

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The present writer has chosen novel as the literary work for her to analyze in her thesis because novel gives more detailed information about the story and describes the situation clearly, so that the reader can get a vivid picture about the story. The present writer is in agreement with Peck and Coyle's statement in their Literary Term and Criticism that novel deals with 'ordinary people and their problem in the society which they find themselves.' (Peck and Coyle,1984:102). Therefore, the present writer is of the opinion that novel is more challenging and enjoyable to analyze.

Living under pressure is a painful thing for someone and there are only few people who are strong enough to be able to survive in facing this condition. African-Americans are examples of people in America who show great endurance in facing pains and difficulties for a long time for they have to face difficulties which come from both the white people and their own race. This may lead them into disappointment and frustration. The novel Of Love and Dust written by

Ernest J. Gaines clearly describes this. He writes a story about a young African-American man who has a difficult life and about how the difficulties affect his life.

Ernest J. Gaines focuses his fiction on the rural folk culture of the South with emphasis on Bayonne Louisiana and the perspective of ordinary black residents who are often ignorant of the larger world. The world he creates is multicultural and Gaines carefully renders its “complex race and class tensions” as he “explores the human meanings and implications of resistance and endurance.” (<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap10/gaines.html>). His novels are set in Bayonne, a fictional Louisiana community modeled after his home. The characters and events are loosely based on lives and experiences that have really touched Gaines.

In order to understand the novelist’s main ideas, the present writer chooses to analyze the theme, which is “the central idea or dominating idea in a literary work”. (Shaw, 1972:378) Theme also is “...the message or moral implicit in any work of art”. (Shaw, 1972:378) The present writer decides to reveal the theme through the protagonist named Marcus. According to Harry Shaw in his book Dictionary of Literary Term, protagonist is ‘the leading character of a drama, novel, or other literary work. *Protagonist* in Greek meant “first combatant”. Such a person is not always the hero of the work, but he is always the principal and central character’. The present writer chooses to analyze the theme through the protagonist because Marcus has experienced a lot of disappointment and frustration during his life which changes him into a different person.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. What is the theme of Ernest J. Gaines's Of Love and Dust?
2. How does the protagonist reveal the theme?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted to show:

1. The theme of Ernest J. Gaines's Of Love and Dust.
2. To show how the protagonist reveals the theme.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method that the present writer uses is library research. She begins by reading Ernest J. Gaines's Of Love and Dust and then reads some essays and books which are relevant to the topic being discussed. Some books and essays of reference also support the present writer in analyzing the primary text. Finally, she draws some conclusions of what has been discussed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The present writer divides her thesis into four chapters. She starts with Chapter One, the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Then she continues with Chapter Two, the analysis of theme through the protagonist in Ernest J. Gaines's Of Love and Dust, followed by Chapter Three the Conclusion, which is the last chapter, which contains some concluding remarks from the present writer.