back now I see that my mother had become—and very quickly after they moved into that house—lonely. Because I was the oldest, I became her closest friend." (p. 150)

Before her death, Susie was already aware of the oddities of her mother. It happened when she took a photo of her mother one morning when she was sitting in the backyard of her house, staring blankly ahead. At that moment, Susie

realized that there was another side to her mother that she had never shown when carrying out her duties as a mother or a wife.

“When the roll came back from the Kodak plant in a special heavy envelope, I could see the difference immediately. There was only one picture in which my mother was Abigail. It was that first one, the one taken of her unawares, the one captured before the click startled her into the mother of the birthday girl, owner of the happy dog, wife to the loving man, and mother again to another girl and a cherished boy. Homemaker. Gardener. Sunny neighbor. My mother’s eyes were oceans, and inside them there was loss. I thought I had my whole life to understand them, but that was the only day I had. Once upon Earth I saw her as Abigail, and then I let it slip effortlessly back—my fascination held in check by wanting her to be that mother and envelop me as that mother.” (p. 44)

“A deep breath rushed out of her, and she sat down on the floor, her mouth still open and her hand still holding the picture. The tethers were rushing and whipping around her, like a canvas tent come loose from its stakes. She too, like me until the morning of that photograph, had never seen the mother-stranger. She had seen the photos right after. My mother looking tired but smiling. My mother and Holiday standing in front of the dogwood tree as the sun shot through her robe and gown. But I had wanted to be the only one in the house that knew my mother was also someone else—someone mysterious and unknown to us.” (p. 45)

Abigail has a passion for reading books. When she was in college, she often spent her time reading books intensely. However, since getting married, she rarely spends her time doing so anymore.

“My mother was reading Molière, whom she had studied so intensely in college but hadn’t looked at since. Beside her were the books that had marked her as an avant-garde undergraduate: Sartre, Colette, Proust, Flaubert. She had pulled them off the shelves in her bedroom and promised herself she would reread them that year.” (p. 204)

Since Susie's death, Abigail feels increasingly isolated from her family. While Jack, her husband, grew closer to his children after Susie's death, Abigail grew further away from them.

“On my way home from the junior high, I would sometimes stop at the edge of our property and watch my mother ride the ride-on mower, looping in and out among the pine trees, and I could remember then how she used to whistle in the mornings as she made her tea and how my father, rushing home on Thursdays, would bring her marigolds and her face would light up yellowy in delight. They had been deeply, separately, wholly in love—apart from her children my mother could reclaim this love, but with them she began to drift. It was my father who grew toward us as the years went by; it was my mother who grew away.” (p. 153)

“How to swim back to her, how to reach her again. She was pulling and pulling away—all her energy was against the house, and all his energy was inside it.”
(p. 160)

In the end, Abigail, who increasingly feels that she has lost her identity more and more, takes her pain and desire on Len Fenerman, the detective who works on solving Susie's death case. Abigail hopes that by having sexual relations with Len, she can forget about her daughter's death, even if only for a moment.

“Len was about to say something; I could see my mother notice his lips just as they parted. She shut her eyes and commanded the world to shut up—screaming the words inside her skull. She opened her eyes again and looked at him. He was silent, his mouth set. She took her cotton camisole over the top of her head and stepped out of her underwear. My mother had my body as it would never become. But she had her own moonlit skin, her ocean eyes. She was hollow and lost and abandoned up. Mr. Harvey left his house for the final time while my mother was granted her most temporal wish. To find a doorway out of her ruined heart, in merciful adultery.” (p. 197)

Abigail's feeling of alienation has its peak in the summer of 1975 when she finally decides to leave her family and drive alone to New Hampshire. This is a bold decision for her because afterward, she will have to independently for months, away from the people she knew. But it is from this experience, Abigail finds herself again and begins to accept her condition of being a mother. She finally does not consider her love for Susie as something that would destroy her.

*“On a summer evening in 1975, my mother turned to my father and said:
“Have you ever made love in the ocean?”
And he said, “No.”
“Neither have I,” my mother said. “Let’s pretend it is the ocean and that I am going away and we might never see each other again.”
The next day she left for her father’s cabin in New Hampshire.”* (p. 213)

From the data above, it can be concluded that Abigail Salmon is a mother of three who, in the middle of her marriage life, lost her passion as a wife and a mother. The feeling of loneliness and alienation that she feels is caused by several things, such as the death of her first daughter Susie and the identity crisis she has

experienced since she had to adjust her role as a mother. This problem made her further and further away from her family over time, until she finally decided to isolate herself for years in order to rediscover her identity and come in terms with the situation after the death of her daughter.

3. Characteristics of Lindsey Salmon

Lindsey Salmon is Susie's younger sister, as well as the second child of the Salmon family. She is only about one year younger than Susie, so many people see Susie in her after Susie died, which made her experience "the walking dead" syndrome. However, Susie and Lindsey are actually different in many ways. Susie describes her sister as a very gifted person. One of the reasons is because Lindsey is the only person with true blond hair in her family. Susie states she is more jealous of her sister's hair than her status as "a dumbo."

"The school district made everyone take tests and then decided who was gifted and who was not. I liked to suggest to Lindsey that I was much more pissed off by her hair than by my dumbo status. We had both been born with masses of blond hair, but mine quickly fell out and was replaced with a grudging growth of mousy brown. Lindsey's stayed and acquired a sort of mythical place. She was the only true blonde in our family." (p. 32)

Another reason Lindsey is gifted is that her intelligence exceeds the average child of her age. Lindsey is one of the brightest students in her school. Not only she is talented academically, but she is also gifted in sports. Lindsey is the only girl on her school's football team. Since her early teenager, she is used to reading big books, which she always carried around. It keeps her from being shunned by people, even her teachers.

