

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender inequality has been one of the social issues which occurs for a very long time in which the problem is about women's subordination and men's domination. The term of this concept is called patriarchy. Patriarchy plays important role in society and it affects all life aspects in this world. Patriarchy, like carbon monoxide, is insidious because it is colorless, odorless, and invisible (O'Connor and Drury 6). The United Kingdom was one of the countries considered as patriarchal society before the women's suffrage in the 19th century which gradually changed the women's role there. Women's roles were strictly limited and bound by the society and by government regulations. They could not get the same recognition as men. British women in the late 19th century must struggle to get chances in education. Women in that time were human beings who had "to marry young, stay home and raise a family" (Murray).

War was one of the triggers of the changes. Some countries that joined a war successfully changed women's roles. It happened because the women had to replace the head of household position when their husbands were sent to war. This also happened during World War II. World War II was the second biggest war that has ever happened on this earth. It was a global military conflict that happened from 1939 to 1945. This war was the fighting of several countries, between the major Axis Power and the major Allied Power. The major Axis

Power consists of Germany, Italy, and Japan and the major Allied Power consists of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and United States (*World War 2 Countries*). Nazi Germany was one of the countries that gave big effects to the war. The German troops tried to get more places for Germans. One of the places they occupied was the Channel Islands. “The Channel Islands were the only British territory to be occupied by Germany during World War II, and as such gained a certain status in the mind of Adolf Hittler” (Stephenson 4).

The war also changed the British women’s roles. The United Kingdom was one of the countries whose troops were sent to the war, so when the men were at war, their wives must go to the men’s domain. The jobs that were undertaken by women during the war were mechanics, engineers, tank drivers, building ships, working in factories, making bombs and aircraft parts, air raid wardens, driving fire engines, plumbers, ambulance drivers, WRVS volunteers, nurses (Barrow). Even though some of the women were still in the women’s domain, they still felt the differences such as what they did out of their houses, went to public domain and what they did during the hard times of a world war. “Individual British women in the World Wars found new freedoms and opportunities in wartime – “like being let out of a cage,” in one woman’s words” (Goldstein 175). What happened on those women who changed their roles or got different lifestyle during the war is that they get consequences for getting either positive or negative judgment from the society around them.

“Britain was alone, but even more alone were Channel Islands” (Stephenson 8). When the island was invaded and occupied by Germany, the British government did not do anything in order to save it. As a small island, the British Channel Island was argued as an island that was not able to give any profit to be preserved. Guernsey Island, which belongs to Channel Island, was one of the Channel’s state occupied by Germany. There are so many books, history or others, which try to whether show, discuss even examine the hard condition during the occupation and one of the books genre is novel. Endraswara states literature is considered as mimesis (imitation) of the society, termed as mirror concept (80). The novel entitled *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* written by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows is one of the novels that contains of the depiction of the occupation period in Guernsey Island, the condition, situation, moreover, the society’s defense.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows shows the condition during the occupation of Guernsey by using that time as the setting of the story. This novel is considered unique because it is written in epistolary form in term of letters that are written between the characters. In the same year of the publication, this book became the winner of *Washington Post’s Best Book 2008 Award (The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society)*. The first author of the novel is Mary Ann Shaffer, an American who works as editor, librarian, and bookseller. According to *Barnes and Nobel’s* official website, Shaffer wrote this novel after getting the inspiration from her visit to Guernsey in 1976. She found new fascination of the island. She read some

books in the Guernsey airport bookstore that gave her much information about Guernsey. A book entitled *Jersey Under the Jack-Boot* gives her a particular interest in the German occupation of the Channel Islands. In the process of the writing, Shaffer got ill, so her niece, Annie Barrows, an author of children's literature, helped her finishing the story until its publication after her death. This is the first novel for both of them. Annie Barrows have written several books on some topics such as fortune telling, urban legends, and opera before branching into children's literature. In June of 2006, she released *Ivy and Bean*, the first award-winning book in a series about two young girls who become best friends in spite of their differences (*Our Reader's Guide to The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*).

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society tells about the year after the World War II, starting from January to November 1946, but the idea of the story is about the experiences of Guernsey society during the Nazi Germany occupation in World War II, their sufferings and their defense. The position and role of women during a war is also shown in this novel in which during the war, most women choose to be volunteers to help the war victims, such as being nurses or doing other voluntary works. It is what happens in Guernsey Island during the World War II.

