

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer explains the introduction of the research, consisting of the Background of The Study, Identification of The Study, Research Question, Objective of The Study, and Sequence of The Writing.

1.1. Background of The Study

Literature is a human imagination that reflects the real social life of society (cultural, political, historical, religious, and economic fields) embodied in a work. The work referred to here is a work that contains artistic value, in the form of poetry, drama, fiction or non-fiction novels, and others. Because literature is a reflection of the social life of society, a literary work contains social problems or symptoms that are common in society. As well as Problems of Economy, Social Culture, Social Status, Crime, and Gender, Personal Struggles have to be faced by one specific gender, in this case, Female (Woman).

Wellek and Warren (1963, 73-74) emphasized that literature serves as a vivid representation of both life and social existence. They explored a wide array of literary forms, noting that these works often encapsulate the diverse elements and experiences found in our everyday lives. According to their analysis, literature can reflect everything from personal emotions and relationships to broader societal issues and cultural norms. This broad and inclusive perspective on literature highlights its ability to encompass virtually all aspects of human experience. As a result, discussions about literature are continually evolving and remain an endless source of exploration and debate, as noted by Karina (2021, 1). This ongoing dialogue underscores the dynamic and ever-relevant nature of literary studies, which continually adapts to new insights and interpretations of human experience.

Historically, women have encountered numerous forms of discrimination and inequality within society. For centuries, they were systematically deprived of fundamental rights such as voting, which denied them a voice in the political sphere. Educational opportunities were often restricted, limiting their ability to acquire knowledge and skills on equal footing with men. Additionally, women have faced significant disparities in the workplace, including unequal pay for performing the same work as their male counterparts. Gender-based violence has been another pervasive issue, manifesting in various forms of abuse and harassment. Moreover, women have frequently been constrained by limited opportunities for career advancement, facing barriers that obstruct their professional growth and economic independence. These systemic inequalities have long contributed to the marginalization and oppression of women, reflecting deep-seated societal biases that have persisted over time.

The struggle for women's rights has been ongoing, with movements like feminism advocating for gender equality and challenging traditional gender roles. Women have fought for the right to make decisions about their bodies, to have access to healthcare and reproductive rights, and to be treated as equals in all aspects of life.

According to an Article titled Gender Roles in Society | Definition & Examples, society's treatment of women has undergone significant changes over time, with women's roles evolving from being relegated to the domestic sphere to becoming more

independent and equal in the workplace and society. The traditional gender roles for women have been based on characteristics such as helpfulness, passivity, and nurturing, which have been deeply ingrained in society (Krainc, Kim, 2023). However, these roles have been challenged and transformed over the years, especially with the rise of feminism and the increasing participation of women in the workforce.

One novel that brings women struggle in its story is *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte. *Agnes Grey* is a poignant and daring exploration of the societal constraints and injustices faced by women in 19th-century England. Through the eyes of Agnes Grey, a young governess, the novel delves into the struggles of maintaining dignity and love in a society that often undervalued and disrespected women. This novel takes place in the north of England during the first half of the 1800s.

The novel begins with Agnes narrating her family background and the circumstances that led to her employment as a governess. Agnes is the daughter of a clergyman and her mother was born into a wealthy family that disinherited her when she married a man with no wealth. Agnes is dedicated and idealistic, believing she can make a positive difference in the lives of her charges. However, she soon faces the harsh realities of her chosen profession. Her first assignment is at the Bloomfield household, where she is tasked with teaching the unruly and undisciplined children of Mrs. Bloomfield. Agnes struggles to gain the respect and authority necessary to control the children, but her efforts are hindered by the parent's lack of support and discipline. Eventually, she is dismissed from the position, realizing that her inability to make a significant impact is due to the parents' lack of concern for their children's education.