"But Lindsey Salmon was another thing altogether. She was gifted, one of the twenty students from his school who had been selected for the statewide Gifted Symposium. The only trouble in her file was a slight altercation early in the year when a teacher reprimanded her for bringing obscene literature—Fear of Flying—into the classroom." (p. 32)

“But once called gifted, it had spurred her on to live up to the name. She locked herself in her bedroom and read big books. When I read Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret, she read Camus’s Resistance, Rebellion, and Death. She might not have gotten most of it, but she carried it around, and that made people—including teachers—begin to leave her alone.” (p. 32)

In terms of coping with her sister's death, Lindsey prefers to be strict and rational. She tries to distract herself from sadness by doing some exercises and immersing herself in reading big books. She also tries hard not to show her emotions in front of others so that they would not sympathize with her. Lindsey does not want to be pitied. She also hates it when people always associate her with her sister's death. Because of this, Lindsey chooses to overcome the grief over her sister's death alone. She even refuses her father's help.

“At home that night she lay on the floor of her room and braced her feet under her bureau. She did ten sets of sit-ups. Then she got into push-up position. Not the girl’s kind. Mr. Dewitt had told her about the kind he had done in the Marines, head-up, or onehanded, clapping between. After she did ten push-ups, she went to her shelf and chose the two heaviest books—her dictionary and a world almanac. She did bicep curls until her arms ached. She focused only on her breathing. The in. The out.” (p. 34)

“Look, Dad,” my sister said, making her one concession for him, “I’m handling this alone.” (p. 61)

However, even though Lindsey never shows her emotions to others, that doesn't mean she is immune to feeling sad. After all, her sister was the closest friend who knew her best. Like other people, she is also reminded of her sister every time she looks in the mirror. For that reason, Lindsey begins to take a shower and do her activities in the dark, where she would feel safe and no longer reminded of her sister. She only lets out her cry whenever there is no one around her.

“She would leave the dark shower and feel her way over to the towel rack. She would be safe in the dark—the moist steam from the shower still rising off the

tiles encased her. If the house was quiet or if she heard murmurs below her, she knew she would be undisturbed. This was when she could think of me and she did so in two ways: she either thought Susie, just that one word, and cried there, letting her tears roll down her already damp cheeks, knowing no one would see her, no one would quantify this dangerous substance as grief, or she would imagine me running, imagine me getting away, imagine herself being taken instead, fighting until she was free. She fought back the constant question, Where is Susie now?" (p. 59)

The only time Lindsey expresses her genuine emotion is during a short conversation with Ruth Connors, in which Lindsey says that she really misses her sister. This shows that despite her harsh and cold demeanor, she is actually a loving person.

*"Do you miss Susie?"
Because it was dark, because Ruth was facing away from her, because Ruth was almost a stranger, Lindsey said what she felt.
"More than anyone will ever know." (p. 121)*

Among her other traits, Lindsey's most notable traits are her courage and assertiveness. When her father says that he is suspicious of their neighbor, Mr. Harvey, Lindsey is the only person who believes in him. Lindsey doesn't hesitate to speak curtly to the police when they gave up on investigating Mr. Harvey.

*"Detective Fenerman."
"I was just telling your father . . ."
"That you're giving up."
"If there was any good reason to suspect the man . . ."
"Are you done?" Lindsey asked. She was suddenly the wife to our father, as well as the oldest, most responsible child." (p. 134)*

When Lindsey visits the police station and finds her mother's scarf lying on Len Fenerman's desk, Lindsey quickly learns that there is something between the two of them. Firmly and without hiding her anger, she asks the detective what really happened between him and her mother.

"Lindsey stood and faced him. She was clear-eyed and driving fast toward the worst news yet. "What was she doing in your car?" (p. 215)

The most substantial evidence of her courage is when she recklessly breaks into Mr. Harvey's house to find the proof of her sister's murder. Even Susie does not hide her admiration as she witnesses her sister's courage.

"I watched my sister and marveled. She was becoming everything all at once. A woman. A spy. A jock. The Ostracized: One Man Alone." (p. 176)

Her break-in to Mr. Harvey's house almost puts her in danger. When Mr. Harvey arrives home and finds out about her plan, Lindsey bravely jumps from the second floor into the bushes below the house. The great thing is that she was completely unharmed after the incident.

"But she was not hurt. Gloriously not hurt. Gloriously young. She stood up as he reached the window to climb out. But he stopped. He saw her running toward the elderberry. The silkscreened number on her back screamed out at him. 5! 5! 5! Lindsey Salmon in her soccer shirt." (p. 183)

It is easy to conclude that Lindsey is a strong female character, both mentally and physically. Lindsey isn't afraid to say what she thinks needs to be said. She also dares to do anything to find out the truth about her sister's death. Among the rest of her family, Lindsey is the most skilled at dealing with the sadness of Susie's death.

4. Characteristics of Ruth Connors

Ruth Connors is one of Susie's school friends. Not many know her because she is a quiet and introverted girl. Ruth has a unique ability to communicate with other realms. She has what people often refer to as a sixth sense. In Susie's transition from Earth to the in-between, Susie's soul accidentally bumps into Ruth and touches her. Ruth has tried to tell her mother about the dream-like incident, but her mother said it was just her imagination. Since there is no one to tell her stories, Ruth begins to pour her experiences through poetry.

