

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

Many literary works which were produced in England in the Victorian Era portray the condition of the society. Many fictions captured the oppression experienced by the working-class people. Some authors who wrote those fictions show how paupers and working-class treated unfairly in the society. *North and South* is a novel which tells about some social problems in Victorian era.

*North and South* is a novel by English author, Elizabeth Cleghor Gaskell published in 1854. Gaskell herself was born in London on September 29, 1810 and lived in Manchester. She wrote *North and South* to illustrate social problem faced by the working class in her era. The novel talks about social issues in industrial era, like: social classes, the life of working class people and romance.

Victorian society was divided into social classes. They were upper, middle, working or lower class. The working-class was part of lower class. "The lower class was divided into two sections: the working class (laborers), and the poor" (Radja 2014:23). The lower and working classes lived deplorable conditions meanwhile, the lives of the working class were better than the lower class. The working-class people have jobs, money and some of them have their own houses. The job that they had were unskilled factory, labor, sweeper, and more. However, the salary is small. The poor are the poverty, vagrant, and beggar. The poor did not have money and house.

*North and South* also tells about class conflict. Class conflict or class struggle is a situation of people who live in stratification and get into disagreement between the upper and lower classes. According to *Longman Dictionary English* "class struggle (also class war). In

Marxist theory, political opposition and the fight for economic power between capitalists and the proletariat". The writer concludes this that state means the conflict between the employers and employees due to different economies. In conclusion, there is a conflict between the good financial people and the people who have financial problems, which ends up injustice in society.

*North and South* is a novel that illustrates the life of the working-class in the industrial city in the Victorian era. This novel presents an industrial city named Milton where there are many factories. Most working-class people in Milton are working in the factories. The main character of *North and South* is Margaret Hale.

The working-class people who work in the factories earn income only from that job. The employers crave high income, "The novel depicts the industrial world of the northern town at a point of crisis: a deepening conflict between capital and labor amid a trade downturn, rising competition, disputes over wages, intensified union activity and strikes..."(Knesevic 2011:88). The rising competition in industrial cities urges the ambition of employers to increase their income, and that ambition brings injustice acts to their employees. It puts the workers live in a difficult situation. The employers oppress the working-class people and hardly care about them.

The oppression could be seen in their treatment of working-class people. They pay the workers low salaries and even cut their wages. As the result, the working-class people face a lack of money and food. The writer believes that Gaskell is trying to present the real situation based on her perspective in this novel, particularly about economic oppression suffered by the working-class people.

The economic oppression in the novel seems like a modern slavery. Modern slavery is hiring people, but they paid improperly. The money is enough for getting food only. The

employers do the oppression to the employees. The employees are hired but get less money. The employers get an advantage over the employees and the employers are stingy.

In this research, the writer chooses to analyze and identify the economic oppression by the employers of employees. The writer believes that oppression and social life in the Victorian era are important to discuss. In conclusion, the readers know how social life in old England due to social injustice.

Economic oppression is seen in the novel through the social injustice perpetrated by employers against employees. This research focuses on the oppression that is portrayed in that novel. Economic oppression is low wages for the unskilled workers. The low wages are insufficient for the workers. The laborer's lives become miserable by the lack of money. Poverty and suffering in the lives of the lower class in the Victorian era often appear in Charles Dickens's works, like *Hard Time* and *Oliver Twist*. Charles Dickens also mentions the working-class people who are oppressed by the employer. In his works, Charles Dickens seems to consider that the employer participates in poverty and oppression caused by the employer or the middle class.

Several authors describe the oppression related to class stratification and economic exploitation. Other upper classes are superior and treat the lower class unfairly. So, several authors describe the condition of society or the lower class in England in order to depict the poverty or the apprehensive life of the low class. Economic oppression is linked to class conflict and social stratification. The authors who discuss poverty, economy exploitation, and exploitation class tell the reader about underprivileged people in England during Victorian era. Additionally Dickens tells his reader about the poor people. "Charles Dickens's works had a social mission, to make the readers take a note of underprivileged people of the Victorian society so that they could take action to improve their plight" (Gholami and Joodaki, 645).

## 1.2 Identification of the Problems

*North and South* is a story about life in England, particularly in Milton, in the industrial era. This novel portrays the lives of working-class people who live in suffering due to bad treatment of their employers and the little money as their salaries given by the employers. Their life is so far from proper even after they work very hard. The writer assumes that their sufferings in life are mostly caused by the unfair treatment of the employers, who are eager to earn as much money as they want by neglecting the needs of the employees. It is presumably that Gaskell has tried to capture the social condition in this novel so that people can realize what harms this industrialization can cause to the lower-class people. Gaskell presents the economic oppression in the novel through unfair treatment by the employer to the employees.

## 1.3. Review of Related Studies

There are many studies and discussions about *North and South*. Many scholars used this novel for their research. The writer has collected several studies that discuss and analyze the aspects and conflicts in the novel.

