

WOMEN' STRUGGLE IN SURVIVING THEIR LIVES AS SEEN ON THE NOVEL ENTITLED *MARY BARTON* BY ELIZABETH GASKEL (A FEMINISM STUDY)

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Abstract

The research is aimed to analyze the struggle of women, especially women from a low economy class, in surviving their lives as seen on the novel entitled 'Mary Barton' by Elizabeth Gaskell based on a Feminism Study. Elizabeth Gaskell has written this novel in the 19th century when the industrial revolution has happened in England. In analyzing this novel, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method. There were two kinds of data sources: the primary data sources and the secondary data sources. The primary data source was the novel entitled 'Mary Barton' by Elizabeth Gaskell. Then, the secondary data were books, internet sources, and research journals which were related with this topic. The data collecting in this research was library research by summarizing, paraphrasing, and documenting the data. The technique of data analysis was interactive data analysis by Miles and Huberman. The result of the analysis showed that the novel illustrated the struggle of women from a low economy class in surviving their lives in the 19th century in England. The condition of poverty has made them to be stronger in facing their lives and struggling to get a better life. Mary Barton, as a main character, became a heroine from a lower class to struggle against their poverty life and she did it well. In 19th century in England, there were many women who struggled in many aspects of their lives, such as economic aspect, social aspect, law and justice aspect, aesthetic aspect, and psychological aspect. It was one of the impact of Industrial revolution in England at that time which has changed many sectors of life for women. So, it can be concluded that the struggle of women in the world especially in England has been happened for many years. In England, it has become bigger when the industrial revolution happened. It has changed the condition of women became better and better until now.

Keywords: *The struggle of women, A Feminism Study, Descriptive Qualitative*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings demand some ways to express their feelings and thoughts. One of the way is through the work of literature. Literature is an aesthetic writing which expresses and can communicate other's

thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward life. Barnett (1963:1) stated that Literature is sometimes defined as anything written, this definition is both too broad and too narrow. It is said 'too broad' because not all of writing can be called literature. On the other

hand, it cannot be said 'too narrow' due to the fact that it is not necessary for a song or ballads to always be written or printed. Wellek and Warren (1956:20) said that literature will be judged valuable only so far as it yields for this or that adjacent discipline. Literature is a performance in words. The situation in a literary work may be anything that can be contemplated or thought about a single object or a complex series of events.

A novel is one of categories in prose. A novel will be the focus on this study. Many authors write the novels based on a certain event which happened in their lives. 'Mar Barton' is a novel by Elizabeth Gaskell which reflected the reality of women especially from a low economy class in the 19th century in England. It should be many problems when people live in a society, such as how they fulfill their needs, how to get a good education, how to get a good position in society, and so on. As a human being, they have to overcome the problems in order to get a better life in economy, social and politic. To make some changes in that aspects, they must struggle for life. In society, struggling to get a better life is very important in order to survive. In the 19th century, England was under capitalism. There were two classes at that time. The bourgeoisie was the owner of the means of productions, and the proletariat was from the working class. Basically, bourgeoisie and proletariat were opposed to each other because they had different position in the mode of production. The bourgeoisie became the oppresor to the proletariat by giving low wages. Conflicts between them were central to the social structure and

capitalism, and could not be abolished without replacing the system itself.

The relation of women as a social group to the analysis of economy class has spurred political debates within Marxist and Feminist circle as to whether women's movement challenging male domination can assume a common set of women's interest. In literature, a feminism study has become the theme in many novels. Authors express the struggle of women to get their rights on the reality in the form of imaginative expression. Elizabeth Gaskell was one of the authors who potrayed the struggle of women in the 19th century. She wrote a novel entitled 'Mary Barton' which told about social phenomena and social conflicts in that era when industrial revolution happened in England. 'Mary Barton' was a novel which told about class life in Manchester in 1840s. It showed about the struggle of low economy women which was represented by Mary Barton as a main character. This novel showed the occurance of class conflict because of poverty condition. In this research, there were some problems that should be answered, such as 1) the kinds of life aspects which was struggled by low economy class women in 'Mary Barton' novel; 2) How the women of low economy classes struggled in surviving their lives in the 19th century as reflected on 'Mary Barton' novel; and 3) Mary Barton's influences in women' struggle to get a better life in the 19th century.

