

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

“Racism is the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behaviour towards them. The belief that some races of people are better than others” (“Racism”). “Racism world-wide is manifested in every continent. In Europe, extreme racist groups have gained more and more acceptability in countries like France, Germany, and Austria Many African countries have endured long-term civil wars, some beginning shortly after that nation’s freedom from former colonial countries” (“World Racism” par 4). In the United States, racism existed in the form of slavery. “Slavery in the United States began soon after English colonists first settled Virginia and lasted until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865. Racism in the United States was worse during this time at any period before or since” (“Background on Racial Discrimination” par 7). Africans as slaves suffered during that time as they were treated as things not human beings by their master.

Two American writers who deal with slavery in their writings are Harriet Beecher Stowe and William Styron. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a 19th Century American author, wanted to help people in the North to understand better the realities of slavery (“Harriet Beecher Stowe Biography” par 6). She wants people in the North know and understand how bad slavery is so that they will participate and help to abolish slavery. Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States in his 1863 meeting with Harriet Beecher Stowe, said, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war” (“Harriet Beecher Stowe Biography” par 7). It is mostly true because her work *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or, Life among the Lowly* is the first novel to criticize the institution of slavery and becomes the bestselling anti-slavery novel. “She needed to tell the nation what it should have already known, that slavery was unjust, immoral, and evil. This was her mission when she wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (“Harriet Beecher Stowe” par 3). *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* is her second anti-slavery novel.

William Styron is a 20th Century American novelist who became well known for his novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, a fictional recreation of the 1831 slave rebellion in Virginia led by Nat Turner (“William Styron” par 1). *The Confessions of Nat Turner* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and also became one of the most controversial novels (“Biography” par 2). It becomes controversial because some critics say that William Styron cannot describe Nat Turner well enough since he is white.

I have chosen Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or, Life among the Lowly* and William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner* because both stories deal with slavery. These two novels show the condition of slaves at that

time. Both the protagonists are African-American slaves who experience inhumane treatment from their cruel masters. In the beginning, born as slaves, Uncle Tom and Nat Turner receive the promise of freedom from their masters. However, later they have to be separated from their families, friends, and their master's families, due to their being sold to pay their masters's debt. They experience the cruelty of their new masters and in the end, they die as slaves. As the two novels deal with the struggle of the protagonists, the literary element I will analyze in this thesis is the portrayal of the protagonists. The meaning of *protagonist* is "the leading character or one of the major characters in a play, novel, film, etc" ("Protagonist," def. 1). By reading the portrayal of the protagonists, the readers can understand their attitudes towards slavery.

Statement of the Problem

The problems I would like to discuss are:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in each novel?
2. What is the purpose of each author in portraying such a protagonist?

Purpose of the Study

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

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed in each novel.
2. To show the purpose of each author in portraying such a protagonist.

Method of Research

The method of research that I use is library research. I begin the research by reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life among the Lowly* and William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. After that I analyze each text by using some information and materials from the Internet that can support my analysis. Lastly, I draw some conclusions of what has been discussed.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One 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. Chapter Two contains the analysis of the portrayal of the protagonist of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life among the Lowly*. Chapter Three comprises the analysis of the portrayal of the protagonist of Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the synopsis of the novels and the biography of the authors.