The aspects of the novel had analyzed by Lia Khalisa entitled “An Analysis of Several Aspects Reflected in Elizabeth Gaskell’s Novel “*North and South*”(2014). In this study, Khalisa discusses some aspects which relate to human life as reflected in the *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. Those aspects are economic, social, and environment. Khalisa examines those aspects between the places, the people, and the condition of the places in the novel. The writer analysis those aspects in two places presented in the novel. They are Milton as an industrial city and Helston as a rural area. Most of those aspects are related to human life. By reading this study the writer knows that the industrial city is causing some conflicts in society and for the environment. It gives the reader’s comprehension that the lives of

working-class people are the victims of the conflict. The results of this study present Milton is an awful place for people's health, social life, and shortage of money.

The next research is a discussion about the conflict in *North and South* by Julie Kloučková entitled "The conflict of masters and men in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton* and *North and South*"(2021). This research tells about the conflict between master and men in two novels by Elizabeth Gaskell. This study examines how people from the middle class or the capital holder treat employees. The differences between the social classes evoke the unfair treatment of working-class people by employers. In addition, Kloučková differentiates the nature of the characters and the strike in the two novels. Kloučková not only discusses the conflict of the novel but also the bad effects of the industrial era on the working class. The bad effect is the injustice treatment that working-class people through in the industrial city. They are child labor, tokens as their wages, unhealthy condition, starvation and no social security. The result of this study helps the writer understand more about working-class people's misery and oppression by middle class in industrial cities.

The next study is entitled "Gaskell's Questioning of the Victorian Class System in *North and South*" by Fatma Kalpakli. Kalpakli in her article examines the Victorian system, social aspects, and Victorian culture as described in Gaskell's novel "*North and South*"(2010). Kalpakli analyzes the conflict between the working class and the middle class. Kalpakli also differentiates the conditions and houses of the employers and employees. The employers stay in a comfortable house, whereas the employees stay in as mall and dirty house. The condition of employees' houses is pitiful. Moreover, this study discusses the differences in culture, habits, meals, and rules between the working-class and the middle class. This study explains Gaskell's purpose in writing the novel. The purpose is to persuade the reader to be aware of working-class people's suffering. This study helps the writer to find other forms of oppression in England toward the pauper and working class. The

diversification of classes makes it clear that working class people have been oppressed by the middle class.

The next research is an article written by Rusminiet.al. This study discusses some grievous things experienced by the lower class and working class in the Victorian era and how the situation in England at that time. This research is entitled “The Reflection of the Working-class Life Condition During the Victorian Era Found in *Oliver Twist*” (2019). The novel used as the object of this research is different from that used in this thesis. However, this study discusses the life of working class and lower class people in the Victorian era and social issues in the England in the Victorian era. This article demonstrates how hard the lives of the working class and lower class in the Victorian era. Rusmini, et.al start with the migrant worker from a village to the city, which begins with the condition of the air and environment in the city, which makes it difficult for residents from villages to adapt, insanitary life caused by the bad atmosphere from the chimneys, smallest labors, workhouse system, crime by children, and the last is too much convicts due to criminal activities. This research portrays the hard life of the lower class and it makes the writer have better understanding that Victorian era England was an unfriendly and unsaved place, especially for the lower classes. The problems that appeared in the Victorian era show that London was in a poor situation. Poor facilities and many prejudice, as well as injustices were commonly experienced by the lower-class people. The writer finds out that those cases are unfair for the lower and working-class people in England.

After reading the sources above the writer found that economic oppression in literary fictions seem to be created in order to describe and criticize the social condition. Most of the studies above discussed and criticized the conflict between employees and employers and differentiated their lives through several novels. In this research, the writer focuses on economic oppressions and how the oppression affects workers' lives.

## 1.4 Research Questions

This research is conducted to answer these following questions:

1. What are the forms of economic oppression suffered by the working-class people in Gaskell's novel *North and South*??
2. How do those economic oppressions affects the life of the working-class characters in the novel?

## 1.5. Scope of Research

This study focuses on analyzing social issues, particularly the economic oppression experienced by the working-class people in England as depicted in the novel *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. In this thesis, the writer limits this research into two discussions related to the topic. Firstly, the writer identifies the condition of the working-class people, then the kind of economic oppression that made the working-class people suffered as depicted in the novel. Secondly, the writer identifies several effects of economic oppression that working-class people through, especially as depicted through the characters named Mr. Higgin, Bessy and Mr. Boucher as the workers. The writer focuses on identifying the oppression act and some impacts on working-class people.

## 1.6. The Objective of the Research

The research aims are to examine and analyze the social issues in a fictitious industrial city named Milton in England as portrayed by the Victorian novel *North and South*. It presents conflicts between the capitalist and the working-class. It discusses the economic oppression in the Victorian era as suffered by the working-class people in the novel. This study findings show that the working-class people are oppressed economically by their employers. After understanding the condition of the workers, and the form of oppression

faced by the workers, the writer carries on to find the effects of the oppressions to the characters' life. The writer hopes this research will be able to help the readers to understand the forms of economic oppression and the impacts of them to the working-class people.

