

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I would like to elaborate about the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis.

### **Background of the Study**

In a world dominated by the patriarchs, there are many issues affecting men and women. The world is “Holding up the male quality as central”, has “Dualistic and gendered thinking of roles in which men and women both have their own specific roles (e.g. men leading, women supporting)”, and supports “Male domination; (in which) men often occupy the most important and visible roles” (Serres). In particular, I am interested in the role of women in society.

As a woman, I think the subject of the role of women in society is important and interesting. It is generally acknowledged that women seem to have certain roles and duties in a society. Their roles and duties might be varied; they can depend on the time and place where they live in, but one thing remains: like men, they must do what the society expects and most of them are struggling in doing it.

In the nineteenth century of England, “women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best suited to the domestic sphere” (Hughes).

Women in that period were also expected to remain chaste until marriage, not allowed to pursue higher education and professional work (Hughes), thus, because of those rules, it seemed quite understandable for women to feel restrained and cause several outbursts and rebellion. Therefore, the nineteenth century of England is seen as a traditional era.

The twentieth century, on the other hand, has a different story, as seen in the following quotation below:

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed changes in almost every aspect of the day-to-day lives of women, from the domestic spheres to public. The women’s movement, with its emphasis on advocacy of equal rights, newly formed women’s organizations and the rise of new generation of female artists, photographers, and professionals, transformed the traditional patriarchal social structure across the globe. (“Feminism in Literature Essay – Women in the Early to Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century (1900-1960)”)

Based on the quotation above, it is evident that the society in the early twentieth century of England is starting to be progressive.

Throughout the centuries, the role of women in society has often been conversed about in many discussions, including literary works. Not only in the nineteenth century, in which plenty of novels concerning the role of women in society were published, the twentieth century also has plenty prominent novels

regarding that matter. From each century, I am particularly interested in two of them, *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*.

I decided to choose *Jane Eyre* because it is Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece. Brontë is one of the most notable English writers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, who "bravely contradicted society through her writing" (Lowes). Most of her works are about ". . . woman seeking on balance between love and achievement" ("Charlotte Brontë: The Greatest Literature of All Time"). Her heroines are usually very reflective of themselves; they are "stands-in for the author" (Cecil and Bock 161). Published in October 16, 1847, *Jane Eyre* became a bestselling novel; and is said to be "a frequent topic of discussion for the literary critics and editorial writers of the time" (Rupiper). It is also considered "a classic Western literature" ("Charlotte Brontë - Author, Poet"). The novel deals with Jane Eyre's, the protagonist, search for both identity and love as she is starved for compassion and care from the people around her throughout her childhood and she has nothing but her passionate nature and her strong will ("Jane Eyre Character Developments And Attitudes"). Jane is described as a "strong character with a well developed sense of what is right" ("BBC - GCSE Bitesize: Jane Eyre") as well as "one of the earliest representations of an individualistic, passionate, and complex female character" (Temple).

The second novel, *Rebecca*, was written by Daphne du Maurier. She was a well-known English writer and playwright as well as "a prominent literary name in England" ("Daphne du Maurier Biography") in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Often categorized as a romantic novelist, du Maurier "provided her audience with an escapist world of glamor and adventure" ("Daphne du Maurier"). She was given the title Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1969 ("Daphne

du Maurier") and won the National Book Award by the American Book Association in 1938 for her novel *Rebecca* ("Daphne du Maurier Biography").

*Rebecca* is Daphne du Maurier's most notable work. Published in May 1938, du Maurier herself described her novel as ". . . a sinister tale about a woman who marries a widower . . . Psychological and rather macabre" (Dennison). In this novel, the protagonist, Mrs. de Winter, is a woman who struggles to seek for her husband's acknowledgement as well as acceptance by everyone around her while feeling overshadowed by her husband's late wife, Rebecca.

After reading the two novels, I think the themes in both novels are the most significant and interesting aspect. Theme itself is defined as "a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly" ("Theme - Examples and Definition of Theme"). Thus, in this thesis, I chose to analyse the theme through portrayal of the protagonists, which are women.

Finally, I find it interesting to see how both Jane's and Mrs. de Winter's characteristics contribute to their gaining their ideas of love, which entail equality and acknowledgement from their significant others. I am going to analyse the novels by using formalism, "an interpretive approach that emphasizes literary form and the study of literary devices within the text" ("Literary Theory"), because I think I can find all the informations that I need in the novels.

### **Statement of the Problems**

1. What are the themes of the novels?
2. How does the portrayal of the protagonists help in revealing the themes?

## **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problem above, I would like to state purpose of the study as below:

1. To show the theme of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*.
2. To show how the portrayal of the protagonists helps to reveal the themes.

## **Method of Research**

In writing my thesis, I did some library and online research in order to find some information and references needed. First, I began by reading Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Next, I decided what topic and element I would like to analyse. Further use of online research was done to find necessary references that were relevant to the subject. Then, I analysed the novels by using the references I found to support my analysis. Finally, I drew some conclusions from my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters. Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract precede the first chapter. The first chapter includes Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter contains the analysis of the theme through the portrayal of the protagonist in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* whilst the third chapter contains the analysis of the theme through the portrayal of the protagonist in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of what has been analysed in the previous

chapters. This thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which contain the summary of both novels and the biography of the authors.