Epistolary novels and diaries are among the most common forms here, and Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows's *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* offers many pleasures for Gentle Reads fans-the satisfactions of letter writing, characters both quirky and tragic, book

clubs, and, despite the undercurrent of misfortune and privation, an uplifting story. (Saricks 96)

This study mainly discusses a woman character named Elizabeth McKenna in the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. She is a British that lives in London but then she moves to Guernsey Island and chooses to settle there. Juliet Ashton is a character who has a very important role in this story because she helps the readers to gain much information about Elizabeth McKenna as the main character. Juliet corresponds with the members of a literary society whose name is *Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* and what she gets from those letters is many stories about a woman named Elizabeth McKenna.

The name of the literary society is taken from its members' favorite menu which is made by one of them. "Since there was scant butter, less flour, and no sugar to spare on Guernsey then, Will concocted a potato peel pie: mashed potatoes for filling, strained beets for sweetness, and potato peelings for crust" (56). Elizabeth is the portrait of the women in World War II. She becomes one of volunteers in that time. As the founder of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, she is described as a heroine by most of the Guernsey society, especially by the members of the literary society. On the one hand, the members of the literary society feel so amazed on her. On the other hand, someone argues that she is a disgusting woman. Elizabeth McKenna's role in the public domain during the World War II brings her into the consequences, which is on the society's judgment. She gets both the positive and the negative judgment from the

society. She gets positive or good judgment because of her heroic deeds in sacrificing her life for the war victims in Guernsey Island while for the negative or bad judgment she gets is caused by the deeds considered as immoral by the Guernsey society.

In the life and times of one Elizabeth McKenna alone, they have managed to give us a heroic portrait of a remarkable figure whose every action proves true to her neighbors and friends on the island, whose presence and influence is ever felt by Guernsey folk (a character who never even appears in the book!) (Kessler)

Subsequently, this study mainly discusses how a woman is viewed through the woman main character of Elizabeth McKenna's deeds.

The writer of this study applies the theory of feminist criticism suggested by Mary Wollstonecraft in her book entitled *A Vindication of The Rights of Women*. Feminist criticism is chosen since it is used to examine "the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson 83). According to the patriarchal traditional gender role, there are only two kinds of woman, the good and the bad one. In the novel of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, it is clear how a woman is viewed by the society because of her deeds and that limits her life. Elizabeth McKenna is called an angel because of her deeds, which agree with the patriarchal traditional gender roles. It is when she becomes one of the volunteers in helping the war victims, as a nurse and prisoner who sacrifices her life for other people. Whereas, when she breaks the

patriarchal rules, she is called a monster. She has similar lifestyle to the colonizers because of her relationship with one of them. They are not married when Elizabeth gave birth to their only one daughter.

The analysis continues to how Elizabeth McKenna acts as a whole woman, a woman who is not limited by stereotypical gender views. According to Mary Wollstonecraft, women should have their own right to take any kind of deeds they choose. Wollstonecraft states that “I do not wish women to take power over men; but over themselves” (Jenainati and Groves 27). The analysis is about how Elizabeth McKenna chooses every choice in her life. Some characters in the novel, in giving responses to Elizabeth’s monstrous image, show why Elizabeth McKenna does those “immoral” deeds. When she chooses certain kind of act, she thinks that she has to do that due some reasons behind the decision-making.

But dismissing these fanciful theories, and considering woman as a whole, let it be what it will, instead of part of man, the inquiry is whether she have reason or not. If she have, which, for a moment, I will take for granted, she was not merely to be the solace of man, and the sexual should not destroy the human character. (Wollstonecraft 57)

It can be seen that Wollstonecraft makes a point that woman should be perceived as the “whole” ones instead of being the humans whose space are limited and bound by patriarchal society. Here Wollstonecraft uses the word “man” in order to symbolize the patriarchy that is dominated by men’s interests. Thus, this study wants to observe how Elizabeth McKenna deeds as a woman is

accepted by the Guernsey society and how she lives on her own as a whole woman.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

The study focuses on the patriarchy and the society's judgment towards a woman character named Elizabeth McKenna in the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. The following are the formulated problems proposed in this study:

1. How does the Guernsey society respond to Elizabeth McKenna's heroic deeds?
2. How does the Guernsey society respond to Elizabeth McKenna's "immoral" deeds?
3. How does Elizabeth McKenna act as a whole woman, a woman who is not limited by stereotypical gender views?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to reach several objectives that are expected. The objectives are intended to answer every question proposed in the statement of the problems. The objectives are listed as follows:

1. To reveal how the Guernsey society responds to Elizabeth McKenna's heroic deeds.
2. To explore how the Guernsey society responds to Elizabeth McKenna's "immoral" deeds.

