

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter conducts the introduction of the study that includes the background of the study, problem formulation, limitation of the study, objective of the study, significance of the study, and outline of the study.

A. Background of The Study

Nineteenth century era in England or known as Victorian era is an era when money and financial status are meaningful aspect in society. Poonam Nagar in his essay states that “In 19th Century England, money was then, as it is now, of fundamental significance. It was very important that a family must have a good reputation & financial stability, for a satisfactory living in the society,” (121). The quotation means that in 19th century era, people who have a lot of money would have good reputation and more privileges in society. Meanwhile, for people who have less money, they have less advantage in living in society.

The social condition in 19th century era was mostly influenced by money. The most common social classes in England are the upper, the middle and the working classes. A researcher in his article emphasizes “Although there are several classifications, the most orthodox and widely recognised one is to divide people into three main social classes which are the upper, the middle and the working classes,” (Tomida 273).

The first class is the upper class, or upper class can called as aristocracy. A researcher emphasizes that “The members of this class were born in nobility and they owned the majority of the land. They were privileged and avoided taxes. Aristocrats made a lot of money, the wealthiest ones of them made about 30,000 pounds per year,” (Radja 22). The upper class got the more privileges living in society because their wealthy and money to satisfied their life.

The next class is the middle class. According to Ibid “New roles were defined for middle class men and women; middle class men went for work in business, while their women stayed home and cared for the family needs,” (qtd in Radja 22). The position of middle class is between upper and lower class. The middle class position is better than lower and get better job but they are still less privilege than the upper class. The third class is lower class or working class. Harris states that “The lower class was divided into two sections: the working class (laborers), and the poor. It contained men, women, and children performing many types of labor, including factory work, seam stressing, and chimney sweeping, mining, and other jobs,” (qtd in Radja 23). For the lower class, they need to work to get money for their lives and the job they can have are only become laborers.

In terms of roles women and men have to take in 19th century era, women had difficult position in society. This difficulty appears as the result of the concept of different sphere between men and women in society at that time. Tinna Sif Sindradóttir states in her paper that “The concept of separate spheres was invented

to help women understand that their place in society was to occupy the domestic sphere, while men could participate in the public sphere,” (3). The different sphere between men and women in 19th century era made the position of women was limited in society and difficult position because the rights of women are less than men.

Thaden’s review (2001) found women in 19th century have wretched position in society and dealing with their rights; for unmarried women in 19th century only have few prospects in society, the lower class women could only work as servants or factory workers. The middle class women only have better profession as governess and teacher, and for upper class women with their wealthy only became lady, (qtd. in Xiaojie 67). From the quotation above it can be seen that women in 19th century only had few rights than men. No matter what financial status they have; upper, middle or lower, their rights were less than men. It means that men get more chance in society than women. In society, women get job such as weak job that do not really have meaning in society.

Dealing with the middle class women, the only prospect job for them is being governesses. Debra Teachman states “The middleclass women were destined to get married or to depend on their male family members for their survival. If they could not get married or did not have sufficient money to live independently, they had to find jobs which might maintain their social dignity. The only job might taken was a governess,” (qtd. in Nao 1). When middle class women are decided for not marrying, being a governess could be a best choice

because being a governess could give advantage to middle class women to earn money for their economic independent when there is no people would take care of their financial stability.

Even though being governesses is prospect job for middle class women, it was difficult job for them. As a governess, woman must struggle in their society because Victorian governess has uncertain status in the society. Governesses are educated middle class women who have to survive for their jobs in upper class society with all respect or less from their employer because sometimes they are considered as servants than educators for the upper class children. Elizabeth Eastlake claims that

A governess has no equals, and therefore can have no sympathy. She is a burden and restraint in society She is a bore to almost any gentleman, as a tabooed woman The servants invariably detest her for she is a dependant like themselves, and yet, for all that, as much their superior in other respects as the family they both serve, (qtd. in Amies 537).

