

Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter includes background of the study, statement of the problem, importance of the study, purpose of the study, importance of the study, scope and limitation, methodology, and organization of the study. The background of the study consists of the reason of choosing Elizabeth Gaskell as the author, Mary Barton and North and South as the two novels that will be compared, and also the topic that will be discussed.

1.1 Background of the Study

The writer of this thesis focuses on Elizabeth Gaskell, a minor Victorian novelist because she is a unique novelist compared to other female novelists such as Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, George Eliot, etc. First, she has a position as a

second or even a third rated novelist but it does not mean that she is not a great novelist (Wiehe 1097). One reason of considering her as a minor novelist is her limitation to women's issues. Actually, within her limitation Gaskell has the most precious of the Victorian qualities and an artist's imagination (Cecil188). She can express what she thinks and feels better than ordinary women in her time because she has a great talent in writing what is in her mind. Therefore Winifred Gerin writes: "she is a born writer, with a natural style that flows as effortlessly in the telling of a tale as in communication with a correspondent, a style which created among other impressions one of total authenticity" (77).

Moreover, Mrs.Gaskell's portrait shows us that she is a typical Victorian woman. David Cecil says that "in an age whose ideal of woman emphasized the feminine qualities at the expense of all others, Gaskell was all a woman was expected to be; gentle, domestic, tactful, unintellectual, prone to tears, easily shocked" (154). However, she can describe her heroines with their unfeminine power in struggling for something. (Cecil 187). There is no longer any question about whether she is a major or minor novelist because she qualifies both as an artist and in relation to the development of the English novel (Wright 97).

Secondly, as a Victorian novelist, Gaskell always writes about women characters. Mrs. Gaskell who lives during the nineteenth century becomes aware of the women's struggles since " the period from 1800 to 1918 was the heroic age for British women " (Gillie 107). She tries to combine the master-worker's problem and women's struggles into a good story in order to expose the social condition of England at that time and to suggest a remedy (Cecil 183). Her

attention is focused on the social and emotional problems of her women characters. David Cecil says that she is incapable of creating satisfactory male characters (Phelps 343). Her male characters are not really described as well as her female characters in the ways they react against their surroundings, they think about other people, etc. In fact, she can draw fine and intelligent portraits of men, yet it is the women who receive her closest and most sympathetic attention. Many people know her because of her ability in making a good story about women's roles and their inevitable varieties (Foster 139). " Her description of a heroine carries her awareness of the struggle of woman individually in a male-dominated world " (Foster 145). Moreover, Foster also says that almost all of her work touches on "the issue of female self – expression" (Foster 143).

Another thing that makes the writer interested in Gaskell is that she can write about social distinctions between the upper class and the lower class realistically without exaggerating it. The combination of her eyes to look for the detail and her feminist subtlety gives her an extremely beautiful perception of social distinctions (Cecil 197). Gaskell is able to describe the snobs in her own way and to think and understand deeply about it although she had a deeper outlook on human nature (Cecil 10). She is also able to get every single fun out of this snobbery with her good humor that prevents her from exaggerating it. In fact, the writer agrees with David Cecil who says that within its limits, Gaskell's picture of life is surely solid, vivid, and true (Cecil 196).

Furthermore, the writer is interested to analyze and to compare Gaskell's two outstanding novels, Mary Barton and North and South because those two

novels are closely connected (Allot 4). North and South is written as an improvement to her first novel, Mary Barton. They use the same issue; labor troubles around the industrial area. Gaskell uses those two novels to show her concern with the painful contrast between the lives of the rich and the poor, especially in England. She sets her novels against the background of the master and workman relationship (Chang 97).