3. To reveal how Elizabeth McKenna acts as a whole woman, a woman who is not limited by stereotypical gender views.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Regarding the issue of gender inequality, the writer of this study wants to show how a society views a woman and how the woman acts as a whole woman by analyzing the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. The patriarchal ideology plays its role clearly on the judgment of the woman character that are always considered as the good and the bad one, never in between. This study attempts to give contribution to the study of literature particularly in English Department Faculty of Humanities, Airlangga University in which it can be one of the worthwhile studies in order to give notable information to the readers in analyzing a woman character of a novel.

Since there is no previous undergraduate thesis in Airlangga University using the theory of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism, hopefully the study can be helpful for students who are interested in doing research about woman by applying the feminism theory in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Finally, the writer hopes that this study could encourage other readers to do their own research on other works, whether it is a different novel or other kinds of literary works, and to analyze woman character related to the gender equality.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

There are many issues, problems, events, and conflicts in discussing this novel. The writer does not analyze the whole part of the novel, she narrows the focus of the study only to several aspects which she thinks most important. Since the primary source of the study is a novel entitled *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, it is needed to focus on the intrinsic elements, which is about the characterization on how a woman character of Elizabeth McKenna is depicted. Therefore, the writer limits this study by focusing on the illustration of Elizabeth McKenna through the society's judgment towards her deeds, her heroic and immoral deeds and about how she acts in her life as a whole woman by disregarding the unfair judgment she possibly gets because of her sex as a woman. Elizabeth McKenna is a character who is found in other characters' letters starting from how she is viewed to what she chooses to do in her life. The other subjects outside the limitation are not considered in the process of the study analysis.

1.6 Theoretical Background

In analyzing the novel entitled *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Anne Barrows, the writer of this study applies the feminism theory suggested by Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Feminist criticism is one of the literary criticism whose standpoint is women. In the study, it is about the traditional gender roles built by patriarchy. The theory of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism is used to find out how

the patriarchal ideology is appeared in the novel of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. It is used to analyze the woman main character named Elizabeth McKenna and the society's judgment towards her, which is related to the patriarchal traditional gender roles of a woman and about how the woman character lives on her own way.

Patriarchy believes that there are only two types of women, the good and the bad, and they are classified through their deeds and whether they follow the patriarchal traditional gender roles or not. However, in agreement with Wollstonecraft's feminism, a woman has her own rights to choose anything she wants whether the deeds agree with patriarchal traditional gender roles or not. It is shown through Elizabeth McKenna's deeds in living her life. Although she is a woman who is assumed as the alienated sex, she knows that she is the only one who is in control of her life.

In this sensual error, for I must call it so, has the false system of female manners been reared, which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land.
(Wollstonecraft 57)

Patriarchy has successfully created the women's characters by limiting their life spaces. Wollstonecraft argues that women are built unfairly because patriarchy takes their dignity over as human beings. Women are used and taught to be beautiful as "flowers" who has the responsibility to please either men or people around their lives.

1.7 Method of the Study

In doing the study, the method used is done through several steps. Data collecting from the novel that is analyzed is carried out by doing close reading. The writer does it to make data classification and select the data needed for the analysis. She collects the information about Elizabeth McKenna from the letters written by other characters to find how she is viewed by them and how she lives her life. The writer also uses other literatures, including online sources, to provide sufficient supports to elaborate the study. The writer collects data from library research such as literary works discussed, books, and references related to the study which are journals and articles including the data from the internet. Comparing the study with the other similar studies is done by finding several academic journals and articles containing the application of the same theory or the same topic with the study.

The descriptive qualitative method is chosen in conducting the study since it is believed as the applicable one. The descriptive qualitative method is done by giving quotations of the data that is analyzed (Moleong 11). The observer using this kind of method commonly uses why and how questions in conducting the research (Moleong 11). The writer describes the phenomena found in the novel to make the interpretation and the explanation qualitatively. The theory of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism will be used to analyze the objects which are to find out how the patriarchal ideology works through the society's judgment towards a woman character named Elizabeth McKenna, and how Elizabeth McKenna acts

on her own as a whole woman, a woman who is not limited by stereotypical gender views, who has the right to choose any act she takes.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Heroic : the woman's deed agrees with women's patriarchal traditional gender roles.

Angel : the term which is used by the patriarchy system to name the women who follow their patriarchal gender roles.

Immoral : the woman's deed which does not conform with the patriarchal ideology.

Monster : the term which is used by the patriarchy ideology to name the women who break their patriarchal gender roles.

Whole Woman : a woman who is perceived as a real human being whose life space should not be limited and bound by the patriarchal rules.