

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Literature offers experiences of life. It records people, places and events which we can identify in our own lives. However, it is also a term to describe writings appreciated as works of art. Authors weave words together and present us interesting stories. How the readers respond to a certain literary work is influenced by their foreknowledge about it and their attitudes toward the values the work promotes. These three aspects of literature altogether play a significant role in reading and understanding literature.

The reason why Charlotte Bronte is worthy of acknowledgement in the world of English literature is because she introduces us to her characters mainly by inviting us to come into the realm of their personal thoughts and describing their emotional reactions with much intensity. As Professor Peden, of the University of Missouri, writes, “Bronte was not primarily interested, as were her predecessors in the field of

the English novel, in the recording of exterior action. Her concern was with ... inner causes rather than with external results” (Peden xii-xiii). The introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of Jane Eyre also notes that Bronte “is greatly admired for ... her emotional honesty” (Jane Eyre), which is shown in her comprehensive treatment of characters’ interiority.

Jane Eyre is one of several novels that are written by Bronte. Much of its values are derived from its outspoken voicing of women’s conditions and experiences in its time. It is called, by Brian Phillips, “a critique of Victorian assumptions about gender and social class” (Phillips). In addition to it, the novel’s strength can also be found as much, as Joyce Carol Oates writes, in the way it reflects the protagonist’s self-introspection (Oates vi).

Daphne du Maurier is an “English novelist, biographer, and playwright”. She is mostly noted in the world of English literature as a thriller writer who writes many suspenseful short stories and novels. Beside fictions, Du Maurier also writes some “biographies, among others Branwell Bronte’s, the brother of sisters Anne, Charlotte, and Emily”. One of her work, Rebecca, is written based on Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre (Liukonnen). Jonathan Yardley writes, in his article entitled “Du Maurier’s ‘Rebecca’, A Worthy ‘Eyre’ Apparent,” that her career as a writer is very successful. Du Maurier has, like Bronte, strong and vivid imagination to tell stories and create world of fiction (Yardley).

Rebecca is categorized as a psychological suspense novel (Douthat). The fact that we can easily trace its character and events back to Jane Eyre could lead us to believe that the book is merely a copy of Bronte's work. Yet, it is, on its own, acknowledged as a good piece of literature, with its suspenseful plot and definite theme. The novel also shows some sensitivity in its description of the past so as to be gently perceived in its protagonist's present reality (Yardley).

Being compared with each other, the protagonists in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca offer an interesting subject study, Rebecca being the intertext of Jane Eyre. While there are some similarities to be found in them, their characters are completely of different kinds. They are both complex but the nature of their roundness differs from each other. Fictitious as they are, one may sense them as real-life people. They both show fear, doubt, and anxiety when drawn into conflicting situations; however, each of them reacts differently when confronted with the existing contradictory forces in life. Furthermore, one may probably learn something from their strengths and weaknesses, as well as from their aspiration and frustration. In general, it is their inwardness that makes them both interesting characters to analyse.

### **Statement of the Problem**

1. How are the protagonists portrayed in both novels?
2. What do the authors want to say in creating such characters?

## **Purpose of the Study**

1. To show how the protagonists are portrayed in both novels.
2. To show what the authors want to say in creating such characters.

## **Method of Research**

The method that I use in writing my thesis is the library research. The thesis will be based on my reading the primary texts and some relevant references. The two primary texts are approached intrinsically, focusing on the protagonists as the subject study. Meanwhile, I also look for some criticism, commentaries, and articles that have been done about the two novels.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis begins with Acknowledgement, which is followed by Abstract (in Indonesian). Its main part is divided into four chapters: Chapter One is 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 Analysis of the Protagonist in Jane Eyre, the first novel; Chapter Three is Analysis of the Protagonist in Rebecca, the second novel; Chapter Four is Conclusion, which

compares the two analyses in the previous chapters. It ends with Bibliography and Appendices which include the works' summaries and authors' biographies.