METHOD

According to Nawawi (1995:71), methodology is a way of doing something. It

also means procedures or ways which held to achieve certain objectives. In determining the method, it is necessary to keep in mind accuracy and conformity on the features of the problems and the objectives of the research being fulfilled. The methodology in this research was descriptive qualitative method. According to Moleong (1990), qualitative research is considered as verbal analysis of descriptive data. The data can be sentences, phrases, or words uttered by a person, behaviour done by a person, and also other data taken by researcher. Dealing with a descriptive research, Selinger and Shohamy (1989:124) said that descriptive research involves a collection of technique and used to specify, delineate or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation. The descriptive method did not emphasize only on the fact finding which is then followed by the analysis of the object, but also continued by interpreting and comparing it to certain standard of criteria. In this research, the standard criteria was the struggle of women. So, the type of the literary study was descriptive qualitative method based on feminism study.

There were two kinds of sources which were needed in analyzing the novel, they were: 1) Primary data: it was taken from the novel entitled 'Mary Barton' by Elizabeth Gaskell which was published in 1994. The data were obtained from dialogues, events, and narrations; 2) Secondary data: it was obtained from many information which supported the research such as journal articles, books, and internet sources which could enrich the interpretation of analysis. The secondary

data had an equal significance with the primary ones. These sources will also play an important role to the whole accomplishment.

In data collecting, there were some techniques such as: 1) reading the novel several times until the researcher got an adequate information or data to be analyzed; 2) reading some other sources related to the novel such as books, articles or internet sources; 3) taking a note for the important parts both in primary sources and secondary sources. All collected data were given certain notes; and 4) classifying the data into categories and developed them into good unity. In analyzing the data, there were some steps such as; 1) collecting the data; 2) reduction data; 3) display data; and 4) verification or conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Characteristics of Mary Barton

Mary Barton was a young girl. She was twenty years old. She was John Barton's daughter and losing her mother when she was 13 years old. She was a dressmaker in Miss Simmond. She lived only with her father since her mother passed away in poverty. So, she wanted to be a lady by marrying Harry Carson, a son of a rich mill owner although she realized that she did not love Harry Carson. She loved Jem Wilson, her childhood friend. Physically, she was young and pretty. Marry combined her face and appearance in well dressed so her beauty looked great. People around her realized how pretty she was. As it stated in:

“So, she put her pretty new blue merino, made tight to her throat, her linen and linen cuffs and sailed forth to impress poor gentle Margareth. She certainly succeeded. Alice who never thought much about beauty, had never told Margareth how pretty Mary was, and she came in half blushing at her own self consciousness, Margareth could hardly take her eyes off her” (Gaskell, 1994:28)

Her beauty attracted Harry Carson. She met him in secret after finishing her work in Miss Simmond. She had a dream that someday she would marry Harry Carson, the son of a mill owner. By marrying Harry Carson she would get pleasure and become a lady. As it stated in:

“So, she turned on her pillow and feel a sleep dream of what was often in her waking thoughts; of the day when she should ride from church in her carriage, with wedding bells ringing, and take up her astonished father, and drive away from the old dim work-a-day court forever, to live in a grand house, where her father should have newspaper, and phamplets and pipes, and meet dinner everyday, and all day long if he liked.” (Gaskell, 1994:74).

She faced many problems in her life. She lived in pain and sadness. She lost her mother when she was 13 years old and her sorrowful appeared when she needed her mother to help her to overcome her problems. As it stated in:

“But Mary rubbed her eyes and sank back on her pillow, awake, and knowing it was a dream, and still, in all her troubles and perplexities, her heart called on her mother for aid and she thought ‘if mother had but

lived, she would have helped me” (Gaskell, 1994:25)

Mary thought about her two lovers, Harry Carson or Jem Wilson. She thought that by marrying Harry Carson she would be free from poverty, but she also knew that her father would disagree. Her father would be happy if she married with Jem Wilson. But Jem Wilson was a poor worker who was unable to fulfill her dream to be a lady. Mary also faced her father’s harsh. She felt that her father did not love her and changed after following Trade Union. He went to and was often angry. Mary paid less attention to her father. Morally, she was a good daughter for her father. She cared about her father and tried not to make him angry. As it stated in:

“That’s father step. And his shirt’s not ready!” She hurried to her irons and tried to make up for lost time.” (Gaskell, 1994:184).

