Werther Effect VS. Thirteen Reasons Why by Tianyi Zuo

When I went through the negative comments on *13 Reasons Why* on internet, I thought of the Werther effect. The word Werther effect derives from Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Wertheris.* It represents suicides that are emulations of another widely publicized suicide. Many audience, especially parents, are afraid that their children might suicide following Hannah after watching this show. Personally speaking, I think this kind of worry is quite reasonable as teenagers are more likely to be impacted by the surrounding. Moreover, I think *13 Reasons Why* focuses more on the depiction of the depression instead of the solution to the problems. It raises the awareness of teen suicide for the public while it further upset the teenagers who are already in fragile situation by reminding them the bullying and isolation.

Recently, a game called Blue Whale challenge comes to the spot light. It

consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by administrators over a 50-day period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit suicide. At first just few teenagers in Russia took part in this crazy game but after people posting the procedures on social media, more and more teenagers began interested in it. Some of them played this game because of curiosity while the game later drove them out of control step by step and finally led them to death. Blue Whale challenge is considered as a typical example of Werther effect. Furthermore, I think the way *13 Reasons Why* presents its audience is similar to that of Blue Whale challenge to the participants. It describes how the students and the school 'killed' Hannah step by step. Although its effect on teenagers is not so obvious as Blue Whale challenge, we could still see cases that parents charged *13 Reasons Why* causing the suicides of their children.

There are some other TV shows that contain graphic scenes, but we have to recognize that their target audience is not teenagers. *A Game of Throne* is well-known for its brutal portrayal of killing while I think it conveys, more importantly, the spirit of

never giving up. Every character, no matter nobles or the small logs, struggles so hard for lives. In *13 Reasons Why*, however, the audience could only see how Hannah blames others. Some people point out that Hannah herself is the fourteenth reason leads to her death which I somehow agree. Hannah definitely won't be a positive model for the teenagers.

After finishing watching *13 Reasons Why*, I suddenly think of Nietzsche's saying that when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you. We couldn't pretend the dark side of the society doesn't exist, but we also should always remember that there is not only the dark side. 13 Reasons Why is not recommended for teenagers because it forgets the latter.