

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study.

Language and literature have a very close relationship because literature uses words as its instruments. Literature is also known as an art. Being an art of words, literature can help people become more sensitive to language. Since it is part of the language, literature is one of the subjects that are taught at the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

Since long ago people compose literature. In literature, the writers try to illustrate emotions, thoughts and dreams into some situations that they want to show. Literature is defined as a written composition and that is designed for story telling. Stories in literature dramatize situations, reveal thoughts and emotion. The purpose is to interest, entertain, stimulate, broaden and ennoble the readers (Robert, 1989:1). Mainly, literature analyzes a life experience in a form of play, fiction, or poetry. It means that through a form of play, fiction or poetry, the readers can find a sense of life, which has not been in their mind before. The main function of literature is for understanding and communication, like Scholes

(1978:xxv) says: “literature enriches our lives because it increases our capacities for understanding and communication. It help us to find meaning in our world and to express it and share it with others”. By learning literary works, students can contact closely the real world (Mayhead, 1981:12). Therefore the students can sharpen their analytical ability to analyze what the writer means. It proves that besides being interesting, learning literary work is very important. As a sense of life, literature is an important element of people’s culture because it contains the record of human’s values, thoughts, problems and conflicts (Little, 1966:1). It is necessary for the readers to have more attention to and have more interest in literary works. The deep meaning inside the literary works can be studied briefly, because the works are written beautifully to afford pleasure and to seek for insight and truth.

In this study, the writer analyzes drama because drama will not waste too much time. White and Whiting say (1970:25): “Unlike novel, a play can be read in one sitting”. A drama differs from a short story and novel. The purpose of this writing is not to be read, but it is to be seen (Scheineder, 1967:416). The readers cannot get its words and ideas directly. So, they have no chance to go back and review what has just been said. The readers can make a simple observation by seeing the play on the stage. In other words, it is easier for the reader to understand its value if he concentrates on the dialogue and the action from the characters. Little (1966:12) claims that there is no form of literature that is

more popular than drama. It presents a story, as a novel and a short story do, in a different manner. Drama presents characters that are shown in dialogues and actions, thus it has dramatic characterization which often other fictions do not have. Moreover, drama has a quality to describe human characters and attitude in action. It is because the language used in drama is more natural and it is put in the appropriate context. Drama enables the reader to see the interaction of the characters through the dialogues and actions clearly.

Another reason why the writer chooses drama is that it offers a sense of immediacy. A drama exists, even in the written form, in the present tense. The action always happens “now”, no matter how well the readers know drama, no matter how many times the readers have seen or read it. Its action always pulls the readers to move forward and always command the readers’ active attention.

As Hatlen (1967:7) writes in “Drama: Principles and Plays”, drama is a blend of several satisfaction. First, it gives the readers an entertaining story. It might hold the readers’ attention, arise laughter and excitement. So it can be said that drama is a form of entertainment that brings excitement for the readers. Second, drama gives the readers’ pleasure in witnessing an achievement and considering the manner of its value. The dramatized situations in drama have directly excited the readers’ mind and the readers’ curiosity. Third, drama has a function to improve the readers’ knowledge about how life is. From a drama, the

readers are able to broaden their mind in facing life. Picozzi (1970:1) says: "The characters are the people in the play. You share the lives of these people, and as you become involved with them, the play becomes a real, exciting experience". It means that the readers are able to grasp its values and thoughts as they get involved with the characters in the play.

The writer chooses William Shakespeare as the good playwright. She is impressed by his work of art. Shakespeare's works are known and admired by many people even though he had imperfect education. He is not only a dramatist with the big two aspects: tragedy and comedy, but also a great poet (Taine, 1964:263). Meres admits that Shakespeare is England's most excellent writer (Bevington, 1992:lxiii).

Through this study the writer chooses tragedy, one of the dramatic aspects of Shakespeare. A tragedy dramatizes a conflict between the vitality of the single life and the laws or limits of life. Besides, there is always a main character that becomes the victim on each tragedy story. Barnet (1992:159) states that tragic heroes usually go beyond the standards more than reasonable people adhere; they do some fearful deed, which ultimately destroy them.

Shakespeare makes tragedy more terrible by showing how a man may seal his own fate. So, the flaw is not necessarily evil in human, but it is simply human liable to normal human temptation and errors. It means that the fault done is not because of evil force in him, but it is in human being himself. Beside that, Shakespearean tragedy involves revenge.