Mary was a lovely daughter. She knew well about her father’s manner and how to comfort him when he felt sad. As it stated in:

“Mary sat on a stool at her father’s feet in old childish guise, and stole her hand into his, while his sadness infected her,.....”Mary, we must speak to our God to hear us, for man will not hearken; and, not know, when we weep tears o’blood” In an instant Mary understood the fact, if not the detailed that so weighed down her father’s heart. She pressed his hand with silent symphaty, she did not know to say, and was so afraid of speaking wrongly, that she was silent” (Gaskell, 1994:92)

Her pain was still continued. Her father was a murderer. He shot Harry Carson. Mary met dilemma when knowing that Jem Wilson was suspected as a murderer in that murder. She knew that her father was guilty, not Jem Wilson. It made her felt worse. Although she knew that her father was a murderer, but her love never ended to him. She wanted to be with him in his last time. As it stated in:

“Oh, Sir! Said Mary, springing forward, and catching hold of Mr. Carson’s arm, “My father is dying. Look at him, Sir. If you want death for death, you have it. Don’t take him away from me these last hours. He must go alone through death, but let me be with him as long as I can. Oh, Sir! If you have any mercy in you, leave him here to die!”
(Gaskell, 1994:344-255)

2.The Struggle of Low Economy Class Women in The 19th Century in England as Reflected in ‘Mary Barton’ Novel.

a.Economic Aspect

Great Britain was a pioneer of the industrial revolution which through great developments in industries in the early 19th century. The development could be seen in manufacturing which tried to get great investment to improve the profit. The other development was in Free Trade of new technology and the invention of new technology to support industry.

Industrial revolution created many factories which increased in job opportunities as well as wages. The factory system allowed for efficient and economic production of goods, thereby lowering the

cost of the end product. As a result, the standard of living for citizen was enhanced. By 1850, the factory system dominated Great Britain and resulting in more product being made available to a wider range of consumers. Britain has unlocked and developed a new source of energy. With practically unlimited power, the British economy had enormously increased its production of manufactured goods. The economy grew much faster than the number of people, average real income per person grew markedly.

As economic conditions improved late in the 19th century, women generally worked outside the home after marriage only in poor families. Many wives and teenagers in poor families worked. These conditions understated the enduring gap between rich and poor because industrial and urban development made society more diverse and less unified. Instead, economic specialization enabled society to produce more effectively, and its process created more new social group that it destroyed.

When women could support themselves, they had their entry to all the trades and professions, with a house of their own over their heads and bank account. They would own their bodies and be dictators in the social realm. In ‘Mary Barton’ novel, many women struggled in economic aspect. ‘Mary Barton’ novel stressed repeatedly the importance of women’s independence in economy through especially Mary Barton (as a main character).

At the beginning of the novel, the important of work for women was pointed out when John Barton declared that "I'd rather see her earning her bread by the sweat of her brow, as the Bible tells her should do aye, though she never got butter to her bread, that be like a do-nothing lady, worrying shopmen all mornings, and sreedding at her pianny all afternoon, and going to bed without having done to a good turn, to anyone of God's creatures but herself" (Gaskell, 1994:8).

This was the utterance of the old Barton, but undoubtedly, it was also the revelation of Gaskell belief that Mary must do something. Her father most practical thought was to get Mary apprenticed to a dressmaker although he had never left off disliking a factory girl on more account than one. So, Mary and her father began to look for such an opportunity. Days passed and Mary went out for it as her father became disheartened and indignant fo continuing failures and eventually she had her wish fulfilled.

Mary has engaged herself an apprentice to a certain Miss Simmonds, one millionaire and dressmaker. At Simmonds's home, Mary worked for two years without any remuneration on consideration of being taught the skill, and afterwards she was to dine and had tea here with a small quarterly salary. The researcher indicated her feminist stood as she was acknowledging the significance of work in women's life and insisting the women should make their own career decision independently.

