CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Detective stories were popularized at the end of the nineteenth century by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle through his detective character, Sherlock Holmes, and at the beginning of the twentieth century by Agatha Christie through her detective characters, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple (Thornley and Roberts 156). Nowadays, besides detective stories, there are many other genres popping up, but still, the popularity of detective novels never withers. There are two contemporary detective novels that I would like to analyse in this thesis, namely Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.

The Da Vinci Code is considered to be a controversial novel because it "not only misrepresents the Church as a murderous institution but also implies that the Christian faith itself is utterly false." ("Cracking *The Da Vinci Code*"). The novelist himself, Dan Brown, an American thriller fiction novelist of the late

twentieth century, claims that he is a Christian; but he also states that "the more he learns, the more questions he has" and that he only gives the information that has been rumoured through centuries. ("Interview with Dan Brown on *The Da Vinci Code*") By combining facts and thriller mystery, Brown has created a way to make his novel seem vivid so that when readers read it, they can feel that they are watching a movie.

Brown keeps a fast pace in this novel by intriguing suspense throughout the story followed by several surprises which make the readers unable to stop reading it. What really builds the suspense is how the major characters have to run away from the police's chase while trying to solve the mystery. Its exciting elements of plot combined with the historical facts, which are unknown to common people, make the readers unable to turn their eyes from the pages. Despite the fact that the mastermind of all the murders is rather easy to guess, the ending is amusing and very surprising. It is worth reading and analyzing.

Another novel which is worth reading and creates more or less the same quality of suspense and surprise as *The Da Vinci Code* is Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. *The Name of the Rose* is also a detective novel, which is set in an abbey in Italy. The story revolves around the monks in the abbey and the dark side inside them, such as their sexual activities, which is similar to *The Da Vinci Code*. *The Name of the Rose* makes the readers question the oath of celibacy from these holy men and put the idea that these men are merely ordinary men.

Umberto Eco is an Italian novelist of the late twentieth century as well as a semiotic professor, which "reflects his many intellectual interests and wide-ranging knowledge of philosophy, literature, medieval history, religion, and

politics (Gale). His novel, *The Name of the Rose,* deals with historical events as well as philosophical knowledge, which somewhat different from the normal kind of detective novels. The mystery behind the killings as well as the dark side of the holy people in the abbey is very surprising. Eco has succeeded in creating a fine artistic unity in this detective novel with the logical explanation of the events happening in this novel.

I choose to analyse elements of plot in *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Name of the Rose* because both novels are about murders that include the thrill of chasing the suspects and finding the motives of the killers. The elements of plot will help the readers to find the rationality behind the reciprocal relationship in the suspense and surprise found in both novels.

According to the book *Story and Structure* by Laurence Perrine, the elements of plot consist of suspense, surprise and artistic unity. Suspense is the element of plot which makes the readers ask 'what will happen after this or what will this character do?' and questioning the events which raise their curiosity and anxiety. Moreover, surprise happens when the event in the story ends differently from the readers' expectation. Then, there is artistic unity which is "essential to a good plot; nothing irrelevant that does not contribute to the total meaning; nothing that is there only for its own sake or its own excitement." (Reuben)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems I am going to analyse in this thesis are:

1. Which parts of the story act as suspense in the novels?

2. Which parts of the story act as surprise in the novels?

3. How do the suspense and surprise create artistic unity in the novels?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the problems above, the purposes of the study are:

1. To identify the events that act as suspense in the novels.

2. To identify the events that act as surprise in the novels.

3. To show how the suspense and surprise create artistic unity in the novels.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

I use library research for my thesis, first by reading *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Name of the Rose* as the primary texts. Second, I also read a couple of books and compile some data from the Internet so as to support my analysis of suspense, surprise, and artistic unity of the novels. Finally, I draw some concluding points from my analysis.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter

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is the analysis of the elements of plot in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. The third chapter is the analysis of the elements of plot in Umberto Eco's *The Name of The Rose*. The fourth chapter is the Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography and Appendices, which contain the synopses of the novels and the biographies of the authors.