

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The writer decides to choose a novel from all literary genres because it is the widely read and enjoyed literature form. The term novel itself means “a prose story based on the imagination of the author” (Roberts, 1969, p. 51). “People read novel not only to be entertained and to escape from the real world, but also to learn more about life” (p. 51). Novels allow the readers to “enter the hearts and mind of other human beings” (Kersen, 1966, p.1). Furthermore, a novel is connected to the events occurred in everyday life. Although the situations or characters are only the result of the author’s vivid imagination, they are the same as the ones many people know or experience in their life. Hence, the writer of this thesis finds that it is easier to grasp the ideas and experiences in a novel than any other literary genres like a poem or a play. That is the reason why the writer of this thesis finally chooses a novel to be analyzed.

The writer has taken a special interest in Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, a British writer in the nineteenth century, because “she is one of the famous British writers. Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Charlotte Bronte, George Elliot, Elizabeth Gaskell ... are the names that first come to our mind when we think of the Victorian novelists” (Allen, 1954, p.153). This particular Victorian writer, Elizabeth Gaskell, has a unique reputation in English literature. One of her unique reputations is reflected in one of her novels, *Mary Barton, A Tale of Manchester Life*. *Mary Barton, A Tale of Manchester Life* can be said unique because it is one of the earliest Victorian novels that contains social protests. *Mary Barton, A Tale of Manchester Life* also straightforwardly challenges a subject matter that is so uncommon at the time she wrote it that no other Victorian writers did it. In the period of post-World War I, Elizabeth Gaskell was placed in the second or third position of the novelists, inferior to Dickens, Thackeray, and George Elliot, but

then she was respected as a major novelist (Wiehe, 1966, p. 1097). She was once considered to be a minor artist, but fortunately after World War II there was a reevaluation of Victorian writers and her reputation was upgraded and finally she became one of major Victorian female writers. The early consideration to place Gaskell as a minor writer is because there is limitation in her achievement that makes her unable to write something beyond her vision and experiences although she is at the highest of her art. It means that she is not thought as a major writer because she has a limited ability which makes her incapable to write anything outside her world even when she is at her best.

However, David Cecil admits that “the limitation is detected but within her limitation, Gaskell is just as successful a novelist as the greater Victorians. To say that she is a minor novelist is not to say that she is less an artist. Within the limits of her genius, she is eminently an artist” (Cecil, 1969, p.188). This statement is true based upon what the writer reads in *Wives and Daughters*. She wrote about daily life based on her own, but in such an ingenious way that it was written beautifully. The writer of this thesis thinks that Gaskell should never be considered as a minor artist in the first place, first of all, because the writer thinks that one of her novels, *Wives and Daughters*, is one of the great novels in literary world and deserves to be discussed. Even David Cecil and George Eliot said that Gaskell was not less an artist when compared to Dickens or Thackeray (Cecil, 1969, p.188). The latter even ranked her as a woman of ‘genius or effective talent’ (Nesor, 1966, p.155) and acknowledged a debt to her when George Eliot was writing *The Scene of Clerical life* (Allot, 1956, p.2). The reassessment of Victorian writers that has gone on since the World War II leads to her risen reputation.

Since Gaskell’s works deal with women at third classes as the victims of economic and social restrictions, with the relation between women and marriage, with the struggle for self-achievement, and with the intermixture of women’s careers and public history, many scholars begin studying her works and life more closely in the last decade. Therefore, Patricia M. Spacks refers her as ‘seriously underrated’ in this century (Wiehe, 1966, p.1097). This means that although her works are considered minor and underrated, her works are important minor

achievements that are serious enough to be studied. Thus, the writer agrees that she is elevated to the rank of Major Victorian novelists.

Another reason why the writer of this thesis chooses Gaskell is ‘her being a true Victorian’ (Stebbins, 1995, p.96). It means that in some area, the writer agrees with the opinion that as a true Victorian she is what all a woman is expected to be in an age where the ideal of women is emphasized on the feminine qualities (Stebbins, 1995, p.96). She was ‘gentle, domestic, tactful, prone to tears and easily shocked’ (Cecil, 1969, p.184). ‘Her talent is also a Victorian talent, fertile and intuitive. She is very clever’ (p.185). Her being a Victorian makes her books also Victorian. Her rambling, unequal, enthralling novels, full of providential chances and true love rewarded in the last chapter are typical Victorian novels’ (Cecil, 1969, p.185). It means that Victorian novels typically have a lot of characters, a thick plot, and a realistic, long description of the life at that time.

Finally, as a Victorian writer, Gaskell has the most precious quality of an artist that is the artist’s imagination (Cecil, 1969, p.188). With the possession of this creative imagination, the thesis writer notices that Gaskell gives the color of freshness and vividness to her whole picture of life. The color of freshness and vividness means that her imagination has the attraction for the reader because she can describe the natural surrounding in amazing details. Besides, she is also skillful in describing realistically without exaggerating her descriptive imagination, and she is good in her writing concerning the emotion, the feeling and the thought of her characters. Her portrait of life is so convincingly solid, vivid and true that it makes the writer become very interested.