“Ruth began writing poetry. If her mother or her more approachable teachers did not want to hear the darker reality she had experienced, she would cloak this reality in poetry.” (p. 38)

It seems like Ruth has had an interest in literature for quite a long time. Ruth regularly borrows books from her school to read at home during the vacation. She is particularly interested in early feminist texts. Later, we find out that Ruth is also a feminist herself—or at least someone who holds feminist values in some parts of her life.

“She had a pile of huge books she had borrowed from Mrs. Kaplan, the social science teacher. They were all early feminist texts, and she held them with their spines resting against her stomach so that no one could see what they were. Her father, a building contractor, had made her a gift of two super-strong elastic book bands. Ruth had placed two of them around the volumes she planned to read over vacation.” (p. 39)

Evidence that Ruth is a feminist, alongside the fact that she is interested in reading feminist books, can be seen when she visits Susie's death memorial and sees Lindsey and her boyfriend, Samuel, at the event. Ruth, who sees Samuel's hand holding Lindsey's hand, thinks this is Samuel's way of “conquering” Lindsey.

“Ruth watched my family greet people and noted in horror my sister's new look. Ruth did not believe in makeup. She thought it demeaned women. Samuel Heckler was holding Lindsey's hand. A word from her readings popped into her head: subjugation.” (p. 110)

Ruth is also known among her high school teachers as a smart and critical student. Even though Ruth often skips classes, she is never reprimanded by her teachers because her intelligence often bothers them and slows their lesson plans.

“Soon she noted that teachers in subjects besides gym didn't report her if she cut. They were happy not to have her there: her intelligence made her a problem. It demanded attention and rushed their lesson plans forward.” (p. 78)

We can see Ruth's critical attitude when she is reprimanded by her teacher for drawing a nude woman and bringing the drawing to her school. Ruth feels

unacceptable for being the only one to blame for this incident. Ruth assertively states that she does not feel guilty for drawing a nude woman, and that her male friends are to blame for copying the drawing and distributing it.

“There isn’t a nose or mouth on that wooden model either,” Ruth said, “but you encouraged us to draw in faces.”

Again Ray squeezed my hand.

“That’s enough, young lady,” Mr. Peterford said. “It is the attitude of repose in this particular drawing that clearly made it something the Nelson boy would xerox.”

“Is that my fault?”

“Without the drawing there would be no problem.”

“So it’s my fault?” (p. 76)

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Ruth is a subversive and rebellious student, even though she doesn't point it out straightforwardly. Susie states that she finds Ruth subversive not only because of her obscene drawings, but also the fact that Ruth is actually more talented than her teachers.

“Inside, it was beautiful. Drawings of women mostly, but of animals and men too. I’d never seen anything like it before. Each page was covered in her drawings. I realized how subversive Ruth was then, not because she drew pictures of nude women that got misused by her peers, but because she was more talented than her teachers. She was the quietest kind of rebel. Helpless, really.” (p. 77)

Ruth's rebellious nature is also recognized by one of her friends, Ray Singh, who says he likes the way Ruth curses and hates their school. This shows that even though Ruth is a smart student and likes to read big books, she does not favor her school's system.

“He liked the way she cursed and hated school. He liked how smart she was and how she tried to pretend that it didn’t matter to her that his father was a doctor (even though not a real doctor, as she pointed out) and her father scavenged old houses, or that the Singhs had rows and rows of books in their house while she was starved for them.” (p. 203)

When Ruth graduates from high school and attends college in New York, she begins to explore her sixth sense ability through her solitude and anonymity in

the city. Ruth walks through the city streets and has a vision of the moments before the death of several girls or women. She keeps these visions in her memory and writes them down in her journal.

“I was the one who got to follow and watch, and, as opposed to the giddy choir, I often found these moments as painful as they were amazing. Ruth would get an image and it would burn into her memory. Sometimes they were only bright flashes—a fall down the stairs, a scream, a shove, the tightening of hands around a neck—and at other times it was as if an entire scenario spun out in her head in just the amount of time that it took the girl or woman to die.” (p. 251)

Susie several times has shown herself in front of her family. One day, Susie also appears in front of Ruth. Kindly and without showing any fear, Ruth greets Susie and tells her how she has written poems about her and asks if Susie wants anything. The only thing Susie wants is to be able to experience life again in the world. Ruth then lends her body to Susie, so that Susie can spend one last time with Ray Singh, something she has wanted to do for a long time.

“As clear as day, she saw me standing there beside her, looking at the spot Mr. Harvey had dumped me. “Susie,” Ruth said, feeling my presence even more solidly when she said my name. But I said nothing. “I’ve written poems for you,” Ruth said, trying to get me to stay with her. What she had wished for her whole life happening, finally. “Don’t you want anything, Susie?” she asked.” (p. 295)

Years after Susie's death, Ruth grew up to become a mature woman who fully embraces her special ability. Her experiences and courage have shaped her into a free and independent woman. The stories of the dead that surround her still remain in her memory, and it depends on her choice to tell these stories to others or not.

“And there she was again, alone and walking out in the cornfield while everyone else I cared for sat together in one room. She would always feel me and think of me. I could see that, but there was no longer anything I could do. Ruth had been a girl haunted and now she would be a woman haunted. First by accident and now by choice. All of it, the story of my life and death, was hers if she chose to tell it, even to one person at a time.” (p. 321)

In short, Ruth Connors is a talented teenage girl who tries to show her rebellion against the things that surround her through her creative works,

especially her paintings. Ruth likes to read feminist literature and tries to apply it in her life. Among the other characters, Ruth is the closest to Susie after her death.