Agnes then takes a position at the Murray household, where she tutors the daughters of Mr. Murray. The Murray girls, Rosalie and Matilda, are spoiled, vain, and completely uninterested in their studies. Agnes again faces the challenge of gaining their respect and obedience, but she discovers that her efforts are futile in the face of their parents' indulgence and neglect. Despite her frustrations, Agnes forms a close bond with one of the maids, Nancy, who becomes the only source of friendship and support in the otherwise hostile environment. As Agnes continues to navigate the challenges of her profession, she meets Edward Weston, the local curate, and they form a close friendship.

In Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey*, the writer noted that Bronte thoroughly explores important themes related to social class, the treatment of people from lower social standings, and the value of maintaining personal integrity. Throughout the story, Bronte provides a detailed and often critical look at how women are treated in a male-dominated society. The novel illustrates women's various difficulties as they strive to keep their dignity and independence while dealing with societal pressures that often diminish their value. Bronte's examination of these issues highlights the broader problems of class inequality and gender discrimination, showing how social structures can obstruct individual self-respect and personal freedom. By presenting these themes thoughtfully, *Agnes Grey* offers a deep reflection on the challenges of staying true to oneself while navigating a strict and often unfair social system.

1.2. Identification of The Study

After reading the novel *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte, the writer found some social issues that the main character faced:

1. Portrayal of the social injustices and prejudices prevalent in Victorian society, exploration of morality, class divides, and the challenges encountered by women of that time.
2. The struggles of its protagonist, Agnes, as a governess, highlight the harsh realities and limitations of her profession, the mistreatment of governesses, and the moral dilemmas.
3. Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues in the novel. Agnes feels alienated from society due to her status as a nanny and has difficulty integrating with her employer's family.
4. Agnes has a good education but has to work as a nanny to support herself. This reflects the limited opportunities available for women to utilize their education effectively, as well as the challenges of finding decent and adequate employment.

1.3. Research Question

From the Identification of the study above, the writer emphasizes the analysis to answer these questions as follows:

1. What are the various and multifaceted struggles that Agnes Grey faced as a woman governess from a non-wealthy family in Northern England during the Victorian Era?
2. How does Agnes Grey navigate and respond to the various struggles?

1.4. Objective of The Study

Based on this research question statement above, the writer determines two objectives of the study as follows:

1. To describe the struggles that the protagonist faced as a woman from a non-wealthy family in the Victorian Era.
2. To find out on how Agnes Grey to navigate and respond the various struggles.

1.5. Sequence of The Writing

There are five chapters in this research. The first chapter serves as an introduction and includes the following topics: background, identification of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, and sequence of the writing. Chapter 2 is titled "Literature Review" and it gives a summary of many related studies as well as the structuralism approach, which includes the novel's core elements of character, plot, setting, and theme. Methodology, which is covered in Chapter 3, includes Methodological Design, Method of Data Analysis, Method of Data Collection, and Methodological Design. In the fourth chapter, study findings, and data collection linked to Bronte's novel Agnes Grey are discussed. Lastly, Chapter Five serves as the conclusion, including the writer's recommendation and a summary of the findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer discusses Literary Preview, which consists of Previous Studies and the Structuralism Approach.

2.1. Previous Study

Previous studies that are relevant to the writer's research are included in this sub-chapter. Certain data can be acquired from comparable or related previous research. The same issue and approach have been covered by other writers, according to the writer's analysis.

The first study is written by Kaushik (2012) with the title *The Elements of Feminism in the novel Agnes Grey*. This study aims to reveal the social classification in Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey* novel using a Marxist approach. The analysis is done by determining two objects: the first is analyzing the novel based on the structural elements, and the second is analyzing the problem of social classification by using the Marxist approach. The result of the study is that the structural elements of the novel, such as character and characterization, setting of place and time, plot, point of view, and theme, shape into one unity in the novel, reflecting the social classification of women during the Victorian era.

