

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Nathanael West is an American novelist of the 20th century. Aside from novels, he also writes stories, poems, essays, plays, and film scripts. Some of Nathanael West's novels are The Dream Life of Balso Snell, Miss Lonelyhearts, A Cool Million, and his last novel before his death is The Day of the Locust. In this novel, he uses a symbol of destruction in the title of the novel, The Day of the Locust.

West's use of the locust in his title, then, calls up images of destruction and a land stripped bare of anything green and living. Certainly, the novel is filled with images of destruction: Tod Hackett's painting entitled "The Burning of Los Angeles," his violent fantasies about Faye, and the bloody result of the cockfight, just to name a few. (Sanderson)

I have chosen The Day of the Locust, Nathanael West's most popular novel, for my thesis. I am personally interested in analyzing it because the setting of this novel is centered in Hollywood in the 1930s, the time West worked as a scriptwriter there. I believe that is why he chose to write a novel about the entertainment industry.

I would like to analyze the portrayal of the major characters of this novel because they are very interesting. Character itself is very important in a novel because "Without characterization, no thesis, no plot, and no setting can develop genuine interest for a reader or cause him to care what happens, or does not happen, to whom and why" (Shaw 71).

I also find that the major characters are very dominant in this novel. The major characters in The Day of the Locust are Tod Hackett, Homer Simpson, and Faye Greener, who are related to the Hollywood lifestyle. Each character represents an artist, a businessman, and a film star. Two of them have an obsession to materialize their dreams and one of them has a purpose to get a better life in Hollywood. Their characteristics are influenced by the Hollywood lifestyle. The lifestyle in Hollywood itself is dominated by glamorous things and competitiveness that requires abilities, intelligence and hard work to survive. Sometimes, they also live in pretense, which turns their life into a fake or a fantasy. These things influence the characteristics of the major characters. ". . . it is a bit of fantasy lifestyle. The rich and famous of Hollywood are an interesting crowd of eclectic and eccentric personalities, . . . It appears to be just an illusion, albeit a carefully orchestrated smoke and mirror magic trick of reality, as these folks live in a fake world, . . ." (Winslow).

Statement of the Problem

The problems stated are:

1. How does the author portray the major characters?
2. What is the author's purpose of creating such characters?

Purpose of the Study

According to the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study is:

1. to show how the author portrays the major characters in the novel.
2. to show the author's purpose of creating such characters.

Method of Research

In my research, I conduct the library research, by first reading The Day of the Locust as my primary text. Then, I read and collect some texts from the library and the internet to support my topic. The information and the knowledge that have been gathered are then used to analyze the text. Finally, I draw a conclusion from the research I have done.

Organization of the Thesis

There are three chapters in my thesis. The thesis starts with Acknowledgements. The first chapter is Introduction which consists of 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. The second chapter is Analysis of The Portrayal of The Major Characters in Nathanael West's The Day of the Locust. The last chapter is the Conclusion of the discussion. My thesis

ends with the Bibliography and Appendices in which I present the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.