So, it was the fact that Mary got many benefits from her employment since one

year later she became a girl who was "*far Superior in sense and spirit to the mother she mourned*" (Gaskell, 1994:29). It was labor that gave her the power and mind to assume an adult role though she was only a little girl less than 16 years old. It was due to Mary's employment that a woman deriving strenght and dignity from the ability to earn own living who was after being an apprentice of dressmaker. "*would have her ta at Simmonds, her food for the day was safe*" (Gaskell, 1994:67). Therefore, the function of work was matchless to Mary. That she supported the family, helped the poor, and later rescued her sweetheart Jem Wilson. And all of them were attributed to her employment which brought forth the autonomy in economy for her.

b.Social Aspect

As the first industrial country, England became more developed. Industrial Revolution indicated the dramatic transition from a way of life based on ownership of land to a modern urban economy. The chane from rural life to become urban life.

Industry, job opportunity, increased wages, and vision opened the way for a new class of citizen by the 1850s. The middle class was also sensitive to fashion, displaying their good fortune by the clothes they wore. Social life in Great Britain has moved significant change. The social changes were so swift and brutal. The middle class came to the life of upper class because they had power of economically and socially. The middle class got luxury and pleasure in their life style by concerning on fashion and it made them had good clothes.

Their activity were walking around the park, participating in a sport events, thanking carriages ride in Hyde Park, having picnic, and also having dinner with all luxurious.

The life style of middle class was so different with the low class. A low class lived with low paying, low skilled. They did not have anything and depended on their wages only. This condition made their life became worst. The struggle of low economy class women in social aspect could be seen in 'Mary Barton' novel. The reflection could be seen in Mary's aunt namely Esther. Esther was a pretty woman. She lived with Mary Barton's family in a slum area which was common in suffering condition. Esther spent her money in dress set for her pretty face. As it stated "*You see Esther spent her money in dress, thinking to set of her pretty face; and got to come home so late at night....*" (Gaskell, 1994:7).

The suffering of poverty in the 19th century in England made almost people, especially women, took all ways to solve their problems and to get out from the suffering of poverty, such as being a lady, leaving her family, and prostitution. Esther took one of those ways. She left her family and went with an officer to make her dream came true. As it stated "*My mind is, she's gone off with somebody*" (Gaskell, 1994:6). But she has taken a wrong way. Then, she lived in street without a man. An officer has left her alone.

From the explanation above, it can be said that Esther wanted to change her social life. She got bored with her life from suffering of poverty. She thought that being

a lady would give her a solution to be free from poverty. She did not care of her family, all of her family felt anxious about her. Mary Barton's mother died because she thought about Esther's mysterious disappearance deeply. Esther preferred went with an officer to stay with her family. She thought that after being a lady her life would be happy forever. Unfortunately, she has taken a wrong choice. Although, Esther's struggle to change her social life was not successful, it showed that in 'Mary Barton' novel there was the struggle of low economy class women to change her social life.

c. The Law and Justice Aspect

The law and Justice aspects in the 19th century were so significance differences between middle economy classes and low economy classes. The middle economy classes had more skills and master in every aspect than the low economy classes. The middle classes had a power to influence the law of court because they had power both economically and socially. So, it was very easy to master almost all aspects in that time.

The law of justice for low economy classes were underpressure. In 'Mary Barton' novel, there was a struggle of low economy class women to defend the fair justice. The reflection could be seen by Mary Barton (the main character). She struggled to get freedom for Jem Wilson from punishment of court. Mary knew that Jem Wilson was innocent. He was only suspected as a murderer in that case because he was the last person who met Harry Carson (the victim). She knew that the real

murderer was her father (John Barton) because she found the gun in a box at home. Harry Carson was killed by John Barton on Turned Street after the meeting between workers and masters. After killing Harry Carson, John Barton disappeared. He was gone and nobody knew where he was. As it stated *“No”, he said, faintly and mournfully. “it’s best as it is. I couldn’t eat, and it’s best to be off. I cannot be still at home. I must be moving.”* (Gaskell, 1994:187).

