CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The life story of human usually related to how people face their life. The way of people facing their life may depend on the characterization that they have. The characterization of each person is various. It can be divided into the characterization, stereotype, internal characteristic, external characteristic and the motivation. Even though there are two or more people have similar external characteristic, like twin brother or twin sister, they must not have similarity in internal characteristics. The aspects are usually influencing the life story of human.

From the issue of human life story above, it is interesting to discuss a novel entitled *Ironweed.* It is a real life portrait. The novel shows how the main character life is influenced by characterization that he has. The title *Ironweed* is very suitable with the story itself, because it represents the character in the novel. The word 'ironweed' is a compound word which is a word that contains two words 'iron' and 'weed'. The word 'iron' means a kind of metal, while the word 'weed' means bushes. The two words are much related to the story. It can not be guessed by readers before they read the story. The words have meaning a lot to the main character of the novel that the main character's decision is as strong as iron and the main character's living is in the weed. A note has quoted from the

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novel about the title itself that adapted from The Audubon Society's *Field Guide to North American Wildflowers*:

> Tall Ironweed is a member of the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae). It has a tall erect stem and bears deep purple-blue flower heads in loose terminal clusters. Its leaves are long and thin and pointed, their lower surfaces downy. Its fruit is seed-like, with a double set of purplish bristles. It flowers from August to October in damp, rich soil from New York south to Georgia, west to Louisiana, north to Missouri, Illinois and Michigan. The name refers to the toughness of the stem.(Kennedy)

The quotation above seems explain about the reason why the title of *Ironweed* is chosen for the novel. The word of 'ironweed' is the name of a plant. The name of 'ironweed' is suitable for that kind of plant, since the plant has strong stem. That is why the name of the plant is chosen for the title of the novel, since the title is representing the main character.

The reason why the novel is interesting to be discussed is because *Ironweed* exposes the life and mind of bums. It is the picture of bums in America. It is about the value of struggle in the American poor society, when the bums are hard to find people to depend on but themselves.

Ironweed is a winner of 1984 Pulitzer Prize for fiction novel that produced by Viking Press, New York in 1983. From the online source, there is also found the movie version of *Ironweed* that produced by Joseph H. Kanter, Denis Blouin, Rob Cohen and directed by Hector Babenco.(Rotten Tomatoes) However the story is not based on the true story, but it is the picture of the true story in America at

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that time. The novel emphasizes the story of bums in America that are hard to get living since they get difficulties in getting proper job and proper salary.

The novel is written by William Joseph Kennedy. He is an American writer and journalist who born and raise in Albany, New York. Many of his novels feature are the interaction of members of the fictional Irish American Phelan family. Kennedy's works include *The Ink Truck* (1969), *Legs* (1975), *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (1978), *Ironweed* (1983), etc.(Kennedy) *Ironweed* has a man as the main character named Francis Phelan. The novel is not only focused on him, but also telling about a woman named Helen. The meaning of the compound word of 'ironweed' is representing the main character. His decision is as strong as iron. While, weed is his bed and his home after he fights to earn money from outside. *Ironweed* tells about behind of bums' life America, such as: about their occupations, their wants and how they keep surviving. Francis Phelan is one of the American bums. He becomes a bum since he does not live with his family in Albany, New York. He leaves his wife and his children and he never met them during two decades. In his life outside Albany, he meets a woman named Helen. She is an old whore who is at the similar age to Francis who is about fifties. Francis has close relationship with Helen, moreover they ever lived together in an apartment for several years. But unfortunately, they have to leave the apartment since they can not pay the rent. They are not marriage couple, in other words, they are not husband and wife. On the other hand, Francis never divorced his wife, Annie who lives with their children in Albany, he just left her. The cause of Francis who leaves his family is because of his guilty feeling that he

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does not mean to fall his baby on the floor. During his life as a bum, he faces something that is perhaps he never faced it when he is not a bum. The duration that is used to tell the story of *Ironweed* novel from the beginning to the end of the story is three days. It seems a short novel, but there are flash backs in the middle of the story that done by the main character Francis Phelan and his girl friend Helen. In the end of the story, it tells that Francis is coming back to his family and he seems decide to live with them again.

