

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

I decide to analyse a novel in my thesis because a novel is the most popular genre among the other genres. A novel usually gives more detailed descriptions through its theme, plot, characters, conflict, setting, etc. These elements in a novel cannot stand alone or be separated. A novel usually tells the readers the lives of characters which are supported by the other elements of the story. 'Any discussion of character in fiction, then, must attend to the relationship between character and the other elements of the story and between character and the story as a whole.' (Kenney, 1966: 26). At the end of a story the readers usually get a moral lesson or a message that the author wants to deliver. Furthermore, the form of narration in a novel makes the readers comprehend the story and see the message from the author more easily and clearly.

I choose to analyse one of Alice Walker's novels because she is famous for her touching and wonderful stories. Alice Walker is an American novelist who lives in the late twentieth century. One thing that makes her works different from the works of other writers is that she writes about topics generally considered to be taboo. Her works mostly deal with themes which are familiar to the readers such as: rape, violence, isolation, troubled relationships, multi-generational perspectives, sexism, and racism.

In her novel By the Light of My Father's Smile, Alice Walker writes an erotic, extraordinary and fantastic story - she presents not only the abuse of women but also the inferiority of women's sexualities. Alice Walker describes this novel as 'a celebration of sexuality.' Through the novel she wants to inspire people that earthly love or sexuality is a blessing, not a burden. This novel shows that sexuality in human life is a blessing and it cannot be judged by anyone's perspective. Alice Walker is so skilful in writing this novel that she makes the readers feel compelled to keep on reading the novel until the end of the story. By the Light of My Father's Smile offers a complex story as it is written in a multi-voiced narration. This helps the readers see the characters in this novel from many perspectives. Furthermore, it is interesting reading the novel for it elaborates love, passion, and forgiveness.

I decide to discuss the portrayal of the protagonist in Alice Walker's By the Light of My Father's Smile in my thesis. In Dictionary of Literary Terms, Harry Shaw states that a protagonist is 'the leading character in drama, novel, or other literary work.' (Shaw, 1972: 305). A protagonist plays an important role in a literary work because he or she determines the flow of the events of a story. Without a protagonist, a story will neither be interesting to read nor develop into a good story. 'Characterization is the creations of images of imaginary persons in drama, narrative story,... Without characterization, no thesis, no plot, and no setting can develop genuine interest for the reader or cause him to care what happens or does not happen, to whom and why.' (Webster, 1972: 71). The protagonist in By the Light of My Father's Smile is described as a woman who praises love and sex but then she is betrayed by her father's hypocrisy. Walker has created her so realistically that it is worth while analysing the protagonist of this novel.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In analysing the portrayal of the protagonist in Alice Walker's By the Light of My Father's Smile, I would like to state the problems as follows:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. What is the author's purpose of presenting such a character?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To show the author's purpose of presenting such a character.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In writing my thesis, I use a library research. First, I read the primary text Alice Walker's By the Light of My Father's Smile thoroughly to understand the story well. Then I read some reference books in the library and look for the theories which are relevant to the topic being discussed. After that, I search for some additional information in the Internet. Finally, I use the selected data and theories to write the analysis and the conclusion.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

I divide my thesis into three chapters preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains 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 Portrayal of the Protagonist in Alice Walker's By the Light of My Father's Smile. The last chapter, Chapter Three, contains the Conclusion. This thesis ends with the Bibliography, which consists of the

list of the references that I have used in my thesis, and the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of *By the Light of My Father's Smile* and the Biography of Alice Walker.