5. Characteristics of Ruana Singh

Ruana Singh is Ray Singh's mother. She often spends time alone at her house. She is well known in the neighborhood for her beauty and grace. Every character, especially male, who has met and visited her house is always struck by her beauty. When Susie's father comes to her house, Ruana is depicted wearing a sari (traditional Indian dress) and capri pants, which shows that Ruana still adheres to the traditional values of her origin country.

“When my father knocked on the door of Ray Singh’s house, he was struck dumb by Ray’s mother, Ruana. It was not that she was immediately welcoming, and she was far from sunny, but something about her dark hair, and her gray eyes, and even the strange way she seemed to step back from the door once she opened it, all of these things overwhelmed him.” (p. 83)

Ruana is a former dancer. Her carriage as a dancer can be seen from her daily movements. And these movements are what caused men to fall head over heels for her. Ruana rarely smiles at other people, which makes her sometimes perceived as cold and arrogant.

“Schoolboy crushes happened all the time to Ray’s mother. The teenager who delivered the paper would pause on his bike, hoping that she would be near the door when she heard the thump of the Philadelphia Inquirer hit the porch. That she would come out and, if she did, that she would wave. She didn’t even have to smile, and she rarely did outside her house—it was the eyes, her dancer’s carriage, the way she seemed to deliberate over the smallest movement of her body.” (p. 85)

“He had heard the offhand comments the police made about her. To their mind she was cold and snobbish, condescending, odd. And so that was what he imagined he would find.” (p. 83)

Ruana has a surefire way of warding off men who try to approach her or show their sympathy for her. She replies emphatically that neither she nor her son needs sympathy from anyone when Susie's father says he feels sorry for Ray.

Ruana always responds to Susie's father's questions with quick and short answers, and as much as possible, stays away from topics related to her personal life.

"No, I won't allow that," she said sternly and placed her cup back on the tray. "You cannot have sympathy for Ray or for us." My father tried to stutter out a protest. She placed her hand in the air. "You have lost a daughter and come here for some purpose. I will allow you that and that only, but trying to understand our lives, no." (p. 86)

Ruana is a loving and protective mother. This can be seen from the way she always greets Ray every time he comes home from school. And when the police investigation leads to Ray, she is just worried about the good of her son.

"Here we are again, Mr. Salmon," she said. "You misinterpret me. I am not saying you are doing the wrong thing by coming here. It is the right thing in its way. You want to find something soft, something warm in all this. Your searching led you here. That's a good thing. I am only concerned that it be good, too, for my son." (p. 87)

Ruana, whose husband is a professor and often held parties at home, is used to composing herself in front of other people. She was not (or at least did not look) surprised when the police came to her house to investigate Ray. Her calmness and serenity have been practiced for a long time ago.

"Ruana did not start as I thought she would. Her calmness had become something practiced. She could make a breath last through the most startling event, whether it was her son being accused of murder by the police or her husband running their dinner party as if it were an academic committee meeting. She had told Ray he could go upstairs, and then she had disappeared out the back door and not been missed." (p. 171)

Just like Abigail, Ruana is also a wife who feels trapped in her household. Her husband, who is rarely at home, makes her spend most of her time alone. A couple of times, Ruana suspects that her husband has spent time with other women outside. Even though Ruana has tried to shrug it off and distract her mind with exercises, her husband's absence really bothers her.

"A year to the day after my death, Dr. Singh called to say he would not be home for dinner. But Ruana would do her exercises no matter what. If, as she stretched out on the rug in the one warm spot that the house seemed to hold in the winter,

she could not help but turn over and over again her husband's absences in her mind, she would let them consume her until her body pled for her to let him go and to focus—as she leaned forward, her arms outstretched toward her toes now—and move, to shut her brain off and forget everything but the slight and pleasant yearning of muscles stretching and her own body bending.” (p. 198)

In the end, eight years after Susie's death, Ruana finally has the courage to think about divorce, something she has been avoiding all this time. Ruana feels that her husband is getting more and more away from her. He comes home and leaves their house like a ghost. Her husband is not mean or violent, but it is his absence that hurts Ruana. Even when her husband comes home, it is as if his soul is outside their house. Ruana feels that there is no point in maintaining the bond between two people who already feel foreign to each other.

“While Ruana's hands grew wet and swollen paring apple after apple, she began to say the word in her mind, the one she had avoided for years: divorce. It had been something about the crumpled, clinging postures of her son and Ruth that finally freed her. She could not remember the last time she had gone to bed at the same time as her husband. He walked in the room like a ghost and like a ghost slipped in between the sheets, barely creasing them. He was not unkind in the ways that the television and newspapers were full of. His cruelty was in his absence. Even when he came and sat at her dinner table and ate her food, he was not there.” (p. 314)

From the evidence above, it can be concluded that Ruana Singh is a former dancer who gave up on her career to take care for her husband and son. Ruana was often left alone at home by her husband, and eventually this bothered her, even though most times she tried to ignore it. In the end, after Abigail's return, Ruana took the courageous decision to divorce her husband.

B. The Portrayal of Women in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*

Based on a book entitled *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1974), there are several types of women condition in society. The first type is women who are trapped in the concept of “the feminine mystique,” which is an

assumption that the highest fulfillment of a woman's life is being a mother and a housewife. The women who fall into this category also vary; the suburban women, the educated women, the American women, or the "happy" women, but they all have one thing in common: they feel trapped in their domestic life. They are the trapped housewives.