At the end the main character's experience is very inspiring and also his decision to take actions in his life movement during he becomes a bums. Even though his life is difficult and sorrow, he does not want to do crime things that may make his life is easy. It is important to analyze the main character's characterization as basic aspects in deciding how he faces his life. The main character's the characterization, stereotype, internal characteristic, external characteristic and the motivation will be an appropriate data to be analyzed. The novel is also help to learn about his unbelievable experience and his uneasy struggle that adorn his life. It is incredibly amazing especially the idea of the novel about what people will do if they are far from their family and leave their comfort life that they ever had. It relates to Francis Phelan, who will do anything to survive without his family's help.

It is interesting to discuss about the main character's characterization. That is why it is to be analyzed more about the internal characteristics of the main character that indirectly make him to decide live in poverty, and make him in twenty two years does not see his family. The data in the literary work is enough

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to support the analysis. The data also needs to be guided by appropriate theory and approach that are helping in analyzing the main character's characterization.

Character analysis is as an analysis of specific character's characteristics. The analysis is able to find the characterization, stereotype, internal characteristic, external characteristic and the motivation of a character. Moreover, by getting the finding of it, the relation between them and the important events that happened in the story are found. The motivation of choosing character analysis of the main character is because the characterization it self that influencing events in the story of the novel *Ironweed.* The main character Francis Phelan is similar to other people in real life. He and other people are not very perfect human and not too bad human. They have bad side and also good side. The variation of characterization that belongs to each person will brings them to different experience. Here, by the event of Francis does not mean to fall his baby, based on the internal characteristics that he has, he decides to leave his home because he feels guilty. His decision makes his life is totally different than before. That is why here, it is believed that the life events of the main character that happened in the story are influenced by the characterization that belong to the main character of Francis Phelan.

B. Statement of the Problem

In order to analyze the main character's characterization, the study will state a question to elaborate the analysis:

How is the characterization of the main character delineated?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, the research object will arranged to analyze the characterization of the main character. Concerning to the statement of the problem, the aim of the analysis is:

To describe how the characterization of the main character is delineated.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is character analysis study. This study is not only tried to find out about the description of the main character, but also to analyze the relation between the characterization and the important events in the novel. In other words, the aim of the analysis is to find out how the characterization of the main character is much related to the events that happened in the novel. The internal characteristics of Francis may influence the experience of life that he faces. While the external characteristics that he has when he is at the age of fifty three years old is may the result of his internal characteristics. This study will analyze the causes and effects of the main character's decision that how he decides to leave his family and his house is based on the internal characteristics that he has.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to make the analysis is focus, scope and limitation are applied. Since this study is about character analysis, so the findings are about the

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characterization, stereotype, internal characteristics, external characteristics and motivation that belong to the main character. This study is not only try to find the characterization of the main character, but also trying to find the relation between the findings it self and the important events that happened in the story of the novel. That is why most of the data is taken from the literary work it self and other sources that are needed to support the arguments in the analysis.

F. Theoretical Background

Based on the statement of the problems, the analysis of the novel *Ironweed* will use intrinsic approach that will be guided by New Criticism. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, intrinsic approach is similar to objective method. It is appropriate to be used as a guide to analyze the intrinsic elements in a fiction. In America the New Critics called "close reading". It is focus on the individual literary work.(Tyson: 135) The individual who will be analyzed in the novel Ironweed is the main character, Francis Phelan. And the analysis will be focused on the characterization that belongs to Francis Phelan. The analysis will avoid the involving of the life of the author William Kennedy. And it is also avoid comparing the novel of Ironweed with the other literary work. Because based on New criticism adherents were emphatic in their advocacy of close reading and attention to texts it self, and their rejection of criticism based on extra-textual sources, especially biography.(Tyson: 137)

The analysis hoped find characterization of the main character, Francis Phelan and the relation between the characterization and the major events.

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Sometimes literary text does not live up to the author's purpose. Sometimes the literary text it self that is more meaningful, richer and more complex than the author expected. And sometimes the text's meaning is different from the meaning the author wanted it to have. Applying the New Criticism is to support the analysis inside the novel. The main elements that will be analyzed in this study are the characterization and the main events. According to Nurgiyantoro, the simple definition of the main character is a person who often appears in any literary works.(Nurgiyantoro: 176)

In applying the criticism, in order to get a deeper analysis, the study will focus only to the main character's characterization. And also the aim of the study is to find the relation of the characterization and the events that believed built by the characterization of the main character.

