

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

I have chosen novel instead of another literary genre for my thesis. Novel is more interesting to analyse than drama or poetry. It gives me more pleasure and curiosity to understand more when reading a novel. Ian Milligan says, “Novels, then, are exciting machines (Verbal machines) which transport their reader in space and time.... They offer us a share in the pleasure of making because the designs they consist of are not simply there to be seen; they have to be understood, constructed, recreated by the reader out of the material and according to the patterns which the fabric of their language contains – or conceals.” (Milligan 7). For me, I think I can explore my own imagination while reading a novel because not everything is described in it because a novel, “is a strange joint creation of the reader and the text he holds in his hand...” (Milligan 2).

I have chosen a novel by Jill Dawson, a novelist who has gained several literary awards including Eric Gregory Award and London Arts Board New Writer Award; she has also been nominated for Whitbread Novel Award and

Orange Prize for Fiction. Dawson's contribution to the world of literature is widely accepted. Since her youth, she has written so many works of literature such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, short stories. It is said that Dawson always cares about every word and every full stop; and she writes lyrical, elegant, stunning, or surprising prose.

I would like to analyse her novel Wild Boy because this novel is based on a true story about a boy who lives in a forest of Aveyron alone without his family around him. When he is about twelve years old, he is found by the people who make him an object of observation because of his wild behaviour. Based on this wild boy, the author makes a fascinating story of fiction about his life after being found by the people.

The focus of the analysis is the portrayal of the protagonist, Victor. It is interesting to analyse Victor because he has special characteristics that are different from those of other normal children. Victor is not aware of the existence of human beings. He lives in his own world, but when he hears the sound of chestnut shell cracking, he concentrates on hearing it. He also bites people who try to approach him.

Victor's behaviour is influenced by some psychological disorders. The first is what psychologists recognize as autism, which is "a developmental disorder, primarily affecting social and emotional understanding." (Behavior Disorder in Children).

There is also a problem related to intellectual functioning, "mental retardation, which means that the average intellectual maturity level will probably never be attained and that intellectual development will proceed at a slower rate

than the average.... Deficits in adaptive behavior must exist concurrently with reduced intellectual functioning” (Behavior Disorder in Children).

The American Association on Mental Deficiency (AAMD) classifies Mental Retardation to four groups. IQ 52 to 67 – mild mental retardation, the educable; IQ 36 to 51 – moderate mental retardation and IQ 20 to 35 – severe mental retardation, the trainable; IQ 19 or below – profound mental retardation, the custodial (Understanding children behavior disorders).

The custodial usually unable to achieve even sufficient skills to care for basic needs, they will usually require nearly total care and supervision for duration of lifetime. On the other hand, the trainable learns primarily in the areas of self-help skills, very limited achievement in areas considered academic, and their social adjustment usually limited to home and closely surrounding area (Mental Retardation: A Life Cycle Approach). They use Gesture and sign as the method of communication because most of them have some form of speech/language disorder; they learn new skill slowly and have difficulty applying knowledge although the progress may be slow, people with severe mental retardation do learn (Mental Retardation).

In addition, there is also a problem related to emotional development, such as “Aggression, which may be expressed through acts or, when the acts are inhibited, through words or thoughts.” (Behavior Disorder in Children).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

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

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In analysing the novel for my thesis, first I read the novel entitled Wild Boy by Jill Dawson as the primary text. I then choose the most appropriate element to analyse in the novel. Afterwards, I search in the Internet to know more about the novelist and critics' ideas about the novel as much as possible. I also read some books related to the topic. These books provide me with sufficient data for writing my analysis.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the portrayal of the protagonist of the novel. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain a short biography of the author and a brief synopsis of the novel.