

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Anxiety is one of the psychological conditions commonly experienced by people when facing internal or external pressures. According to Carveth (2021:12), anxiety is rooted in past or present trauma and often emerges when individuals encounter unwanted feelings. In everyday life, anxiety may arise from various situations, such as social pressure, academic responsibilities, or work-related demands. If it is not managed properly, anxiety can influence a person's emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Therefore, anxiety has become an important topic in psychology because it helps explain how people respond to different forms of psychological pressure.

Psychological experiences such as anxiety are not only found in everyday life but are also represented in literary works. According to Mayer (1997:3-4), literature is a written work that uses creative language and provides aesthetic value for its readers. Besides its artistic function, literature also reflects various aspects of human life, including emotions, social experiences, and psychological conditions. Through fictional characters and narratives, literary works allow readers to understand human experiences from different perspectives. For this reason, literature can be used as an object of psychological analysis.

Among various literary genres, this research chooses the novel as its object of study. Compared to genres such as poetry or drama, novels generally provide broader narrative space for developing characters, settings, and conflicts in greater

detail. Abrams (2013:252) explains that a novel is a long work of fiction that allows authors to present complex events and explore the motives and development of their characters more deeply. This characteristic makes novels particularly suitable for psychological analysis because readers can observe the thoughts, emotions, and behavioral changes of the characters throughout the story.

One of the contemporary novels that portrays complex psychological experiences is *Reminders of Him* (2022) by Colleen Hoover. The novel tells the story of Kenna Rowan, who is released from prison after serving a sentence related to a car accident that caused her boyfriend's death. After her release, she tries to rebuild her life and reconnect with her daughter, Diem. However, her efforts are met with rejection from Scotty's family and negative judgment from the surrounding community. As a result, she faces various emotional and psychological struggles while attempting to move forward with her life.

Throughout the story, Kenna experiences guilt, fear, worry, and uncertainty in different situations. These emotional experiences affect her thoughts, decisions, and behavior, indicating the presence of anxiety. In addition, the way she responds to these pressures reflects various psychological reactions that can be examined through the concept of defense mechanisms. Therefore, Kenna Rowan is considered an appropriate character for psychological analysis.

To analyze these psychological aspects, this research applies the approach of literary psychology. According to Wellek and Warren (1956:81), literary psychology is concerned with psychological aspects related to literature, including

psychological patterns reflected in literary works. Santos et al. (2018:783) also explain that literary psychology helps readers understand characters through both their explicit actions and implicit attitudes. Through this approach, the psychological condition of Kenna Rowan can be analyzed based on the events presented in the novel.

This research specifically employs Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms. Freud (in Feist & Feist, 2008:33) explains that anxiety functions as a warning signal experienced by the ego when facing threats. In response to this condition, the ego unconsciously activates defense mechanisms to reduce psychological tension (Feist & Feist, 2008:34). Therefore, this research examines not only the types of anxiety experienced by Kenna Rowan but also the defense mechanisms she uses in responding to that anxiety.

This research is expected to contribute to the study of literary psychology, particularly in understanding the representation of anxiety and defense mechanisms in contemporary fiction. It is also expected to provide a better understanding of the relationship between psychological conflict and human behavior as represented through literary character. For this reason, Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms are considered suitable theories for examining Kenna Rowan's psychological condition.

1.2 Research Question

The research questions of this research are follows:

1. What types of anxiety does the main character experience in Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*?
2. What defense mechanisms are used by the main character to cope with her anxiety in Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

Related to the research questions stated above, the purposes are as follows:

1. To describe the types of anxiety experienced by the main character in Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*.
2. To analyze the defense mechanisms used by the main character to cope with her anxiety in Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*.

1.4 Previous Research

The writer systematically reviews various research on Colleen Hoover's novel *Reminders of Him* to maintain academic integrity and enrich existing knowledge. This review compares the aims, methods, and main findings of previous studies in order to identify similarities and differences with the present research. Through this comparison, the writer is able to determine the research gap and demonstrate the originality of the current study.

The first previous research is an article entitled "Freudian Defense Mechanisms of the Character Kenna in the Novel *Reminders of Him* by Colleen Hoover" written by Nur Haera Aradjim, Magdalena Baga, and Adriansyah A. Katili (2025). This research analyzes the defense mechanisms used by the main character, Kenna, using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The study applies a

qualitative method with literary structural and psychological approaches. The findings show that Kenna uses several defense mechanisms, including rationalization, denial, suppression, repression, and sublimation. This research contributes to the understanding of defense mechanisms portrayed in literary characters.

The second previous research is a master thesis entitled “Traumatic Loss, Grief Theory, and the Use of Scriptotherapy as a Medium for Emotional Healing in Colleen Hoover’s *Reminders of Him*” by Allata (2024). This research examines how Kenna Rowan uses letter writing as a coping mechanism to deal with pain and guilt after the tragic death of her partner. It based on two main frameworks: Kübler-Ross & Kessler’s (2005) five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) and Henke’s (1998) concept of scriptotherapy. Using a multidisciplinary approach (literary analysis and trauma and grief psychology), this sresearch concludes two main findings: (1) Kenna’s retrospective letters map her progress through the five stages of grief until she achieves psychological recovery, and (2) scriptotherapy has therapeutic power letter writing facilitates emotional catharsis, resolution of the main plot conflict, confrontation with the past, reconstruction of identity, self-forgiveness, and communal reconciliation. In terms of contribution, this research affirms the healing power of writing as a medium for overcoming trauma and restoring wholeness in contemporary American fiction.

