CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mafia is believed to appear firstly in Sicily in about 1800s. In the middle of 19th century they developed and widely spread around the world, especially to the United States, Australia, and North America ("Italian Organized Crime"). There are several meanings of the term mafia in the United States. The word 'mafia' firstly refers to the member of some criminal secret societies who moved to the United States from Sicily, but later it is used to refer to the Italian organized crime in general rather than simply traditional Sicilian crime organization. ("The Mafia"). In Italy itself, the term mafia is known as Cosa Nostra (Our Thing) which many Sicilians do not regard as criminals but as role models and protectors

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because the state appear to offer no protection for the poor and weak. ("The Mafia").

People who come from Sicily believe that mafia is their "way of being", as illustrated in the definition by the Sicilian ethnographer, Giuseppe Pitrè: "Mafia is the consciousness of one's own worth, the exaggerated concept of individual force as the sole arbiter of every conflict, of every clash of interests or ideas" ("The Mafia"). The Sicilian themselves think that mafia is their way of being and not as criminals but American people consider that they are criminals. This is a general stereotype for people who are coming to the United States from Sicily at that time. It is not surprising when Mario Puzo published his novel entitled The Godfather, which contains the life of Sicilian mafia in the United States, people were curious about his work.

Puzo himself wrote at least 11 novels but none of his works is equal to The Godfather. "… Puzo's first two novels weren't that good" ("The Godfather-Critical Overview"). In The Godfather, Puzo writes about the life of a Sicilian mafia clan, the Corleone, who live in the United States. The story itself tells about Vito Corleone, the head of the Corleones who lives in the Prohibition era (1920–33). "Prohibition era is the period during which the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic drinks was prohibited in the USA" ("Prohibition Era"). He moves to the United States when he is still young and later in his life he becomes mafia.

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In the United States he faces some undesirable situations, firstly because he is Italian and immigrant. Secondly, the Great Depression strikes the United States. The Great Depression is a "severe economic crisis supposedly precipitated by the U.S. stock-market crash of 1929" ("Great Depression").

Since the novel itself deals with Sicilian mafia which has been a controversial issue for years, personally, I become curious about the theme of the novel. Therefore, I will try to analyze it. According to Perrine, theme of the novel is "The controlling idea or the central insight of the story" (Perrine 102).

Without any doubt, The Godfather is Mario Puzo's masterpiece which is considered a brilliant work. According to David Kelly, an instructor of creative writing and composition at Oakton Community College in Illinois, the main reason why The Godfather can be considered a brilliant work is because Puzo has successfully made an amazing character. This character is considered his greatest creation, as seen on the following quotation: "The greatest creation of Mario Puzo's writing career is, without question, the character of Don Vito Corleone" ("The Godfather-Criticism").

The protagonist in the novel, Vito Corleone, is a Sicilian who is considered as a mafia (criminal) by people in the United States. Since the protagonist's existence is very important here, I naturally become interested in analyzing it as a support to help me find the theme of the novel, for there are some

ways in which an author can express theme; one of them is through the main characters, "The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story" ("Literary Elements"). According to Perrine, protagonist is "The central character in the conflict…" (Perrine 44) or "The main character in a drama, novel, or story, around whom the action centers" ("Protagonist").

Finally, in order to analyze the protagonist as to formulate the theme of the novel, I would like to portray its characteristics using the characterization technique which based on the technique in M.J Murphy's <u>Understanding Unseens</u>. According to him, there are at least 9 ways that the readers can use to portray a character, which are: personal description, character as seen by another, speech, past life, conversation of others, reactions, direct comment, thought and mannerism.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In order to analyze the novel, I state the problems as follow:

1. What is the theme of the novel?

2. How does the portrayal of the protagonist help to reveal the theme?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is carried to show:

1. The theme of the novel.

2. How the portrayal of the protagonist helps to reveal the theme of the novel.

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METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method that I use is formalism. I will analyze the theme of the novel primarily through the portrayal of the protagonist, Vito Corleone. The type of research I used is library research. First of all, I read my primary text, <u>The Godfather</u>. Afterwards I gather the data from the novel and analyze the text by referring to the literary theories. I also gather some other resources from the internet and books that are able to support my analysis. Finally, I use them which assist me in drawing the conclusion.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

I divide my thesis into three chapters, which is preceded by the Acknowledgement, Table of Content and Abstract. In the first chapter, I present Chapter One as the Introduction which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two I present the theme analysis through the protagonist of the novel. The Third chapter is the conclusion of my analysis. The thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendix containing the synopsis of the novel and the biography of the author.

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