The second type of women, which is also the projection of the future women generation, is called the new women. Betty Friedan describes these women as, unlike the previous housewives, know how to solve their problems and move on with life. They reject mass persuasion and manipulation, and do not give up their own, often painful, values for the convenience of conformity. They do not retreat to privatization, but face real-world challenges. And they know exactly who they are (Freidan, 1974: 363).

These two categories of women are both portrayed in *The Lovely Bones*. The first category, the trapped housewives, is represented in this novel by the old women generation, namely Abigail Salmon and Ruana Singh's characters. Meanwhile, the second category, the new women, is represented in this novel through the young women generation, Lindsey Salmon and Ruth Connors' characters. The fact that this novel has a setting in the 1970s raises an interesting assumption that this novel might really portray the condition of American women at that time.

1. The Trapped Housewives

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan introduces a common problem that was faced by American housewives in the 1950s. She called this problem as

“the problem that has no name,” because most of these women could not clearly express the problems they faced. When asked what was bothering them, they seemed to only describing their daily activities, making it difficult to find out the root of their problem.

“Can the problem that has no name be somehow related to the domestic routine of the housewife? When a woman tries to put the problem into words, she often merely describes the daily life she leads. What is there in this recital of comfortable domestic detail that could possibly cause such a feeling of desperation? Is she trapped simply by the enormous demands of her role as modern housewife: wife, mistress, mother, nurse, consumer, cook, chauffeur; expert on interior decoration, child care, appliance repair, furniture refinishing, nutrition, and education?” (Friedan, 1974: 25)

Although many women admitted to facing this problem, most men, and some women, still do not know that this problem exists. However, those who have faced it will certainly know that all superficial solutions, sympathetic suggestions, words of scolding, and words of cheering have somehow only drowned out the problem (Friedan, 1974: 21).

In this novel, the same problem is experienced by Abigail Salmon. In one conversation with her mother, Lynn, Abigail admitted that she couldn't describe how she really feels to anyone. This symptom is similar to the problem faced by the American housewives in *The Feminine Mystique* when they encountered difficulties in describing the problems they faced.

“I can't describe what I'm feeling,” she said. “To anyone.” (p. 169)

When a woman marries and gives birth to children, most of them experience a loss of identity. This loss of identity is prone to occur when they undergo a transition from being a wife to a mother. Being a mother means sacrificing or reducing their intellectual and spiritual needs in order to spend more

time raising their children. During pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting, women often don't have an opportunity to pause and return to their former selves. This is one of the many reasons why most women experience an identity crisis. This crisis comes when they are forced to adjust to a new role. This "role crisis" is usually associated with the emotional distress experienced by women in their twenties and thirties, who are still in the early stages of adapting to their new roles (Friedan, 1974: 68).

In this novel, Abigail has given birth to three children. Her first two children, Susie and Lindsey, were born close together (they were only one year apart), while her last-child, Buckley, was born many years later, and it happened out of her plans. After Susie and Lindsey's birth, Abigail had a long period of time to regain her identity as a woman, although not completely. But after the unplanned birth of her third child, she sealed up her identity again. In the quotation below, we can see how Abigail hid her identity after her third pregnancy with Buckley, and how she took her desperation out on Len Fenerman by having a sexual relationship with him. Abigail needed Len Fenerman, in addition to helping her forget her daughter's death, to regain her identity as a woman, because in front of Len, she is no longer a wife or a mother of three.

“When she realized she was pregnant the third time, she sealed the more mysterious mother off. Bottled up for years behind that wall, that needy part of her had grown, not shrunk, and in Len, the greed to get out, to smash, destroy, rescind, overtook her. Her body led, and in its wake would be the pieces left to her.”
 (p. 151)

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan stated that women should not stay quiet when their problems are trivialized just because men consider them lucky to stay at home all day long. Friedan also revealed that a culture that limits

women's movements in political, legal, social, and economic spheres makes women feel safer living with their husbands and children rather than creating their own way of life in the world. Friedan also expresses the one question that may come to mind when people see a woman who chooses her own career or continues to develop her potential: "Why should a woman bother to be anything more than a wife and mother if all the forces of her culture tell her she doesn't have to, will be better off not to, grow up?" (Friedan, 1974: 195).

In the novel, Abigail went through the same problem. On one occasion, Abigail expresses her desire to be more than a mother to Lindsey. Lindsey, who is still a teenager, thinks that she understands what her mother means, because she also wants to be more than a girl. But what Abigail really wants is the freedom that she once had when she was young.

"I want to be more than a mother." (Abigail to Lindsey, p. 207)

"What she wanted most was to be that free girl again, stacking china at Wanamaker's, hiding from her manager the Wedgwood cup with the handle she broke, dreaming of living in Paris like de Beauvoir and Sartre, and going home that day laughing to herself about the nerdy Jack Salmon, who was pretty cute even if he hated smoke. The cafés in Paris were full of cigarettes, she'd told him, and he'd seemed impressed. At the end of that summer when she invited him in and they had, both for the first time, made love, she'd smoked a cigarette, and for the joke he said he'd have one too. When she handed him the damaged blue china to use as an ashtray, she used all her favorite words to embellish the story of breaking and then hiding, inside her coat, the now homely Wedgwood cup." (p. 207)

Another characteristic of the trapped housewives is that they feel like they have no personality. Below is a case experienced by one of the housewives in

Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*:

"I've tried everything women are supposed to do--hobbies, gardening, pickling, canning, being very social with my neighbors, joining committees, running PTA teas. I can do it all, and I like it, but it doesn't leave you anything to think about--any feeling of who you are. I never had any career ambitions. All I wanted was to get married and have four children. I love the kids and Bob and my home."