She has transcribed reality into literal form as Coral Lamsbury defines it (p.95). This imagination of Gaskell is her most significant qualities (Cecil, 1969, p.194). What makes her different from the other authors of the similar quality, as Cecil pronounces, is that no one has been fresh, subtle and fastidious in their imagination exactly the same way she is (p.194).

Gaskell is concerned with fiction, with telling stories (Easson, 1992, p.100). Her sharp visual observation makes her able to depict setting in details.

Moreover, her talent is good in creating excitement that is not often seen in a novel as one of literature genres because excitement is not easy to be determined or easy for a novelist to manipulate. The readers will find it in the novel or enjoy it when they experience it, as the writer experiences while reading *Wives and Daughters*.

The writer chooses *Wives and Daughters*, the work of Elizabeth Gaskell to be studied because the writer considers *Wives and Daughters* as the best and perfect novel among her other works. The thesis writer finds that Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a novel that has a collection of great characters, which finally forms a novel that gives a theme about a young girl that experiences growing up and changing into a mature and better person surrounded by the joy and sorrows of the people of Hollingford. *Wives and Daughters* is based solidly on the combination of conflicts that becomes one complex story. The great details of everyday family life, dress, houses, furnishings, meals, books, and other things which are skillfully written into the content on the novel really support the subtitle, *An Everyday Story*.

Wives and Daughters is the story of the maturity of the main female character in the novel. The reason that makes the writer choose the topic is because she thinks that maturity is a very important concept that needs to be discussed more in order to understand more deeply about human characters.

The story in *Wives and Daughters* is about the main female character named Molly Gibson who lives with her father. She is a young girl who at first has immature characteristics. She lives a happy life with her father only until he decides to marry again. Her stepmother comes into her life when she is at the Hamley's house, and she becomes upset with this unexpected change in her family. Instead of dealing with it, she feels so upset that she tries to run from her problem in the garden near the Hamley's house. Roger Hamley finds her and gives some advice. The advice from Roger Hamley encourages Molly to change and becomes the starting point in the process of Molly's maturation.

The writer chooses Molly Gibson as the character to be studied in this thesis because Molly is the main character in the novel. She involves in every part of the

action and throughout the novel she experiences the process of maturation. This development in the main female character interests the thesis writer that she decides to analyze it in this thesis. The writer chooses to discuss the topic of the process of Molly Gibson's maturation because the writer thinks that it is important and necessary to know how one could develop one's character traits and become a mature person. The writer believes that everybody can reach the level of maturity if the factors behind the development toward maturity can be understood.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The writer is curious to know the process of Molly Gibson's maturation and what makes her finally become a mature person in the end of the novel.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The thesis writer wants to reveal the process of Molly Gibson's maturation and the reasons that make her become mature.

1.4. Importance of the Study

By studying Molly's change of character in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, the writer expects that the reader can appreciate the novelist as one of great Victorian artists and that as one of her works, *Wives and Daughters* is a good credit for the author's excellence in writing.

The writer of the thesis also wants to show and to prove that Molly Gibson is developing and growing from immaturity into maturity. Therefore, with this study the writer hopes that the readers understand more about the importance of one to become a mature. All people grow to become adults. But only mature adults will not be childish forever, instead they can cope with hard life in the society. Thus, to be mature should be the goal of every human being.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of the analysis is on Molly Gibson's maturation. The novel, *Wives and Daughters*, has seven characters besides Molly that can be discussed, such as Dr. Gibson, Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Cynthia, the Hamleys couple, Roger and Osborne Hamley. However the thesis writer limits the discussion on Molly Gibson, the main female character. The other seven characters like Dr. Gibson, Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Cynthia, the Hamleys couple, Roger and Osborne Hamley are mentioned only to support the discussion of Molly Gibson's maturation. She is the character who has an important role in the novel and undergoes a change from immaturity to maturity.

1.6. Methodology

In analyzing the novel, the writer uses literary approach and does library and Internet researches. The writer collects any data related to Elizabeth Gaskell as the author, the novel *Wives and Daughters* itself and also to the topic of the maturation of Molly Gibson. The related data are about the novel *Wives and Daughters* that is going to be used to validate the analysis of the novel and also the data about Elizabeth Gaskell as the author. These data are used to help the writer in her analysis of the fiction. The thesis writer uses the literary theories of characterization and conflict as the main tools to analyze and study more about the changes of the main female character in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*. Besides, as the supporting tool, she also needs the concept of maturity in order to define whether Molly Gibson has undergone the process development

1.7. Organization of the study

This thesis is divided into four chapters, the first is introduction, and the content is the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study. The second is the review of related literature, which consists of the theories of characterization and conflict

that are related to the problem that will be analyzed in the thesis. The analysis of *Wives and Daughters* begins in the third chapter. In this chapter, the thesis writer analyzes the development of Molly Gibson's character and the conflicts experienced by Molly Gibson, showing that she is changing from immaturity into maturity. The last chapter is the conclusion, in which all that have been discussed will be concluded.