G. Method of the Study

The object of the study is a literary work of Pulitzer Prize winner novel entitled *Ironweed* written by William Kennedy. The method that is used is 'close reading' and the main source is the novel itself. In order to provide large support in elaborating this study, it is also need online sources. In the beginning, the literary work has read several times. The novel is needed to be read many times, since the detail of the story is needed to get. In short, in doing the analysis, the method of descriptive interpretative will be used, since the descriptive explanation will be given in order to make the answer of the problems is clear. In the method

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of descriptive interpretative, the data that have been found will be interpreted, in order to find the meaning needed. Then, the meaning will be described further.

Before choosing character analysis as the topic of the study, kinds of topic have tried to be written. Character analysis is hoped become the last appropriate topic for this study. By reading the literary work many times, it is easy to find the characterization of the main character. Then, 'close reading' is appropriate way to find the data about characterization it self, and then make the classification of data and select the data that contains the characterization of the main character that are as data collecting method. It needs to be careful in taking the data. The main data are may taken from the characters' conversation and their thought and flash back especially in his society, family, his religion side, etc. Then, the data can be analyzed to empower the argument and it can be considered with the theory that is used. In the end, find the relation between the characterization that belong to the main character and the important events in the story.

H. Organization of the Paper

The first chapter of the paper consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical background, method of the study, organization of the paper, related studies and the last is definition of key terms.

The second chapter will elaborate the theoretical framework of the study. Then, the third chapter will be focus on the analysis to answer the statement of the

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problem that are stated in the first chapter. The fourth chapter will summarize and conclude the entire study.

I. Related Studies

There are Irish studies or literary criticism and writings that have made concerning the novel '*Ironweed*' written by William Kennedy. The study is Michael Patrick Gillespie's with his book entitled *Reading William Kennedy* and David McCracken's with his essay *Francis Phelan as a Posbnodern Odysseus in William Kennedy's Ironweed*. Both of these writings are analyzing the novel of *Ironweed.*

According to the press of the book entitled *Reading William Kennedy,* the author Michael Patrick Gillespie helps the reader by giving a helpful introduction. He also provides an analysis of William Kennedy's best-known works. Gillespie begins with an introduction that outlines the imaginative context for Kennedy's work. In analyzing *Ironweed,* Gillespie give the part by part of the story. He tells about religion from the novel in his analysis. In other words, he tells about the main character's religion a little and in a general. The point is he tells much about the plot and the main character.(Gillespie 26)

One more analysis that uses *Ironweed* as a source text is *Francis Phelan as a Posbnodern Odysseus in William Kennedy's Ironweed* written by David McCracken. This essay is not more that eight pages. The author of this essay tells about the similarities between the novel of *Ironweed* and the myth of Greek by Homer.(McCracken)

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It can be concluded that the comparison between Gillespie's book, McCracken's essay and this study is that the tree of them, in similarity, they are discussing about the main character, Francis Phelan. In differences, Gillespie does not only discuss about the main character, but also other elements of fiction. McCracken's essay is trying to compare the main character Francis Phelan with one of myth's characters. At last, this study is focusing on the main character's characterization. This study is hoped discuss about the main character's characterization deeper, even though other elements of fiction are not discussed.

The feature that distinguishes this study from those related ones above is this study using intrinsic approach in order to get closer to the main character's characterization. This study theme is character analysis toward the main character Francis Phelan. The aim of this study is in order to find out how characterization influences the events in the novel. The analysis of the main character also will be guided by New Criticism.

J. Definition of Key Terms

Analysis = a detailed examination of something in order to interpret or explain it.

Bum = a lazy, homeless and worthless person.

Characterization = descriptions of the character distinction.

Event = whatever happens or may have happened.

Gait = a person's manner of walking.

Main character = a figure in literary works who often appears.

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Mission = the vocation of a religious organization to spread its faith.

Poverty = the state of being extremely poor.

Story = an account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment.

Visage = a person's face, with reference to the form of the features