Dealing with the treatment the governesses have to get from the society, sometimes the upper class people treat the governesses impolitely. Helen Knight points out in her essay that upper class commends their children to governess but they describes governess as immoral woman. Also upper class regards governess as inferior because her background is only middle class woman, (9).

Beside governesses have uncertain position in society and feel inferior, governesses must struggle for unstable situation during they work. A researcher emphasizes that during their working life, a governess has no job security and governess has unstable situation in their work place. (Frishtick 13) The job as a governess has unstable situation because sometimes in unexpected situation such as the employer does not satisfied with the service of governess or the pupils are finishing the study, a governess immediately can be stopped by the employer without any severance pay.

Low wages is one of the struggles that must the governesses face. The salary of governess is low. According to Holloway and Landow “the annual salary for a governess could be as low as £10 plus room and board, and sometimes up to £20 or £30. For comparison, a household servant also made about £10 a year,” (qtd in Frishtick 11). With low salary, governess must hold out to being a governess, because they need money for their financial security.

In the novel *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte, Agnes Grey as the major character is eighteen years old girl, she is a daughter of a clergyman. Coming from middle class family, she gets financial security from her family, but after her father is sick, their financial condition become down and the family must pay debt. This condition makes Agnes decide to become a governess for her financial stability and helping her family. She is struggling among the stranger in her employer as a governess. She gets bad experience in her first job as a governess in The Bloomfield family. They are rich but crueller than Agnes thought. Her

employer and her pupils treat Agnes impolitely. Even though she feels unhappy, she tries to keep working on there for salary to improve her financial condition. After she is out from The Bloomfield family, she tries again in other family in the Murray family. She gets better treat from the Murray family. The study chooses *Agnes Grey* novel by Anne Bronte as the object of study because Agnes Grey as the major character in the novel represents of the middle class woman in 19th century era that must be struggle and survive for her life. The novel reflects the struggles of middle class women in 19th century era and one of the struggles is being the governesses.

B. Limitation of The Study

This study titled “The Struggle of The Middle Class Woman as Being a Governess Reflected in Anne Bronte’s *Agnes Grey*”. This study only focuses in the life of middle class woman in 19th century and the struggle of Agnes Grey faces the difficulties as being a governess that reflected in the novel.

C. Problem Formulation

1. How was the life of middle class women in 19th century era as reflected in the novel *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte?
2. How was the struggle of Agnes Grey as being a governess in 19th century era?

D. Objective of The Study

1. To identify the life of middle class women in 19th century era as reflected in the novel *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte

2. To identify the struggle of Agnes Grey as being a governess in 19th century era

E. Significance of The Study

It is hoped that this study can be useful and give contribution to literature field and students of College of Languages and Communication Science Sultan Agung Islamic University and people who read this study.

1. A contribution to English literature study program. It is hoped that the result of this study can increase the discussion about the life of governess in 19th era and the result of the study can help in the learning process. Also it is hoped that the result of the study will developed their knowledge about governess in 19th era by reading this study.
2. A contribution to people who read this study. This result of study is expected to increase the interest to study about governess in 19th era as reflected in *Agnes Grey* novel. And this study is wished to give benefit the reader can easily understand about the content of *Agnes Grey* by reading this study.

F. Outline of The Study

This study contains of five chapters. The first chapter contains introduction that divided into six sub chapters; they are background of study, limitation of the study, problem formulation, objective of the study, significance of the study, and outline of the study. The second chapter contains review of related theories that

divided into four sub chapters: synopsis of *Agnes Grey* novel, English society in 19th century era, women in England in 19th century era, and the life of governess. The third chapter contains the research method that involves three parts: type of research, data organizing and analyzing the data. The fourth chapters contains findings and discussion which are the life of middle class women in 19th century era as reflected in Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey* and the struggle of agnes grey as being a governess in 19th century era as reflected in Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey*. The fifth chapter provides conclusion and suggestion.