A study how Elizabeth Gaskell perceives the english social classes in Cranford by Pungky Wahyu Wijayani

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ABSTRAK

This study is conducted in order to find out how Elizabeth Gaskell perceives the social classes in England during the Victorian age in terms of the social interactions among classes, the lifestyle, and the social mobility as represented in Cranford. There are several theories used in this study. I employ Bz Les' interaction process analysis in order to classify the categories of social interaction. I also employ objective method in classifying the characters' social classes. Besides, I also employ Ross' theory of imitation and types of social mobility theory. This study is conducted using content analysis method in which all data are classified into several themes: the characters' social classes, the social interaction among classes, the lifestyle, and the social mobility.

In the novel, entitled Cranford, I find out that Gaskell sees that the classification of people in England led to some follies. Due to the existence of the social classes, Gaskell perceives that the Victorians brought several characteristics: they were hypocritical and snobbish. The upper classes tended to underestimate and despise the lower classes. On the other hand, the lower classes tended to respect the upper classes too much.

The lower classes also tend to imitate the upper classes' lifestyle although they were too poor to do so. They also tried to conceal their poverty by appearing rich. Therefore, they condemned the talking of poverty in public. Regarding social mobility, Gaskell sees that some people were eager to move upward. However, somehow, the eagerness to move upward might have led into a folly. On the social mobility, Gaskell perceives that the upper class' and the lower class' attitude towards social mobility varied. Some of the upper class people tended to accept the vertical downward mobility, while the lower class people tended to accept the mobility.
After analyzing the novel, I have noticed that there are still many points of the novel that can be analyzed. The students of English literature can analyze the psychological character. They can also analyze the Unitarianism in this novel. Since Gaskell is a Unitarian, she might bring her belief into her works. They can also analyze the extrinsic and intrinsic elements of the novels. However, I have noticed that many students and even lecturers of English literature are clueless about Elizabeth Gaskell and her works. Therefore, I suggest the lecturers to introduce his writer and her works to the students.