

Labor Issues In Elizabeth Gaskell's *North And South* And Charles Dickens *Oliver Twist*

Rany Syafrina

Staff Pengajar Program Studi Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris STBA Haji Agus Salim Bukittinggi

Abstract

Victorian Era is one of the most influence eras in English literature as well as history as the effect of industrial revolution that occur in Great Britain. Authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens try to record the situation of industrial revolution trough literature, both of them capture the image of workers as well as slump area during the Victorian Era. Elizabeth Gaskell in her *North and South* novel focus on women worker, she describes the poor condition of women worker as the result of poor wages as well as unsanitary work place. Charles Dickens in his *Oliver Twist* discusses how children have to work in early age to support their live and family. Both of them wrote about labor issue based on their personal experience, as the result the use of language and stand point in both Gaskell and Dickens represent their personal interest in labor issue.

Introduction

During Victorian era, Great Britain faced an industrial revolution that gave a great effect to the social condition such as the increasing number of poverty, slump areas, factories, and others. Industrial revolution is marked as an important movement and historical event that also influences the development of literature. In this period, some authors began to write about social issues including poverty, social changes, political issue, and so on which are caused by the industrial revolution. One issue that is commonly found in Victorian literature that will be discussed in this paper is the issue of labor that is appeared in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens.

What need to be noted about Victorian literature, it is an era where author mostly wrote about daily life or something that they have experienced of. If we relates the statement with the issue of labor which will be discussed further it can be said that most of author who wrote about labor issues are actually those who experienced them. The further description about the relation between labor issues and their personal experience will be discussed in the following explanation.

Labor Issue in Victorian Literature

Elizabeth Gaskell is one of Great Britain author who was famous during Victorian period, her writing is said to support the feminist issues of the period by describing the heroine characters that differ with the ideal concept of Victorian women. She is often placed side by side with the Bronte's sisters, even though her works are totally different with the Bronte's'. Both Gaskell and the Brontes mostly wrote about middle upper class where they have experience on it, their experience and knowledge about middle upper class represent in their literary works.

But what makes Elizabeth Gaskell differ from the Bronte is the fact that Gaskell is not only discussed the experience of middle upper class women but she is also inserting the issue of labor especially the issue of women workers as it is represented in her *North and South* novel. It is said that Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* is written based on her personal experience when living in industrial area Manchester. In the novel Gaskell uses character