

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Shaw, novel is “a lengthy fictitious prose narrative portraying characters and presenting an organized series of events and setting” (Shaw, 1972:257). Moreover, he also states “novel has no actual maximum length. Every novel is an account of life; every novel involves conflict, character, action, setting, plot, and theme” (Shaw, 1972:257). I have decided to take novel rather than any other genres because novel is more interesting and more detailed so that it is easier for me to understand the story.

I have chosen Nora Okja Keller’s work, Comfort Woman, because I think this novel is a unique literary work. Written by a Korean-American writer, this novel won the 1998 American Book Award. At first, Keller was hesitant to publish this novel because as a comfort woman, she felt that it was a terrible experience. The novel is about the life of a woman who became a comfort woman or a sex slave for Japanese soldiers during the Japanese colonial time in Korea. In her novel, Keller reveals that the protagonist, Akiko, also has great problems to overcome because she and her

husband have different religious beliefs; her husband is a Christian while Akiko is a shamanist.

Shamanism is a primitive religion which does not have a systematic structure but permeates into the daily lives of the people through folklore and customs. Neolithic man in Korea had animistic beliefs that every object in the world possessed a soul. They also believe to have a soul that never dies. So a corpse was laid with its head toward the east in the direction of the sunrise. Korean shamanism includes the worship of thousands of spirits and demons that are believed to dwell in every object in the natural world, including rocks, trees, mountains and streams as well as celestial bodies. Shamanism in ancient Korea was a religion of fear and superstition, but for modern generations, it remains a colorful and artistic ingredient of their culture. A shamanistic ritual, rich with exorcist elements, presents theatrical elements with music and dance.

The literary element I would like to analyse is conflict. "Conflict is the opposition of person or forces upon which the action depends in drama and fiction" (http://people.emich.edu/gcross1/lit_101.htm). There are three types of conflicts in novel, namely social conflict, inner conflict, and physical conflict. However, I would like to analyse only the social conflict because there are not any inner or physical conflicts in this particular novel. Social conflict is a struggle between man and his society. Social conflict is an important element in novel because the protagonist

usually has conflicts with the other characters, especially with the other major characters in the novel.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the analysis of Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman, I formulate the problem as follows:

1. What are the social conflicts in Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman?
2. What causes the conflicts?
3. How are the conflicts resolved?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I aim :

1. To show the social conflicts in Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman.
2. To show the causes of the conflicts.
3. To show the resolution to the conflicts.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

I intend to use formalism for the analysis. At first, I start reading Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman, and then I decide what kind of topic is going to be discussed. I also look for some references from the library and the Internet which are relevant to the topic and useful in supporting my analysis. Finally, I use the data that I have collected for my analysis from which I draw the conclusion.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis consists of three chapters. 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 the Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. In chapter Two, I present the analysis of the protagonist's conflicts in Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman. Chapter three contains the conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of the novel and the Biography of the author.