Mary Barton never gave up to prove that Jem Wilson was innocent. She did many efforts for Jem Wilson’s freedom. She thought that his alibi would save him. She consulted this idea to Job Leight (Margareth’s grandfather). As it stated *“Well, Job, you’ll not refused me this, I know. I won’t mind what you think, if you’ll help me as if he was innocent. Now suppose I know – I knew he was innocent – it’s only supposing, Job, - what must I do to prove it? Tell me, Job! Isn’t it called an alibi, the getting folk to swear to where to really was at the time.”* (Gaskell, 1994:234).

The alibi was that Jem was with Will when the shoot happened. Will was the witness and he could prove it. But, Will was in Liverpool and then Mary went to Liverpool to prove that Jem Wilson was innocent. Mary’s effort to prove Jem Wilson was innocent was successful. Jem was not guilty. As it stated *“...that the knowledge of it had weighed down the scale on the side of innocent, and ‘Not Gulty’ was the verdict that thrilled through the breathless court.”* (Gaskell, 1994:313).

In that tragedy, it showed that Mary Barton could prove that Jem Wilson was not guilty in a murderer case. She could get Jem’s freedom. Mary Barton showed that the low economy class could get fair justice. In that time, it was impossible for the low economy class to do it and it was successful.

d.Aesthetic Aspect

Feminist aesthetic sense was to identify a set of perspective that pursue certain questions about philosophical theories and their assumption regarding art, and aesthetic categories. Those who works in aesthetics inquired into the ways that gender influences the formation of ideas about art, artist, and aesthetic values.

In the 19th century in England, music halls and vaudeville theaters, the working class counterpanted of middle class opera and classic theater were enormously popular throughout Europe. Music was for recreation and entertainment for the working class. Music hall audiences were thoroughly mixed which may account for the fact that drunkenness, pregnancy before marriage, marital difficulties, and mother-in-law are favourite themes of broad jokes and bitter sweet songs.

In ‘Mary Barton’ novel, the researcher accentuated in aesthetic sense such as an idea which was well represented by Margareth Leigh. In this novel, Margareth struggled in aesthetic sense especially by singing. Her physically condition was not normal. She was a blind girl. But, she had an ambition to be a successful singer. Her close friend (Mary Barton) supported her to be a good singer. To make her dream come true,

Margareth studied music at the mechanic. She felt her ambition to be a singer would come true and Mary was very glad to hear that. Margareth realized that her struggle to get her dream as a singer with her blind eyes would be hard. She was very proud of herself, and she would tell her grandfather about her dream and made him surprise. But after she told him, she was very sad because her grandfather was not happy to hear that. Margareth felt so confused and decided to be a singer but she just sang at the Mechanic.

In 'Mary Barton' novel, the researcher found the struggle of low economy class women in getting her ambition in aesthetic sense, although her physic was not normal. She was a blind girl. But, she had a high spirit to make it came true. Margareth's effort was successful, and finally she became a singer.

e. Psychological Aspect

Psychological was important to acknowledge sex roles, status, and socialization in society as possible sources or causes of psychological difficulties. The aim of psychological was changed rather than adjustment. Psychological aspect in the 19th century in England was very sadness for the workers. Industrial revolution made almost workers were not ready to accept this condition. They did not have good skill and opportunity to follow it. So, many workers felt frustration to face this condition. The psychology of low economy class were they had lost their confident and many children became quite precocious.

In 'Mary Barton' novel, there was accentuate in Psychology such as an idea was well represented by Mary Barton. Her psychological aspect has shaped when she lost her mother at the age of 13 years old. She had limited education from the school. She just studied from her experiences. In the 19th century, the middle class' education did not equal to the low class' education. The middle class' education has taken almost entirely at home, and there were boarding school. They learnt French, drawing, dancing, music, and use of globes.

The low class's education was so different from the middle class' education. Most of the low class did not study in the school. They did not have much money to pay their school. The industrial revolution led to a population increased, but the change of surviving childhood did not improve throughout the industrial revolution. There was still limited opportunity for education. Children were expected to work. Employers could pay a child less than an adult.