The second is an article written by Rochmah (2015) titled *The Woman's Struggle of Being a Governess in Anne Bronte's Agnes Grey*. The writer used feminist literary theory to analyze the character of Agnes Grey, a governess who navigates the complexities of her position in the mid-19th century. Marxist feminism is also applied to analyze the governess as a working woman and her role as a source of oppression. Additionally, the thesis attempts to connect certain points with Islamic perspectives. The analysis reveals that Agnes's experiences as a governess are a microcosm of the societal constraints and expectations placed upon women during this period. The author argues that Agnes's story serves as a commentary on the limited choices available to women, particularly those from lower social classes, and how they were often forced to conform to societal norms.

The third study is written by Saputri (2017) with the study titled *Gender Oppression in Anne Bronte's Agnes Grey*. This study uses a Marxist approach to analyze the novel "*Agnes Grey*" by Anne Bronte, focusing on the portrayal of women's struggles during the Victorian era. The result of the study is that the novel presents a nuanced portrayal of women's struggles, emphasizing the need for women to assert their self-respect and dignity in the face of oppression.

There are some similarities between the three earlier studies and this research which is center on the struggles faced by women in the Victorian era, particularly through the character of Agnes Grey. While the earlier studies primarily focus on feminist and Marxist theories, this research incorporates structuralism alongside feminism. This additional perspective allows for a broader analysis of how narrative structure and form contribute to portraying women's struggles. Furthermore, the earlier studies often focus on specific themes or aspects of Agnes's experiences (like her role as a governess or societal critique), while this research aims for a broader analysis of her overall struggles, such as economic, social, and gender-related challenges.

Significant differences between earlier studies and this research are in the approach, Kaushik and Saputri rely on a Marxist framework, while Rochmah and this research use feminist literary theory. However, Rochmah added connection between her results with Islamic perspective while this research focuses more on Agnes's struggles and personal resilience.

The second difference is shown in the focus of research, Kaushik and Saputri address societal and structural critiques, while Rochmah and the writer explore women's struggles. Furthermore, this research uniquely centers on Agnes's personal strategies and adaptive responses to these struggles.

From several differences above, the writer concludes that this research complements the previous studies by shifting the focus from broader societal critiques to an exploration of individual agency and personal growth.

2.2. Structuralism Approach

Structuralism is a way of thinking about the world which is mainly related to responses and descriptions of the structures of literary works which are assumed to be phenomena that have structures that are interconnected with each other. The nature of the structure will be meaningful if it is connected to other structures. This network of relationships is an orderly structure that will later form a standard system in literary research.

According to Junus (1990: 1), structuralism is often understood as a form. For this reason, structuralism is often considered simply modern formalism because there are similarities between the two, namely that they both seek the meaning of the text itself. However, Levi-Strauss and Propp found that structuralism is also related to philosophy because it can describe the thoughts of the store owner. This means that structuralism in modern literature and traditional literature will remain connected to things outside the structure (Endraswara, 2013: 49).

Structuralism believes that literature can be understood and explained based on its literary system which forms a kind of rules for the creation of literary works (Faruk, 2012: 157).

According to Endraswara (2013: 50-51), the basic idea of structuralists is the rejection of mimetic or those who consider literary works as imitations of reality, and expressive theories, or those who consider literary works as expressions of the author's feelings and opposes the assumption that literary works are a medium of communication between author and reader. Structuralism also exists as an effort to complement expressive and historical literary research. Structuralism, expressivism, and historical research have failed to understand true literary works because they always relate literary works to other fields.

According to Alok (2022), Structuralism is a literary theory that appeared in the middle of the 20th century, mostly in France and Russia. It is defined by the belief that everything in the world is part of a greater whole and that recognizing a particular object necessitates knowing about this bigger structure. This method places a strong emphasis on figuring out and understanding the underlying patterns, codes, and structures that drive human culture and society, including literature.

Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss are two key figures in structuralism. Saussure, considered the father of structural linguistics, introduced the concepts of *langue* and *parole*, and the signifier and signified, revolutionizing the study of language and semiotics. Claude Lévi-Strauss applied structuralist ideas to anthropology, analyzing cultural phenomena like myths and kinship systems to uncover universal cognitive structures. Their work demonstrates the broad applicability and profound impact of structuralist theory across various fields.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the structuralism movement in literature had a significant impact, especially in France, where academics like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes applied the movement's ideas to literature and other fields. The movement questioned conventional ideas of authorship and the reader's role in text interpretation, which had a profound impact on literary theory and criticism (Alok, 2022).

Based on the opinions of experts regarding structuralism which have been explained above, the writer can draw the conclusion that structuralism is thought that emphasizes the analysis of literary texts by identifying and examining the underlying structures, codes, and patterns that govern their meaning. This approach focuses on the formal and narrative aspects of a text, often disregarding authorial intent, historical context, and individuality of the text itself.

Structuralism also views literary works as stand-alone figures and does not pay too much attention to elements outside the literary work. The relationship between elements in a literary work should have a purpose and be aesthetic. There are some elements of the novel "Agnes Grey" by Anne Bronte that need to be analyzed using the Structuralism Theory of literature, such as Character, Theme, Setting, and Plot of the story.

2.2.1. *Characters*

In the structuralism theory of literature, character analysis is a crucial aspect of understanding the underlying structures that organize literary works. Structuralists believe that characters in a story are not isolated entities but are part of a larger system of relationships and patterns. This approach emphasizes the intrinsic elements of the story, focusing on how characters interact with each other and the plot to create meaning.

Character is the individuals within the narrative. Character analysis involves examining the roles, functions, and relationships of characters within a narrative structure, this involves identifying how characters interact with other elements like plot, theme, and setting to create meaning. This approach focuses on the structural elements that contribute to the meaning and significance of the characters, rather than their individual personalities or motivations.

Abrams (1981: 20) defines character as a person depicted in dramatics and narrative works who is interpreted by the reader as having moral and dispositional qualities expressed in what they say and do. Abrams' definition emphasizes the reader's role in constructing the character, highlighting the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. This perspective underscores the idea that character is not a fixed entity but rather a product of the reader's interpretation.

By examining the structural elements of a story, such as character development, plot, and characterization, structuralists aim to uncover the deeper patterns and

themes that underlie the narrative, revealing the universal features of human consciousness and how stories are told across different genres and cultures. For instance, in a study on Bryce's character development in Wendelin Van Draanen's novel *Flipped*, the researcher used structuralism to analyze the character's progression through the story, identifying how the character's values, commitments, and insights changed over time (Karina, 2021).

Based on Griffith (1986), there are two categories of characters. The first is dynamic characters, who undergo significant transformations during the narrative. The progressions include the situation, shift in perspective, values, commitment, and each progression that leads to a certain advancement inside the character. Moreover, characters that do not significantly change during the narrative are considered static characters.

Robert and Jacob (1987) describe that in analyzing a literary character, the writer begins by determining the character's outstanding traits. They distinguish two types of characters: main or major characters and minor characters. Major characters are the most important characters in the story, and the story revolves around them. However, they cannot stand alone and need other characters to make the story more convincing and lifelike. Minor characters are less important than main characters.

2.2.2. *Plot*

In literary works, the plot refers to the sequence of events that make up the story. The plot is what drives the narrative forward and keeps the reader engaged. Plot is a fundamental aspect of literary criticism, as it allows readers and scholars to delve deeper into the intricate workings of a literary work, exploring its narrative structure, character development, and thematic underpinnings. At its core, plot analysis examines how the events in a story are arranged and sequenced, and how these elements contribute to the overall impact and meaning of the work (Ashida & Kojiri, 2018).

According to Forster (1927), a plot is the sequence of events within a story, but with a crucial emphasis on causality. According to Forster, a plot is not just a sequence of events but rather the deliberate arrangement of those events to create drama and reveal the cause-and-effect relationships between them. This definition highlights the importance of causality in shaping the narrative and creating a compelling story.