The third previous research is a master thesis entitled “Trauma of Kenna Rowan in Colleen Hoover’s *Reminders of Him*: A Woman Study” written by Sara

Bouregba (2024). This research focuses on Kenna Rowan's trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after the fatal accident that caused Scotty's death. Using Cathy Caruth's and Judith Herman's trauma theories with a psychological approach, the study finds that Kenna experiences psychological trauma and uses coping mechanisms and personal relationships as part of her healing process. This research contributes to the discussion of trauma and emotional recovery in contemporary literature

The fourth previous research is an undergraduate thesis entitled "Theme Analysis in the Novel *Reminders of Him*" by Tiarna Sihotang (2024). This research analyzes the theme of redemption depicted through the characters, plot, and setting in the novel. This research uses an intrinsic approach with the theme theory proposed by Robert Stanton. The results show that the main character's struggle for redemption stems from the guilt over his girlfriend's death and the emotional impact it has on his girlfriend's family. The main character shows four main characteristics in her penance process, namely tough, persistent, hardworking, and sincere.

The fifth previous study is an article entitled "A Syntactic Analysis of Interrogative Sentences in Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*" by Rekha Mouriena and Wa'özisökh Nazara (2024). This study focuses on analyzing the construction and function of interrogative sentences in the novel using syntactic theories proposed by Greenbaum & Nelson (2012) and Seaton & Mew (2007). The research applies a qualitative method and uses a distributional approach to classify the data. The findings show six types of interrogative constructions and four types

of communicative functions. In addition, the functions of interrogative sentences are categorized into four types: seeking information, asking for agreement, confirming something, and giving alternatives. In terms of contribution, this study provides a linguistic perspective by focusing on syntactic structures and their communicative functions in the novel.

The sixth previous research is an undergraduate thesis entitled “Kenna’s Problem as an Ex-Prisoner in the Novel *Reminders of Him*” written by Fadhilatul Fajriah (2023). This research analyzes the problems experienced by the main character, Kenna, as a female ex-convict who faces social injustice due to her status. This research uses an intrinsic approach with character and characterization theories from New Criticism and post-structuralist feminist theory to explain the forms of injustice against women in society. The results show that Kenna is portrayed as a simple, strong, hard-working, and sincere woman. However, her status as a former prisoner causes her to experience social discrimination, such as not being granted custody of her children, difficulty finding work, and rejection from her community.

The seventh previous research is an undergraduate thesis entitled “Love Expression by the Main Characters in the Novel *Reminders of Him*” by Glendy Christy Julia Tambunan (2023). This research focuses on the expression of love shown by the main characters as well as how love resolves the main conflict in the novel. This research uses the theory of love expressions by Gary Chapman (2015) and the theory of characterization by Edgar V. Roberts (2010). Using qualitative textual analysis method, this thesis identifies five types of love expressions: words

of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch, where physical touch is the most dominant type of love expression. The research also describes the characterization of Kenna and Ledger, with 16 and 10 character traits, respectively. The research shows that the main conflict in the novel can be resolved through acts of service by Ledger.

Although this research uses the same novel, it differs from the previous studies in terms of focus and theoretical discussion. Previous studies mainly discuss trauma, PTSD, themes, social issues, healing processes, and defense mechanisms in general. Meanwhile, this research specifically focuses on the types of anxiety experienced by Kenna Rowan based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, including neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety. Furthermore, this research analyzes the defense mechanisms proposed by Anna Freud as the main character's responses in coping with her anxiety. Therefore, this research provides a more focused discussion on anxiety and how defense mechanisms function in reducing psychological pressure in *Reminders of Him*.

1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of the research covers two main aspects of Colleen Hoover's *Reminders of Him*, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic analysis. Intrinsic analysis will focus on the main character regarding her experiences and inner struggles that give rise to anxiety. This research will include an examination of the character & characterization, setting, and conflict that shape Kenna's psychological dynamics throughout the story. Meanwhile, from an extrinsic perspective, this research will

examine Kenna's anxiety using Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms.

1.6 Writing Organization

The writing organization of this research is divided into four chapters:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research, research questions, objectives of the research, scope of the research, and previous research.

CHAPTER II: THEORY & METHODS

This chapter explains the theory and research methods applied in this research. The theoretical section describes the internal and external elements used by the writer during the research writing process, as well as the research approach applied in the preparation of the research.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the analysis of Colleen Hoover's novel *Reminders of Him*, focusing on the anxiety experienced by the main character. The analysis is based on the research questions and utilizes the theoretical framework established in Chapter II. This chapter examines the characters, setting, and conflict as intrinsic elements. Furthermore, it applies Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms as extrinsic elements to analyze the novel.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusion of the writer's analysis.

REFERENCES

