

Chapter I

Introduction

L1 Background of the Study

Literature is a highly valued writing. It is considered as an imitation of the world (Van 587). The author takes the materials for his story from experience and observation of life in this world. Certainly, he has a purpose within his story. Nevertheless, no author tells readers what his story means. The readers must discover the meaning of the story by reflecting on the action itself. "The meaning of the story is like the meaning of life itself" (Altenbernd 9). Novels, poems, plays, and short stories are literary works. Novel has different characteristic from the others, although mostly the subject matters concern with human life. "In novels a reader stays with it until he has exhausted its meaning" (Van 587). This quotation shows how the readers are willing to spend much time to read novel and follow the story until the ending. However, not all writings are included in the literary work. The writings that contain the value of life are categorized as literary works (Eagleton 17). Henry James also supports that literary works should embody and touch the sense of life and should give a direct impression of life (Altenbernd 10). The personal reason of the writer to choose a novel is

because it contains more details to understand the story. Although the length of the page is thick enough, novel provides a great pleasure among its pages. Besides entertaining, it helps her to understand life and human condition.

Besides novel, the thesis writer is interested in choosing this nineteenth century novelist, Thomas Hardy because he is considered as one of the major British novelists in the late Victorian period. During his lifetime, some people idolize him and some denigrate, even scorn him. However, this condition is different after fifty years of his death, Hardy becomes one of the greatest English novelists (Butler 26). "He ranks the second to Charles Dickens" (May 1259). Hardy begins his career in the Victorian era (19th century) and it does not end until after World War I (20th century). In literature, Hardy starts his career as a poet first, but the circumstances make him turn to writing novels. It is because publishers prefer his novels to his poems. And Hardy succeeds to prove that a poet is able to write novels. Even, Hardy is regarded as a productive writer during Victorian era. He writes many written materials at least one new book, dozens of articles which appear on his work every year. "He publishes fourteen novels, four collections of short story, nine volumes of poetry, and some essays" (Butler 25). Besides that, "he is given a number of honors, including an honorary degree from Oxford" (Thompson 6).

In writing novels, Hardy uses some metaphors. Although he is a writer of great subtlety (Butler 17), he has an excellent ability to depict Wessex in a richly poetic vein (Grebanier 714). He describes the shapes of land and sky of the countryside and makes them always present in the readers' mind. Wessex is the

name of one of kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Britain and Hardy uses Wessex to refer to Dorsetshire where he spends his childhood as a setting of his novels. Since he often takes Wessex as the setting of the story, Hardy's novels are known as Wessex novels (Thompson 5). Even, Kronenberger who quotes Maugham in Masters of World Literature said that, Hardy is a little man with an earthy face (75). It means that Hardy is a man who was born and grown up in the country. And his interest in writing about simple country people draws him to write more about country novel or regional novel which is common in England in the nineteenth century. The country novel has characters who are insular in outlook. Since the setting of the novel is in the country, its inhabitants are simple people. They own simple life as well as narrow view. Hardy pictures his characters with a marvelous effect of truth that they seem ready to step out into reality. However, Hardy does not intend to make his story's scene limit to Wessex. "What happened in Wessex is what happened elsewhere. And what happened to people in a local place can be presented to have universal application and appeal" (Luke 7).

The significant characteristic of Thomas Hardy is the ability to express sorrow and sadness with sentimental touch (Butler 23). For Hardy, a novel is as a means of giving truth and impression of the lives of men and women. He digs out deeper matters about the rhythms of life that is the rhythms of happiness and suffering (Kronenberger 66). And most his novels end unhappily. The conclusion of the novels can be called tragic because Hardy returns the end of the story to the thought of death. This can be seen in the chosen novel The

Return of the Native. It is Hardy's masterpiece and is published in 1878. The original novel ends with sadness, but some his readers demand happy ending. Thus, Hardy offers two choices of story ending. The first choice is the story ended by one major female character's death with her old lover's death and another choice is happy ending of the marriage of the minor characters. "The novel itself is written in serial form and he adds a sixth book to the original five in order to give story with happy ending" (Thompson 6).