There's no problem you can even put a name to. But I'm desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food and putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I?" (Friedan, 1974: 17)

Abigail also experiences a similar case. Through Susie's narrative, we can find out how Abigail's personality always changes according to the tasks she carries out: a mother, an owner of a happy dog, a homemaker, a gardener, or a sunny neighbor. But none of these tasks is a reflection of her true personality.

"When the roll came back from the Kodak plant in a special heavy envelope, I could see the difference immediately. There was only one picture in which my mother was Abigail. It was that first one, the one taken of her unawares, the one captured before the click startled her into the mother of the birthday girl, owner of the happy dog, wife to the loving man, and mother again to another girl and a cherished boy. Homemaker. Gardener. Sunny neighbor. My mother's eyes were oceans, and inside them there was loss. I thought I had my whole life to understand them, but that was the only day I had. Once upon Earth I saw her as Abigail, and then I let it slip effortlessly back—my fascination held in check by wanting her to be that mother and envelop me as that mother." (p. 44)

The only moment in the novel where Abigail shows her true personality is when she sat alone in the backyard of her house without anyone's company. At that time, she wasn't wearing lipstick, which she didn't even know what it was for herself. It was the only time she doesn't have to pretend to be playing a role.

"I wish I could explain it better than this, but I had never seen her sitting so still, so not there somehow. Outside the screened-in porch she was sitting on an aluminum fold-out chair that was facing the backyard. In her hand she held a saucer and in the saucer was her customary cup of coffee. That morning there were no lipstick marks because there was no lipstick until she put it on for . . . who? I had never thought to ask the question. My father? Us?" (p. 43)

Abigail's sense of loss of identity later makes her feel lonely and even alienated from her own family. From Susie's narrative, we can see that Abigail still really loves her husband and children, but the problem of her crisis in identity, plus the tragedy of losing her first child, makes her feel even more separated from her family.

“On my way home from the junior high, I would sometimes stop at the edge of our property and watch my mother ride the ride-on mower, looping in and out among the pine trees, and I could remember then how she used to whistle in the mornings as she made her tea and how my father, rushing home on Thursdays, would bring her marigolds and her face would light up yellowy in delight. They had been deeply, separately, wholly in love—apart from her children my mother could reclaim this love, but with them she began to drift. It was my father who grew toward us as the years went by; it was my mother who grew away.” (p. 153)

Through Susie's narrative, Abigail has also realized that she has never actually dreamed of becoming a mother. She also expressed that during her days, being a mother is something many girls dream of. This is a common feature of the feminine mystique, and Abigail has found herself trapped in it.

“She now knew that being a mother was a calling, something plenty of young girls dreamed of being. But my mother had never had that dream, and she had been punished in the most horrible and unimaginable way for never having wanted me.” (p. 266)

Until finally, when her despair has reached its peak, Abigail decides to leave her family and drive miles away alone to her father's cabin in New Hampshire. From New Hampshire, she moves to California and works there. However, she does not completely let go of her family. She regularly sends postcards to her children in every city she visits. She also occasionally calls her husband from California to ask about her children and the condition of her house. From years of travel and exile, Abigail slowly heals the wounds over her daughter's death, and begins to accept that she can still love Susie without fear of being hurt.

In addition, Ruana Singh also experiences a situation similar to Abigail's. She also feels that she has no hope for the future of her family, but she always keeps away from this bad possibility. She allows herself to be trapped in the loneliness of the days at home in order to avoid a split in her family. Unlike

Abigail, Ruana never grows away from her son, Ray. The problem that is bothering her comes from her husband. In the novel, there is no conversation shown between Ruana and her husband at all. Whenever there are guests who visit her house, Ruana is always portrayed as being alone in her house.

Ruana's husband is a professor who spends much of his time outside the home. He even spends more time outside than in his own home. Ruana once suspects that her husband is cheating with another woman outside their house, but she did her best to get rid of the thought. She doesn't want her decision to divorce her husband affect her son's life.

In her youth, Ruana was a dancer. But she sacrificed her career to take care for her son and her husband. This is one of the proofs that Ruana is a victim of the feminine mystique, which assumes that the biggest fulfillment of a woman is to be a mother and a wife, not pursuing her career and education. This situation is similar to the one stated in *The Feminine Mystique*, in which the average women in their forties and fifties remembered how they used to painfully gave up their dreams (Friedan, 1974: 12).

In the end, Ruana chooses to solve her problem by taking the courage to get a divorce. It is a difficult decision for her, but she feels that this is the only way that would set her free. In contrast to Abigail who returns to her family and maintains her relationship with her husband, Ruana chooses to divorce her husband, who, according to her, has no interest in their family anymore, as shown in the quotation below.

“While Ruana’s hands grew wet and swollen paring apple after apple, she began to say the word in her mind, the one she had avoided for years: divorce. It had been something about the crumpled, clinging postures of her son and Ruth that

finally freed her. She could not remember the last time she had gone to bed at the same time as her husband. He walked in the room like a ghost and like a ghost slipped in between the sheets, barely creasing them. He was not unkind in the ways that the television and newspapers were full of. His cruelty was in his absence. Even when he came and sat at her dinner table and ate her food, he was not there.” (p. 314)

Ruana's decision is the same as that of Betty Friedan's, which she described in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan stated that after she divorced, she felt less lonely than when she was “holding on to the false security of her marriage” (Freidan, 1974: 379).

