

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

According to Roberts and Jacob (1989:1) literature is written or spoken compositions designed to tell stories, dramatize situations, and several thoughts and emotions, and also to interact, entertain, stimulate, broaden and ennoble readers. According to Little (1966:2) literature is a picture of life that is true in the sense and gives many important things which science from its very nature cannot give. From those statements, literature according to the writer is a written composition, which can be in the form of prose, fiction, poetry, or drama and it also deals with human experience.

Basing on her own experience in joining literature classes, the writer chooses literary study as the subject matter of her thesis for three reasons. First, the writer enjoys reading literary texts whether they are play, short story, or novel. In short, she can find the pleasure because they can entertain her. According to Barnet (1974:1), "Literature has in it an element of entertaining or to afford pleasure." To get the pleasure, it is not enough by using imagination only but also competence. With good competence, the readers will comprehend the text easily.

Second, she finds that literature is an interesting subject to be study. It has lasting value because of its beauty and imagination. When reading literary text, the writer feels as if she were in a world created by the text through her imagination. Dietrich (1967:236) states, "Literature is works of imagination, chiefly poetry, prose fiction, and drama. It is expressing the cultural identify of

people in a certain time and involves aesthetic quality.” Kennedy (1991:39) states, “Literature involves the students’ imagination and feeling so that they feel as though they become the part of the literary texts that they read.”

Third, the writer can broaden her knowledge and improve her personality. Robert (1977:2) states, “Literature helps us grow both personality and intellectually. It provides an objective base for our knowledge and understanding.” By reading literary text, the writer does not only get pleasure, but also moral lesson that can be obtained from the text.

There are three genres of literature (Robert 1989:2). They are prose fiction or narrative fiction, poetry, and drama. Prose fiction or narrative fiction is a literary form, which tells a story through description and dialogue. It focuses on one or few major characters that experience some changes or deal with some changes or difficulties in their life. Prose fiction includes novel, short story, myth, parable, romance, and epic. Poetry is a literary form, which relies heavily on imagery, figurative language, rhythm, and sound and uses words more economically compared to prose fiction. Drama is the form of literature designed to be performed by actors. Like fiction, it may focus on a single character or a small number of characters, and it presents fictional events as if they were happening in the present, to be witnessed by a group of people composing an audience.

The writer has chosen drama as the subject matter of her study because it is easier to observe the interaction of the characters than if it is done in the novel or poem. The reason is that the language of drama is more natural and put in the

appropriate context. Therefore, the readers can see the interaction of the characters, which are shown in dialogues and actions clearly. Barnet, Berman, and Burto (1974:13) say that the modern playwright often helps the readers by providing full stage direction.

Drama as one of literature genres has a special quality, which is hardly found in other genres. It has a magic quality “Whether the readers are taking part or looking on, or simply reading a play silently, there is a magic quality surrounding the drama as it does not exist in other form of literature.” (Brooks, 1975:25). The magic quality here is the glamour and the greatness of the theatre or the beauty and the bitter things about life. It presents human life in the form of movements, dialogues, mimics, and conflicts.

Another reason why the writer takes drama as the subject matter is that it does not take much time to read compared with other forms of fiction. It only takes two or three hours to read. Besides that, the plot is more economical and selective; it is interesting, clear, not too long, and possible to be acted on the stage.

The author, Eugene O’Neil, is chosen in this study because he is one of the American greatest playwrights who have attraction to the outcasts of society. He won four Pulitzer for literature and a Nobel Prize. His work has proved highly influential in developing the great literary legacy of twentieth century American theatre. O’Neil often used his wide and varied experiences among many classes of Americans as the inspiration for his play *Desire Under the Elms* is chosen because this play is one of the famous plays that Eugene O’Neil ever wrote. This play describes greed and passion. It portrays greed when Ephraim and Abbie seize

the farm without consideration for needs of other people. Ephraim enslaves his own family to achieve his dream on making a perfect farm for his own pride. Abbie marries Ephraim just for getting wealth, Ephraim's farm. This drama also describes passion when hatred turns into love. Because of the unique characteristics of the play: *Desire Under the Elms* and the well-known Eugene O'Neil, the writer is interested and challenged to study this play.

1.2. Statement of Problems

In line with the background of this study, the research questions guided this study were formulated as follows:

1.2.1 Which characters represent greed and passion?

1.2.2 How are greed and passion revealed in this play?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study is intended to find which characters represent greed and passion and how greed and passion are revealed in the play of *Desire Under the Elms*.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is to contribute to all students of English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University. Since the students of English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University are the candidates of teachers, the writer believes that this study can give many advantages.

Through this study, the writers as well as the readers are suggested not to judge other people if they do not know exactly what is beyond their life. Throughout this study, the readers will know that man is limited in controlling his own destiny since his behavior is strongly influenced by environment, and heredity traits. Eben, for example, is trapped by forces, which he cannot control or understand. His affair with Abbie is actually against his will.

Through this study, the writer also hopes that the results of the study and the way the study is conducted will interest the students in appreciating literary works.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

It would be too broad for the writer to discuss all the things in this play; therefore, she limited the discussion and analyzed on some characters only: Ephraim Cabot, Abbie Putnam, and Eben Cabot since their characters are central in the play.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Some key terms used in this thesis are defined to avoid misunderstanding.

1. Greed is an excessive desire for wealth, power, etc for oneself, without consideration for needs of other people. (Oxford dictionary, 1995:521)
2. Passion is a thing for which somebody has great enthusiasm. (Oxford dictionary, 1995:846)

3. Drama is a special fiction that has plot, characters, and dialogue and it uses words to create action through the dialogue of the characters. (Scholes 1978:781)
4. Character is an author's representation of human being, specifically of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment. (Perrine, 1972:54)
5. Plot is an ordered chain of physical, emotional, or intellectual events that ties the actions together. A planned sequence of interrelated actions begins in a state or imbalance, grows out of conflict, reaches a peak of complication, and reason into some new situations. (Robert and Jacob, 1989:1009)
6. Setting is the actual geographical location, the occupations that include the character existence, the time when the action happens, and the characters' environment that is religious, moral, intellectual, social, and emotional. (Kenney, 1966:40)

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The writer used some theories especially those related to literature, drama and a previous studies related to the topic of the study under report. They are the theories of character, plot and setting. To be more precise those theories are discussed in Chapter II.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, the Objective of the Study, the Significance of the Study, the Definition of Key Terms, the Theoretical Framework, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter II presents the Review of Related Literature. Chapter III deals with the Research Method. Chapter IV presents the analysis of this play. Chapter V is the conclusion of the whole report of the study.