

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In patriarchal society, the position of men is superior to women, it is because culture plays a dominant part in creating inequality between men and women. “The superior position is reserved for men and thus it is in favor of the interests of men” (Guerin 182). Such culture is sexist because it places women in an inferior level in all aspects of life.

I have chosen a novel dealing with the issue mentioned above, In America by Susan Sontag. The novel, which was written in 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is a bold and brilliant novel because through it, Susan Sontag achieves the National Book Award in 2000. Moreover, Library Journal claims that “Sontag uses dense, elegant language, inventive dialogue, impassioned monologue, and diary entries to lure the reader more deeply into the fascinating historical journey of a powerful actress...Sontag triumphs once again with her gift for turning history into riveting fiction” (qtd. in Sontag). Even though Susan Sontag has written many books, I choose this particular one because as a woman I want to know more about feminism value, which is an attempt from women to struggle in their lives without being controlled by men. In addition,

when I read this novel I find out that the novel is really contradictory and it opposes women stereotypes, which are weak, submissive and dominated by men.

As a fiction writer, Susan Sontag achieves many awards for her novels and as an activist, she gives some contributions to the world of literature. “A human rights activist for more than two decades, Ms. Sontag served from 1987 to 1989 as president of the American Center of PEN, the international writers' organization dedicated to freedom of expression and the advancement of literature, from which platform she led a number of campaigns on behalf of persecuted and imprisoned writers” (Susan Sontag).

In this thesis, I would like to analyze the character, specifically the protagonist. I am personally interested in analyzing the protagonist because as a central character, she has the true potential as a woman in her society. Definitely, the author has a particular motivation in creating the protagonist. In In America the protagonist of the story is Maryna Zalezowska. She is portrayed as an independent wife who becomes the breadwinner and determines almost everything in her family; many people around her adore her, still she only counts on herself. Furthermore, In America is about “Maryna’s decision to exchange the rustic simplicities of her failed utopia to return to the luxurious life of an actress -- with as few regrets as she expended in her decision to leave Poland for the United States with her family...” (Kakutani).

Since this novel tells about woman’s life and struggle within her society, I think it is suitable to use feminism approach. According to Sharon Spencer in Feminist Criticism and Literature, the concept of feminism is “the attempt to eliminate marginalization of women in all places; the subordination of women; the oppression of women physically and psychologically...and the stereotype which

defames the image of women” (qtd. in Bressler). This can be seen through the struggle and independency of the protagonist as an individual. The protagonist in this novel deals a lot with making choice as a woman. Thus, in analyzing this novel, I think it is suitable to use feminism theory, specifically, the existentialist feminism by Simone de Beauvoir. Simone said that “female is not male, she becomes ‘the Other’, an object whose existence is defined by the male, who is dominant in society... Women should see themselves as autonomous beings and must reject the societal construct that men are the subject or absolute and that women are the Other” (Bressler 182). Accordingly, women should stand by themselves and do not depend on men. They must make their own decision by or for themselves.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problems are stated as follow:

1. How does the author portray the woman protagonist?
2. How is the portrayal of the protagonist related to feminism?
3. What is the purpose of the author in creating such character?

## **III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Based on the statement of the problems above, this study is done:

1. to show how the author portrays the woman protagonist in In America.
2. to show how the portrayal of the protagonist related to feminism.
3. to show how the purpose of the author in creating such character.

## **VI. METHOD OF RESEARCH**

For this thesis I use library research, by first reading In America as the primary text. I also read and collect some data that are taken from books and the Internet. After that, I analyze the female protagonist in the book using feminism approach and finally I draw a conclusion.

## **V. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis contains three chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the discussion of the protagonist in In America. The last chapter is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.