Another reason that makes the writer interested in those two novels is the role of the main female characters in struggling for freedom. Gaskell's representation of her heroines, Mary Barton in Mary Barton and Margaret Hale in North and South carries her deep concern of the struggles of woman individuality in a male – oriented world (Foster 145). Mary, the main female character in Mary Barton, has to struggle to make the Manchester society believe that her lover, Jem, is not the murderer of Harry Carson. She travels alone by train which is an unusual thing for a woman to do at that time in order to prove that Jem is not deserved to be blamed (Allot 5). While, Margaret, the main female character in North and South “does a struggle to make a poor working class and a rich upper class have a mutual understanding of each other” (Wiehe 1102). She struggles to open the mind of the two classes from the misunderstanding between them. Moreover, “she is not just mechanically connecting the two classes but in fact, she works to make them become friends”. She also enjoys intervening in the public male world, and she prefers to join the conversation among the gentlemen (Foster 149).

After learning about the settings and the character traits of the main female characters, the writer notices that settings such as circumstances, social status, etc can influence a woman to have a strong power as a man does. In fact, women may enjoy and use that power to do the struggles in their lives. Their settings influence their character traits which finally take an important role in their struggles for freedom. Therefore, the writer is challenged to discuss the similarities and differences of both characters as seen through their settings and how they develop their character traits within the influences of those settings. Besides, she also wants to discuss the theme of freedom of their struggles.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

After reading those two novels, the writer knows that the idea of freedom is revealed in the main female characters' struggles. Mary Barton, for example, has to struggle to set her lover, Jem Wilson, free from the accusation of being a murderer of Harry Carson. She struggles to make the Manchester society believe that Jem is not the murderer of Harry Carson. Meanwhile, Margaret Hale, also has to struggle in mediating the two classes, the upper class and the lower class, so that they can have a mutual understanding of each other. Both of them have similarities and differences in their settings which finally make them struggle for the freedom of other people. Therefore, the writer really wants to study those similarities and differences in order to investigate how they develop their

character traits within the influences of the settings, and how the idea of freedom is revealed in their struggles.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Through the analysis, the writer wants to discuss the similarities and differences of the main female characters' settings and character traits in order to prove that both characters are developed because of their surroundings or settings. They react against the surroundings, and finally they struggle to achieve their goals. Moreover, she will discuss the idea of freedom in their struggles.

1.4 Importance of the Study

By writing this proposal, the writer hopes the readers to realize that a woman can have a potential power that makes her do something as a man does. Therefore, the writer also hopes that her analysis on the theme of freedom of the main female characters will make the male readers to respect women more and not to look down on them anymore. For the female readers, she hopes that it will encourage them to struggle for what they wish. Furthermore, because Mary Barton and North and South tell us about women and their struggles in looking for freedom, the writer wants the readers not just interested in the novels with men as the heroes but also appreciate more in novels in which women act as the heroines. The last one, the writer hopes that the readers do not ignore Elizabeth Gaskell as a minor

novelist. The writer finds that Gaskell has a talent to impress the readers by her female characters and their struggles in her novels. Therefore, the readers, especially the female readers, can be influenced and challenged to struggle in their lives.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The writer wants to do a limitation in her analysis by comparing only two main female characters and their struggles to look for freedom. Those two characters are Mary Barton and Margaret Hale. They are chosen because their settings, character traits, and struggles which reveal the theme of freedom have the similarities and differences. Moreover, the writer will discuss the other minor characters as they relate to the main female characters in those two novels.

1.6 Methodology

In writing this proposal, the writer conducts some library research in order to find the important source, criticisms, and also other data that are related to her novels and the author. The two novels used as main references in this thesis are those published by Penguin Group in 1994. Then, setting, characterization, and theme will be used as the literary tools in order to analyze the main female characters' struggles. The similarities and differences of setting and the development of the character traits within the influences of setting will be

discussed first to compare both female characters and their struggles. Moreover, the idea of freedom and the success of their struggles will be discussed, too. The analysis will be connected to all the information that she gets from the library, particularly the criticisms.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The writer will divide her thesis into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study. The background of the study consists of the explanation about the author, the novel, and the main topic of the thesis. The second chapter is about the review on the related literature which includes the theory of comparative literature, theory of setting, characterization, and theme. After that, the third and the fourth chapters consist of the analysis in which the writer will apply what she has written in Chapter Two. The last one is the fifth chapter which will conclude what the writer finds out in the analysis.