

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background Of The Study

Literature includes the whole aspect of human activities expressing any feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas. Life itself is an ambiguous term that means among other things true to the fact of human life or true to the general nature of human beings.

Since the subject of all literature is human life, in one way or another every literary work deals with the condition of man, the nature, social, and cosmic situation within his acts and suffers, and wonder, irony, peril or challenge of his predicament. But most literary works focus on particular aspect or segment of the totality of human experience. (Beardsley, 1962 ; 207)

This means that most of subject matter of literature is a human experience itself.

A good literature says something worthsaying, adds to our understanding of human life in the world around us. It embodies thoughts and feelings on matters of human importance (Graham, 1966 ; 2). Therefore through a literary work, whether it is poem, short story, novel, or drama, we can study the aspect of human life.

Drama is one of the imaginative literary works that is presented on stage through actions and dialogues. As an imaginative literary works, drama is not only for the sake of entertainment, but it can also reveal the important values for human life since drama, like any other art works, is able to portray human problems and life. As Christopher Russell wrote in How To Analyze Drama.

A drama is a work of literature or composition which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of-and-dialogues between a group of character (1966 : 5).

Eugene O'Neill is one of the best American playwrights. O'Neill would be assured an enduring place in any literary era. But O'Neill significance in the history of the American theatre amounts to more than the sum of his play.

Even in the second half of the twentieth century performance of O'Neill's works have continued to raise new question concerning America's greatest dramatist, new world drama, and even modern drama as a whole. After his early successes he was recognized as a great talent, and it was assumed that he would go on to be come a master.

O'Neill was primarily concerned with the individual, rather than with the masses of the industrial society. He was not essentially a social reformer, as O'Neill himself pointed out, the crucial problem of his play is not the

individual's relationship to some superior power, to God. In this play Strange Interlude, we can see clearly the psychological insight of the leading character, Nina Leeds, that influence her relationship to others.

The character of O'Neill works are social outsiders proudly and deliberately avenging themselves on a social system they hate, but rather victims of their inherently human vulnerability to life-lies. O'Neill presents his characters as blind and powerless victims in the face destiny, helplessly adrift in life, and subject to forces over which they have no control. Only love and mutual trust can hope to be found.

Strange Interlude is one of his best play ever written. The main character of the play is a woman who fails to face the reality. She never success in escaping from man, life, and her environment. Her failure influences her life in future and make her being egoistic.

Nina Leeds is the main character who leaves her father's house after her aviarot fiance has been down in World War II, accusing her father of having prevented her from consummating her love. To atone for her own guilt she offers servicement in a military hospital in what she had with-held from Gordon (her fiance). In order to give her life some meaning she narries Sam, a good-natured, honest,

hard working but not particularly intelligent college friend of Gordon. But she is not in love with him, but hopes that having children may normalize her life. This hope is shattered when her mother-in-law tells her that her husband, like his father, is in danger of becoming insane. In order to fulfill her marriage with Sam, Nina commits adultery with Ned Darrell, a doctor friend of the family, but her scheme gets out of hand when she falls in love with the father of her child. From now she lives out the triple role of mother, wife, and mistress. Her dream collapses; her son marries; her lover, Ned Darrell, leaves her to devote himself to his work; Sam, her husband, stagnates in complacency. Nina fights in vain to hold on to her possession, but find herself worn out, defeated and helpless. A life of contented weariness with Charles Marsden is all that remains to her.

I.2. Statement Of The Problem

To make a clear focus on the problems and to systemize the discussion, it needs to arise some question that will be starting point of the analysis.

I.2.1. What are the egoism of Nina Leeds ?

I.2.2. What are the reasons that make Nina Leeds being an egoistic woman ?

I.2.3. What are the effects of Nina Leeds' egoism to her life ?

I.3. Objective Of The Study

After reading the play Strange Interlude, the writer comes to the curiosity to find out the egoism of Nina Leeds and the reasons behind Nina Leeds actions to become an egoistic woman.

That egoistic characterization does not do any harm to her but others, including her family. In this case, the writer wants to find out the effects of Nina Leeds' egoism to her life.

I.4. Significance Of The Study

By analyzing Eugene O'Neill's Strange Interlude, the writer hopes to get deep insight of human problems and human characters, especially woman's attitude in facing their conflict.

The writer also expect that this thesis will give contribution to the body of knowledge, especially in understanding of literature in general and American literature, particularly on Eugene O'Neill's works.

I.5. Scope And Limitation

As a chief art of mankind, literary may reflect a

phenomenon of human being. One of the literary works is drama. Drama is designed for both reading and public performance. In this study, the writer dealing with O'Neill's Strange Interlude refers to the strange character of Nina Leeds, as main character, for being egoistic. The writer will analyze the factors cause her egoism and the effect to her life through studying intrinsic aspect especially on plot, characterization, and setting of the play.

I.6. Theoretical Background

In analyzing this play, the writer has chosen an objective theory as a leading one. This analysis will be focused on the intrinsic of the work, such as plot, characterization, and setting. To analyze the structure of the play, the writer uses the structural approach, because the intrinsic approach emphasizes on the structure of the wholeness.

For supporting the objective theory, the writer thinks that she needs to use psychological theory to find out the psychological background which make the main character (Nina Leeds) being an egoistic woman.

I.7. Method Of The Study

This study limits the analysis on the elements of the play, particularly on plot, characterization, and setting. So, the method used in this study is the descriptive method. The descriptive method is a description that focus on plot, character and setting of the play. It means that the writer collects some words or quotations from the play as her data, then she describes those data. So there are many quotations in her analysis to confirm and support the analysis.

The writer also uses interpretation to explain the content of the play, especially plot, characterization, and setting without any interference from any other factors, then the writer looks for any relevant theoretical books which are used to support the analysis.

I.8. Definition Of Key Terms

Egoism : The quality or state of always thinking about (one) self, and about what will be the best for (one) self; continued selfishness.

Strange : Hard to accept or understand; surprising.

Interlude : An interval; a temporary pause or lull during some other activity; an intervening episode or period.

I.9. Organization Of The Paper

Basically this thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical background, method of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the paper.

The second chapter is theoretical framework consisting of two parts. The first is objective theory, used to analyze three basic elements of play, that is plot, characterization, and setting. And the second is psychological theory which is used to support the objective theory in analyzing character. The third chapter is the analysis which consist of three main discussion; plot, setting, and characterization in which the analysis focuses on the character's egoism and its effect to her life. And the last chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