The thesis writer decides to choose The Return of the Native novel is because firstly it is a love story that has the quality of tragedy. But later, after the writer reads it again and again, she finds out in the novel that there is Hardy's philosophy that said "the world does not despise us, it only neglects us" (May 1262). It describes man's situation in the world. He or she searches for the meaning of life, but finds nothing. His pessimistic philosophy derives from the loss of belief in God. And it affects his works, "all Hardy's themes are the story of loss and despair, chaos and without meaning" (1262). "Although he owns the pessimistic philosophy, he does not intend to set it out to his readers" (Scott 8). He just wants to show how a certain person behaves under certain circumstances.

"Hardy's novels that spread over during 1870-1896 are mostly about the picture of human beings struggle against fate" (Thornley 131). He said that Hardy is a fatalist, one who believes in the working of the fate. Barley who quotes Hardy's idea about God said that God must exist. He is absolute and has indifferent sense (45). It means, what God's will is true. Human beings cannot oppose His will. All these are reflected in The Return of the Native. The story

of Hardy's sixth novel is about the coming of a countryman back to his countryside. A newcomer girl, Eustacia who hears and knows his arrival from Paris is eager to attract his love and to be his wife in order to make her ambition to go to Paris true. Unfortunately, before Eustacia is able to reach her ambition, she dies tragically. It is said tragic because Eustacia has to live in Egdon but she hates living there and she faces her death at the same place. That is why the thesis writer would rather choose a topic about Eustacia's failure of going to Paris and whether she is already fated to die in the place she hates or not. Apart from that, the thesis writer finds out that everyone has an ambition in his or her life. To make his or her ambition come true, one must struggle regardless he or she will win or lose later.

L2 Statement of the Problem

After reading Hardy's The Return of the Native, the writer of this thesis is curious to know the heroine's ambitions in her lifetime. Besides that, the writer feels challenged to analyze the cause and the result of her failure of going to Paris. The last problem is, whether Eustacia fated to die in the place where she hates or not.

L3 Purpose of the Study

By analyzing Eustacia's life thoroughly, the writer intends to find out the heroine's ambitions in her lifetime. The thesis writer also wants to show that there are some flaws in the character of Eustacia that make her fail to go to Paris. In addition, the thesis writer wants to prove that Eustacia's tragic life is caused by the flaw in her own characters.

L4 Importance of the Study

The writer expects the readers, especially the students of the Faculty of Letters of Petra Christian University will be interested to know and learn more about British Victorian novelists, particularly about Thomas Hardy. It is because he is considered as the last link with 19th century and the last of the great Victorians. Besides that, the writer hopes the readers get a better understanding of The Return of the Native. Learning from Eustacia's tragic life, the writer anticipates the readers accept whatever their life is. This is intended to avoid the same condition and experience like what Eustacia has during her lifetime. Furthermore, the writer expects that this thesis may help students who are interested in writing a thesis on other Hardy's works.

L5 Scope and Limitation

Considering the title of this thesis, the writer limits the scope and discussion by analyzing only one major female character, that is Eustacia. The writer chooses her to be analyzed because she is central and the most complicated character who can reflect the essence of the novel about the hopeless side of the life.

L6 Methodology

In analyzing the novel The Return of the Native, the writer uses the novel itself as the primary data. Besides, she conducts library research to collect some literary theories and some critics' opinions as a secondary resources that relate to the author as well as to the novel in order to support her analysis. Furthermore, she also uses the literary approach to analyze the chosen topic. By using the theory of characterization, the thesis writer hopes to reveal the flaws in Eustacia's character in order to know the cause and the result of the heroine's failure to go to Paris. Apart from that, the theory about setting is also applied in order to find the influence of settings toward the heroine's ambitions.

L7 Organization of the thesis

The writer presents her thesis into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the readers to the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope and limitation, methodology, and organization of the thesis. Some literary theories and criticism to support her analysis are found in the second chapter. In the third chapter, the writer presents her analysis about Eustacia's ambition, the cause as well as the result of her going to Paris. And the last chapter is the conclusion of the whole thesis in The Return of the Native.