

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The writer is interested in Lillian Hellman because of her great contributions to the world of drama and her unique themes. First, she has many career as playwright, memorialize, screenwriter, journalist and controversial political figure for almost 50 years (Estrin, Vinson, 376). She has strong voice against fascism, the black comedy of the McCarthy Era, and about the Watergate scandal that invite many controversies as well as strong praise. In 1945 she is active on several leftist organizations and is therefore called before the House of American Active Committee in 1952, but she refuses to testify against her friends. Seven of her plays are chosen among the 10 'Best Plays' of their seasons and receive New York Critics' Circle Award for the best American drama of the season for both Watch on The Rhine and Toys in The Attic. She also wins the Gold Medal for drama from the

National Institute for Arts and Letters. Then, she wins the National Book Award for her memoir An Unfinished Woman (Vivian, Heath, 1625).

Second, the writer is also impressed with Lillian Hellman's unique themes. The common themes of her plays are usually about the destructive power of evil and its ability to destroy family relationship and create a cruel public opinion through rumor (Mc Graw Hill, 485). For example, one may destroy one's life through one's rumor. Moreover, she also likes to present the danger of evil and injustice toward innocent people (Vivian, Heath, 1625). She hates sentimentality, that she often permits the villain wins against the hero or the success of none (Estrin, Gassner, 376). Sometimes, she creates angry themes that she is being called "The Hanging Judge of The American Theatres"(Vinson, Gassner, 376). Harold Clurman also says that Lillian Hellman understand realism which happens in the world that we sometimes have to pay an eye for an eye if we have done something wrong (Vinson, 366).

The Children's Hour is one out of two Lillian Hellman's famous play that does not have poetic justice for the good one that a well made playwright typically provide. In Hellman's world, goodness is invariably suffers at the hands of the wicked. For example, in the third act of The Children's Hour, Karen and Amelia Tilford's futures are still uncertain and unknown for the audience. The play makes her an overnight sensation and wins initial strong praise for its tight craftsmanship and unusual theme (Estrin, 5, 10). It is considered as the most powerful realistic play of 1930's. It runs for 691 performances and is bought by Samuel Goldwyn for its film and engaged Lillian Hellman to write the screenplay (Gassner, 642). It is a well made play which are unusually gripping because she takes the act of lying and

connect it with total loss that makes the lies more evil than it actually is (American Writer, 276).

The writer is interested in discussing the motives of Mary's lies and the effects upon the other main and minor characters because the main central character who is Mary Tilford, a fourteen years old little girl can create a huge lie. The lie is not an ordinary lie but an accusation of lesbianism (Am Writer, 276). Her lie brings disaster to the other main and minor characters, those are Karen, Martha, Joseph Cardin, Mary's friends, Amelia Tilford, and Mrs. Mortar. When she fails in her accusation, she intimidates one of her schoolmates into supporting her vicious, destructive lie by threatening to reveal the other child's petty thievery if she does not help her (Estrin, 34). Mary's lies destroy the peacefulness and happiness of the main and minor characters.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Mary Tilford in The Children's Hour is only a small girl who studies at a school run by two teachers, Martha Dobie and Karen Wright. This girl is able to tell so many lies in a day, one of them is a big one which is accusing her teachers being lesbians. The peacefulness and happiness of the school's teachers, relatives, and friends' lives are ruined by her lies. It is very shocking and therefore, the writer is wondering what motives encourage Mary to tell lies and how far lies cause disorder or ruin.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The writer is going to find out Mary's motives for telling lies and the effects that she causes because of her act telling lies to the main and minor characters.

#### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

The writer wants to reveal the dangerous of a spoiled child. If we are taking an action to control the child, she will feel that her freedom has been taken away. But on the other hand, if we spoil the child, she will do whatever she wants without considering the trouble that she may bring to other people.

Moreover, the writer also wants to give an information to the reader that punishment does not always work well in a child, because it can cause hatred or even revenge for the victim. Most people may think that punishment can eliminate bad behavior or at least make the person feels hesitate to do the same way again. Through her study with Mary's case here, the writer would like to give the reader a new view that sometimes punishment does not always end well for the one who does the punishment and the victim.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

In her discussion, the writer will limit it by analyzing only to the main central character that is Mary Tilford since she is the one who has big contribution to the plot. The analysis will deal with Mary's lies. However, the writer also analyzes other characters, which are the other main and minor characters who get the bad effects of her lies, but the analysis stresses on the effects only and not the characters' study.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

The writer is going to treat this play as a literary work, therefore, the writer is going to have literary approach. As the consequence of having this literary approach, the writer is going to use literary theories. The literary theories that the writer is going to use are theories of characterization and theories of conflict. These literary

theories are the main theories to analyze this play, yet, the writer also uses psychological theories as supporting theories. The writer uses both of the literary theories as well as the psychological theories because through them the writer could know Mary's motives for telling lies. The psychological theory that the writer used is the theory of behaviorism.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This thesis consists of four chapters. It begins with chapter I, the introduction, which covers the background and, statement of the problem, the purpose and importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology and the last one is organization of the study. Then, chapter II gives a brief review of the related theory. The related theory then, divided into two sections, which are literary theories as main theories, and psychological theories as supporting theories. These theories in this chapter are used for this study. Next, the analysis of the study is placed in chapter III. Finally, the results of all the analysis or the conclusion could be found in the last chapter, chapter IV.