2. The New Women

The second type of woman portrayed through this novel is *the new women*. The term “new women” is taken from the book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, which means: women who know how to solve their problems and move on with life; women who reject mass persuasion and manipulation, and do not give up their own, often painful, values for the convenience of conformity; women who do not retreat to privatization, but face real-world challenges; and women who know exactly who they are (Freidan, 1974: 363).

In her book, Friedan repeatedly mentions that it is toxic femininity that causes many women to lose their identity in their household life. Thus, the term new women are applied to those women who have managed to escape from the demands of toxic femininity. In *The Lovely Bones*, the new women are portrayed by the young generation: Susie Salmon, Lindsey Salmon, and Ruth Connors. Even though Susie does not have the chance to grow up to be an adult woman, her way of thinking and worldview makes her worthy of being included in this category.

One of the reasons Susie is included in this category is the fact that she has been against toxic femininity ever since she was a teenager. Implicitly, Susie claims that one of the biggest reasons Harvey's victims were girls is because girls are always taught to be gentle and soft. Girls who are interested and good in sports at school are accused of being tomboyish, so most of them choose to avoid sports.

“Fitness was not a big thing back then; aerobics was barely a word. Girls were supposed to be soft, and only the girls we suspected were butch could climb the ropes at school.” (p. 12)

Susie's critique to toxic femininity can also be seen from her desire to “lift her father up” as an attempt to cheer him up. A daughter who wants to comfort her father is a common thing, but through the parable that Susie uses, “a woman lifting up a man”, we can find out the criticism that Susie implies on toxic femininity, as well as toxic masculinity, which causes her father to have nowhere to go when he feels weak and sad, because men are supposed to be strong.

“I wanted to lift him up, like statues I'd seen in art history books. A woman lifting up a man. The rescue in reverse.” (p. 61)

The next character included in the new women category is Susie's younger sister, Lindsey Salmon. From the start, Lindsey is depicted as a girl who is barely feminine. She is good at soccer. She regularly does warm-up and push-ups (the boys' kind) in her room. She reads big books that are rarely touched by girls her age. She never shows her emotions in public. She also joins the football team at her school, being the only girl on the team. One of her teachers even calls her “as competitive as boys.”

“You know who came in to see me this morning?” Mr. Caden had held back his big finish, the one he was sure would work. “Mr. Dewitt. He's considering coaching a girls' team,” Mr. Caden said. “The idea is all centered around you. He's watched how good you are, as competitive as his boys, and he thinks other girls would come out if you led the charge. What do you say?” (p. 33)

From a very young age, Lindsey already knew what she wanted to do. She aspires to become a therapist. Therefore, she is always persistent in studying and reading psychology books in order to develop her potential. Lindsey is not afraid of being labeled as unfeminine for fully developing her potential. In *The Feminine Mystique*, most college girls are reluctant to expert a particular field or pursue a career because they don't want to be considered unfeminine. Here is an interesting answer from one of the college girls interviewed by Betty Friedan when asked which courses they were excited about in college:

“Girls don't get excited about things like that anymore. We don't want careers. Our parents expect us to go to college. Everybody goes. You're a social outcast at home if you don't. But a girl who got serious about anything she studied-like, wanting to go on and do research would be peculiar, unfeminine. I guess everybody wants to graduate with a diamond ring on her finger. That's the important thing.” (Friedan, 1974: 145)

Therefore, Lindsey's persistence in learning and exploring her potential can be called a courageous act.

“There she was, my precious sister. He could see her in the upstairs window of our house. She had cut all her hair off and grown thinner in the intervening years, but it was her, sitting at the drafting board she used as a desk and reading a psychology book.” (p. 297)

Lindsey's other act in rejecting femininity is when she decides to cut her hair short, resembling a boy.

“They had gone the week before to get haircuts at the same barber shop on Market Street, and though Lindsey's hair was lighter and finer than Samuel's, the barber had given them identical short, spiky cuts.” (p. 234)

However, among her other courageous acts, the biggest evidence that makes Lindsey worthy of being called one of the new women is the fact that she is capable of being a career woman as well as a mother and a wife. Lindsey has finally succeeded in achieving her dream of becoming a therapist. She married

Samuel and gave birth to a daughter named after her mother and sister, Abigail Suzanne. What makes Lindsey different from her mother is that she doesn't make her role as a housewife her main job. She has succeeded to, as Friedan (1974: 330) stated in her book, “unequivocally say “no” to the housewife image.”

“Out in her yard, Lindsey made a garden. I watched her weed the long thick flower bed. Her fingers twisted inside the gloves as she thought about the clients she saw in her practice each day—how to help them make sense of the cards life had dealt them, how to ease their pain. I remembered that the simplest things were the ones that often eluded what I thought of as her big brain. It took her forever to figure out that I always volunteered to clip the grass inside the fence so I could play with Holiday while we did yard work. She remembered Holiday then, and I followed her thoughts. How in a few years it would be time to get her child a dog, once the house was settled and fenced-in. Then she thought about how there were now machines with whipcords that could trim a fence post to post in minutes—what it had taken us hours of grumbling to achieve.” (p. 327)

The last woman to enter the new women category is Ruth Connors. Ruth, although not explicitly stated, is a feminist. This is shown by her penchant for reading feminist books and her dislike of men who “conquer women.” She is against makeup and thinks it makes women look mean. When she sees Samuel grip Lindsey's hand tightly, she referred to it as subjugation.