Here, the protagonist brings down in ruin the person who has deeply wronged some loved ones, brings himself and others to ruin as well, and gets caught in the web he has woven to trap his victim (Little, 1966:105). The key here is in the hero himself whether he can control himself from the temptation outside or not. If he cannot, he will fall into the tragic life. Lawlor (1960:IV) says: “The strength of Shakespearean tragic work in particular is that it offers no easily established relationship between what we are and what we must endure”. Meanwhile Bradley (1964:258) states: “a Shakespearean tragedy has a special tone or atmosphere of its own, quite perceptive, however difficult to describe. It is profoundly spiritual, and yet in no real sense is it at all religious”.

Coriolanus is one of Shakespeare’s Roman tragedies besides *Julius Caesar*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. These Roman tragedies are something apart from the ‘great tragedies’ such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and so on. They are more ironic in tone, more dispiriting though they too affirm an essential nobility in humanity (Bevington, 1992:lxviii). Coriolanus was written around 1608 and based on Plutarch’s Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, in the translation by Sir Thomas North.

The conflict in terms of Coriolanus has similar social background with the terms of Shakespeare. At that time, famine and high price led them to rioting. It has become an expression of democratic sentiments, which are heard and feared by the authorities in England. The riots

occurred in the Northhamptonshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire during the summer in 1607. While in the *Coriolanus*, the confrontations are between the plebeians with the patricians, the poor with the rich, and the weak with the powerful. Campbell (1967:405) says: “The play reflected a contemporary social situation”.

The play of *Coriolanus* describes a noble man with his pride in political reality. The main character’s name is Caius Marcius. He is a hero for his country, a son of a widow, a husband and a father. The senate confers Marcius the title of *Coriolanus* after he wins the city of Corioli from the Volscian, and nominates him as consul for the ensuing year. But the plebeians refuse to accept him as consul. At the top of his anger, *Coriolanus* takes revenge by joining the Volscians against Rome and dies in the hand of the Volscian

The tragic life of *Coriolanus* arises the writer’s curiosity to know more about it. His inverted pride makes him face some problems with the public that in the end he pays it with his own life. *Coriolanus* is a man with a bad side that dominates his personality, and his unwillingness to control his temper makes his life’s problem become more complicated. The writer believes that there is a background aspect in every man’s mental quality. A man’s past gives so much influence in developing his personality. Therefore, through this study, the writer wants to find out the aspect that makes *Coriolanus* in a position against his country and his

family. Furthermore, the writer wants to know the contribution of the other characters in Coriolanus downfall.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

Studying Coriolanus by William Shakespeare, the writer draws attention to two questions:

1. What are the causes of Coriolanus' downfall?
2. What contribution do other characters have to Coriolanus' downfall?

1.3 Objectives of the Study.

Through the problems above, this thesis is intended to find out firstly the causes of Coriolanus' downfall; secondly, the other characters' contribution to his downfall.

1.4 Significance of the Study.

The result of this study is expected to be helpful for the students of English Language Department to study the main character in Shakespeare's play Coriolanus. Since literary research always accords with literary analysis, the students will learn to develop their intellectual skills and analytical abilities. By having this knowledge, they will be able to reach the deep meaning contained in literary works. This study is

expected to introduce the work of Shakespeare as one of the greatest playwright.

1.5 Scope and Limitation.

Actually there are three basic elements of drama; there are character, plots and setting. In this study the writer only focuses on the main character Caius Marcius Coriolanus. In Coriolanus, the writer concentrates on the causes that lead Coriolanus to the downfall and the other characters' contribution to Coriolanus' downfall. The writer chooses Coriolanus as her study because his downfall is touching.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms.

To avoid misinterpretation, the writer would like to define the following terms in this study:

- a. Drama is a special fiction which has plot, characters and dialogue and it uses words to create action through the dialogue of the characters (Scholes, 1978:731).
- b. Tragedy is a type of drama that depicts the casually related events which lead to the downfall of the protagonist (in classic tragedy this person should be of unique moral, intellectual or social stature) (Siegel, 1998: [http://www. Geocities.com/Athens](http://www.Geocities.com/Athens)).
- c. Downfall is a sudden fall from power, or prosperity. The cause of such a fall (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 1996).

- d. Contribution comes from contribute, to give or provide jointly with others (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 3rd, 1996).

1.7 Theoretical Framework.

In this study, the writer uses the relevant theories in order to support her analysis. The theories of literature particularly about drama, the two elements of drama: character and plot. The theory of tragedy is discussed at some length in chapter II.

1.8 Organization of Thesis.

The writer divided the study into five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of key terms and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the review related theories and related studies. Chapter III deals with methodology of the study. Chapter IV is the analysis of Coriolanus' tragic downfall in Coriolanus play. And Chapter V is the conclusion of the thesis.