In 'Mary Barton' novel, there was very clearly explanation about the different education condition between the middle class and the low class in that time. In 'Mary Barton', the author used many sentences which showed the different education between the middle class and the low class. The researcher could see in many words in this novel which the author used standard English language in narration. It was shown in the dialogue between persons from middle class as quoted " *No, do tell me. What were you fretting about, first place?*" " *I can't tell you just now, perhaps I may*

some time.” “*When?*” “*Perhaps this very evening, if it rises in my heart; perhaps never it’s a fear that sometimes I can’t abide to think about, and sometimes I don’t like to think on anything else...*” (Gaskell, 1994:42-43).

The author used non-standard English. It was used among low classes, as quoted “*Don ye think he’s th’ masters’ father, too? I’d be loth to have ‘em for brothers*” “*Eh, John! Donna talk so; sure there’s many and many a master as good or better nor us*” (Gaskell, 1994:60).

3.The Influence of Mary Barton as a low class woman in Surviving Her Life in the 19th Century in England as Reflected in ‘Mary Barton’ Novel

Mary Barton clearly demonstrated the struggle of low economy class women in surviving their lives in the 19th century. The plot of the novel also showed that on some occasions, at least, it was vital that woman exerted herself in the male sphere of action. To that extent, Mary Barton contributed to the mid-19th century project of re-imagining women and women’s roles.

Mary Barton novel told about love story, against the background of everyday life of Manchester’s poverty-stricken people in the 19th century in England with the representation of Mary Barton as an heroine, running not only the household but also her father’s accounts, rescuing her lover, making difficult choices and against advice, vocalising her feeling in court, had all been seen as voicing women’s experiences of the author. So, Mary Barton has influenced

women of low economy class in surviving their life in the 19th century in England.

Socially, the characteristics of Mary Barton was a poor girl. She lived in a slum area in Manchester. Poverty was a part of her circumstances. She cared about the suffering of her neighbour such as Mrs. Davenport. Mary supported Mrs. Davenport’s life and motivated her to be a stronger widow than ever. She worked in a factory as a sewer. She got money in order to fulfill her children’s food. Mary’s help also has changed Davenport’s life better. She knew how to thank. She made a shirt collar for Mary Barton’s father.

Mary Barton also cared to Margareth’s problems. Mary gave her advices and it has influenced Margareth’s decision to be a singer but only in Mechanics. Mary’s influence in low class’ life started when she knew that her father was a murderer. He shot Harry Carson and she found the gun in a box at home. The finding terrified her. Mary knew that Jem Wilson was suspected as a murderer because he was the last person who met Carson. Mary who knew the real murderer wanted to prove that Jem was innocent. Then, Mary set an alibi. When the murder happened, Jem was with Will. She went to Liverpool to prove that Jem was innocent. Mary’s effort to prove it was successful. Jem was not guilty. Jem proved that he was not a murder. Then, John Barton appeared to make confession. He knew that he has killed a man, he felt guilty for that and asked Mr. Carson to forgive him.

In this case, Mary Barton’s influence appeared when she has succeeded to prove

that Jem was innocent. After this tragedy, the relationship between middle class and low class was not too sharp anymore. Mary Barton's voice in a court has changed the condition of social life in the 19th century in Manchester. In this novel, Gaskell focused on the problems of women in the 19th century in England. In 'Mary Barton' novel, Gaskell used the industrial revolution theme to criticize the dominant ideology that separated sex to make a feminist statement about women's need for meaningful work, and affirm their fitness for participation in the public sphere.

Conclusion

'Mary Barton' novel was written by Elizabeth Gaskell in 1845. It has a close relationship with the social condition of England in the 19th century as indicated by Industrial Revolution.

Mary Barton described the struggle of low economy class women in surviving their lives. This novel was based on Gaskell's experience when she became a wife of a minister local unitarian chapel.

Gaskell had an idea, opinion and sympathy to the social condition in that time. Mary Barton showed that there were ways which were used by low economy class women to struggle in surviving their life. The struggle was in many aspects, such as economy aspects, social aspects, law and justice aspects, aesthetic aspects, and psychological aspects. Mary Barton also has influenced low economy class women in the 19th century in surviving their lives. Mary Barton's characteristics was a portrayal of Elizabeth Gaskell's life.

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