Plot is the whole sequence of events that are related to each other in the story. Generally, the plot has a conventional structure in literary works according to Chartes (1987: 136-137) divided into five parts such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

1. The exposition introduces the main characters, setting, and basic situations of the story. The exciting force, also known as the inciting incident, is an event that forces the protagonist into motion.
2. Rising action is the part of the story where the action builds towards the climax. It includes the introduction of any remaining characters and the escalation of conflicts and tensions.

3. Climax is the peak of tension and conflict in the story. It is the moment where the protagonist faces the central conflict and makes a crucial decision that determines the direction of the story's ending.
4. Falling action follows the climax and is characterized by a decline in tension and drama. This stage ties up loose ends and concludes any subplots or minor conflicts.
5. Resolution also referred to as the catastrophe, is the final stage of the story where the consequences of the climax are revealed. It provides a resolution to the story, often with a tragic or dramatic conclusion.

In addition to this traditional five-act structure, some literary works may employ more complex or unconventional plot devices, such as nonlinear narratives, multiple storylines, or the incorporation of flashbacks and foreshadowing (Piper and Toubia, 2023).

2.2.3. *Setting*

Setting analysis in literary works plays a crucial role in understanding the context, atmosphere, and overall impact of a piece of literature. The setting of a story encompasses the time, place, and social environment in which the narrative unfolds, providing a backdrop that influences the characters and events within the plot. Through a detailed examination of the setting, readers can gain deeper insights into the themes, characters, and symbolism present in the text.

According to Abrams (2015), setting is crucial in literature as it provides the backdrop against which characters' actions take place and influences their behavior. The setting often contributes to the mood and can act as a character in its own right, shaping the narrative. Moreover, Belsey (2002) highlights that the setting is essential for understanding the power dynamics and social structures within a literary work. It often serves as a reflection of the ideological forces at play in the narrative.

In conclusion, analyzing the setting in literary works is essential for comprehending the full depth and impact of a story. The setting, which includes the time, place, and social environment of the narrative, not only establishes the backdrop against which the plot unfolds but also significantly influences the characters and their actions.

1. *Setting of Time*

The setting of place in literature establishes the temporal framework within which the story unfolds, influencing the mood and thematic elements of the narrative. The time setting indicates when the action takes place and can evoke specific historical, cultural, or symbolic associations that enrich the reader's interpretation of the text. Time setting serves as a crucial element in situating the story within a specific era and context.

2. *Setting of Place*

The setting of place refers to the geographical location, physical environment, and spatial context in which the narrative events occur. The place setting not only provides a backdrop for the story but also influences the characters' experiences and relationships within the narrative.

2. *Setting of Social*

The setting of social conditions in literary works encompasses the cultural, political, and societal context in which the story unfolds, reflecting social norms, class structures, and interpersonal dynamics. The social setting adds complexity and realism to the story, portraying the characters' interactions within a broader societal framework.

From the explanations provided earlier, it is clear that analyzing the elements of time, place, and social environment within literary works allows readers to gain a more profound understanding of how these settings influence the overall meaning and significance of a text. By closely examining when and where a story takes place, as well as the social context in which it unfolds, readers can better appreciate how these factors shape the narrative, characters, and themes. This detailed exploration helps uncover how the setting contributes to the impact of the story, offering insights into the author's intentions and the broader messages conveyed through the text. Understanding these elements can enhance the reader's appreciation of the literary work and its deeper implications.

2.2.4. Theme

The theme is a central idea or message in a literary work, and it can be conveyed through various elements such as plot, characters, symbolism, and language. Determining theme is a critical element of reading and understanding literature, but some readers, especially children, may struggle with this task (Lord, 2014). Identifying and analyzing themes requires readers to move beyond the surface level of a text and consider the deeper meanings and significance.