“Ruth watched my family greet people and noted in horror my sister's new look. Ruth did not believe in makeup. She thought it demeaned women. Samuel Heckler was holding Lindsey's hand. A word from her readings popped into her head: subjugation.” (p. 110)

During one of her many encounters with Ray Singh, Ruth has revealed that she dreams of becoming a painter and a poet. Ruth is good at both things. Susie recognized her talent as a painter when she saw her collection of paintings in her sketchbook. Meanwhile, Ruth's talent as a poet can be seen in her ability to create dozens of poems about Susie.

“They talked about what it was like to be a foreigner in Norristown. They read poems aloud from Ruth's anthology. They talked about how to become what they wanted to be. A doctor for Ray. A painter/poet for Ruth.” (p. 81)

“Almost fifteen now, Ruth Connors knew. Out in the aluminum toolshed behind her house, surrounded by the doorknobs and hardware her father had found in old houses slated for demolition, Ruth sat in the darkness and concentrated until she came away with a headache. She would run into the house, past the living room, where her father sat reading, and up to her room, where in fits and bursts she would write her poetry. “Being Susie,” “After Death,” “In Pieces,” “Beside Her Now,” and her favorite—the one she was most proud of and carried with her to the symposium folded and refolded so often that the creases were close to cuts—“The Lip of the Grave.” (p. 114)

On one occasion, Ruth is depicted reading the novel *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath. It seems that the author wants to show that Ruth's character is inspired by the main character in the novel, Esther Greenwood. Ruth and Esther are similar because they are both students who dream of becoming poets. Another interesting thing is that *The Bell Jar* is once banned because it rejects the typical ideal image of a woman, which is becoming a mother and a wife. Through these small details, we can conclude that Ruth's character is a symbol of rejection of the stereotypes of ideal women circulating in society.

*“Ruth had been standing in the grocery store with her mother when she saw the candles among the paper plates and plastic forks and spoons. At school that day she had been acutely aware of what day it was and even though what she had done so far—lain in bed reading *The Bell Jar*, helped her mother clean out what her father insisted on calling his toolshed and what she thought of as the poetry shed, and tagged along to the grocery store—hadn't consisted of anything that might mark the anniversary of my death, she had been determined to do something.” (p. 200)*

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Susie Salmon, Lindsey Salmon, and Ruth Connors show their personalities as the new women in different ways. Susie shows her rejection to toxic femininity through her thoughts and narratives, Lindsey shows her courage through her actions and persistence, and Ruth shows her resistance through her feminist readings and creative works.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter expounds the conclusion of the findings and discussions elaborated in the previous sections, which are the answers to the problem formulations of this study. Furthermore, suggestions are provided for the readers and the upcoming researchers who are willing to investigate further studies on a similar framework.

A. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, I conclude that there are five female characters with diverse and complex characteristics in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*. They are Susie Salmon, Abigail Salmon, Lindsey Salmon, Ruth Connors, and Ruana Singh. Each of them is portrayed with a deep exploration of personality. Susie Salmon is an affectionate teenage girl whose maturity continues to grow even after she died. She learns to love her family and friends even more as she is watching them from the afterlife. She also learns to understand people's reckless actions without judging them abrasively. Abigail Salmon is a misguided mother who experiences a crisis in her identity. She chooses to take a courageous journey by herself miles away from her family for years in order to regain her identity as a woman. Lindsey Salmon is a strong teenage girl who rejects toxic femininity through her actions. She shows that a woman can be both a housewife and a career woman without having to choose between them. Ruth Connors is a

feminist student who is also an aspiring poet and painter. She also rejects to fit in the image of the ideal woman in society through her subversive paintings and acts. And the last character, Ruana Singh, is a housewife who is often left alone at home by her husband. Years after years, she finally makes a brave decision to divorce her husband, a decision that she has been avoiding all this time.

Furthermore, based on the types of women depicted in Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, there are two representations of women in the novel *The Lovely Bones*. The first is the trapped housewives, represented by the older generation: Abigail Salmon and Ruana Singh. They are housewives who feel trapped and lose their passion in their household life. Abigail and Ruana have their own way of solving their problems. While Abigail chose to return to face her family with a different feeling and identity, Ruana chose to end her relationship with her husband. The second type of women portrayed in this novel is the new women, represented by the younger generation: Susie Salmon, Lindsey Salmon, and Ruth Connors. They are women who dare to reject femininity and refuse to follow the ideal image of women formed by society. They are women who know how to solve their problems and move on with life. They reject mass persuasion and manipulation, and do not give up their own, often painful, values for the convenience of conformity. They do not retreat to privatization, but face real-world challenges. And they know exactly who they are.

B. SUGGESTION

The limitation of this study lies in the scope of its research which focuses on women's experiences that are represented in the novel only. This study does not pay attention to the outside matters that surround this novel, such as the author's life and the social background of the novel. Literary research with a feminist approach is always interesting to do, especially in the modern era where many young women have realized their equal position with men. Future researchers can carry out research with the same object through different aspects, such as the writing technique of the female author in this novel, and the congruity between the representation of women in this novel and the real situation of women during the writing of this novel.

Finally, I fully realize that this study may not be perfect in its writings and elaborations. Therefore, critiques and suggestions are always welcome for the sake of a better research.

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