The theme is often universal in nature, touching on fundamental human experiences, emotions, and values. Literary works can explore a wide range of themes, from love and loss to identity and morality. Skilled writers use themes to delve into the complexities of the human condition and to engage readers on an intellectual and emotional level. Theme can be expressed explicitly through the narrator's or characters' statements, or it can be implied more subtly through the various literary elements. Readers must carefully examine a text, looking for patterns, motifs, and symbolic representations that point to the central theme. Analyzing the theme also involves considering the author's purpose and perspective, as well as the historical, social, and cultural contexts that shaped the work.

2.3. Theory of Feminism

According to Yoder (1987), feminist literary criticism does not mean criticism of women, criticism about women, or criticism about women authors; the real meaning of feminist literary criticism is that critics look at literature with a special awareness that there is a gender that has a lot to do with our culture, literature, and life. It is what makes the difference between them that also makes the difference in the author, the reader, the characters, and the external factors that influence a particular work. Feminist literary criticism is a strong base to unify the stance that a woman can read as a woman, write as a woman, and interpret literature as a woman.

According to Weedon (1987), feminism is a politics that changes the relationship of life forces between women and men in society where these forces include all structures of life, aspects of life, family, culture education, and power.

Feminism was born around the late 1960s in the West with several important factors influencing it. Since the late 1960s when feminism was developed as part of the international women's movement, feminist literary criticism has also been considered an interesting choice of study because it offers the view that female readers and critics bring different perceptions, understandings, and conjectures to the experience of reading literary works when compared to men (citation).

By Culler (1983) feminist literary criticism is "reading as a woman", which is the reader's awareness that there are important gender differences in the meaning and meaning struggles of literary works. According to Suharto (2013), the problem of feminist literary criticism develops from various sources, such as readings about women, with the help of other sciences such as history, psychology, and anthropology, and reconsiders the literary theories that feminist critics already have. The study of sexual differences in literature is considered a new life in criticism based on the feelings, thoughts, and responses that come out of women based on their views on the role and position of women in the literary world.

Moreover, Humm (1986) highlights some of the pioneers of feminist ideas in literature such as Simone de Beauvoir, Kathie Millet, Betty Friedan, and Germain Greer. These figures ask several questions that are closely related to feminism as if they have nothing to do with literature and culture, namely as Suharto (2013) said as follows:

Apakah atau siapakah perempuan? Mengapa perempuan sering digambarkan salah oleh penulis laki-laki dalam karya-karyanya? Apakah politik seksual itu? Bagaimana politik seksual ini digambarkan dalam sastra? Mengapa ada bentuk-bentuk anggapan yang tetap terhadap perempuan dan mengapa pula perempuan mau menerimanya?

The steps for applying feminist theory in a study will be attached below:

1. Critical Reading: Reading texts with a focus on gender representation and how women are portrayed. This includes an analysis of female characters, their role in the plot, and how they are treated in the narrative.
2. Social Structure Analysis: Assessing how patriarchal structures or gender norms affect the production and interpretation of literary texts. For example, analyzing how the text reflects or challenges existing social norms.
3. Reconstruction and Reinterpretation: Exploring perspectives that are often overlooked in literary texts, such as the unheard voices of women or the role of women in specific cultural and historical contexts. Rewriting or reinterpreting texts from a feminist perspective.
4. Comparison of Works: Comparing how different authors and historical periods deal with issues of gender and power in their works. This helps to understand changes in gender representation over time.

5. Development of New Works: Using insights from feminist analysis to develop new literary works that are more inclusive and just, and to create more diverse and nuanced representations.
6. Application of Feminist Criticism Methods: Using critical methods such as narrative analysis, sexuality theory, and cultural studies to explore and assess literary texts with a feminist approach.

Feminist theories in literature have evolved significantly and continue to adapt to social and academic changes. Through the application of these approaches, researchers can better understand how gender affects and is affected by literary works, as well as how literary texts play a role in shaping cultural understandings of gender.

