

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Life in prison has been the inspiration for some writers to produce their literary works. I believe there are two kinds of writers who write prison literature. The first is the writers who have experienced prison life themselves as prisoners; therefore, they usually produce a kind of autobiographical literature. The second is the writers who have observed and researched about prison and prisoners' life although they are never imprisoned. These writers produce fictional prison literature. One of the earliest prison literary works in English literature is Moll Flanders (1722) by Daniel Defoe. This is a semi-autobiographical writing and for reasons I will further elaborate, I decide to take this novel as research material of my thesis.

As an institution that is used for keeping and punishing people who commit a crime, a prison is not a comfortable place to live in. It is usually a place full of horror, where criminals that commit crimes such as murder, robbery, spying and other crimes are tortured, not treated decently and subjected to a harsh life. Political inmates and spies from other countries are kept in the same prison

and sometimes tortured. In this world, each country has its own notorious prison. There are Bastille in France, Newgate in England, Alcatraz and Sing Sing in America. In order to support my analysis on Moll Flanders, I visited LP Cianjur, a prison that is located in Cianjur, West Java.

Daniel Defoe is one of the greatest British novelists and journalists. He produced a lot of literary works in different genres and “is widely recognized for his creativity in depicting life in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Through his career and achievements, he managed to stay on top of all political and social topics” (“ A Biography of Daniel Defoe”). Furthermore, Defoe is notable for being one of the earliest novelists and has helped popularize the genre in Britain. He is often referred to as one of the founders of the English novel. (“Daniel Defoe”, Ebiog.com). “His greatest strengths lay in his ability to draw from both reality and his own vivid imagination to create wonderful, adventurous books” (“A Biography of Daniel Defoe”).

From Defoe’s biography, I find out that Defoe once spent his time as an inmate in Newgate. He was enjailed because in 1703 he wrote his famous pamphlet “The Shortest Way With Dissenters”, which criticized the high church. It caused him to be arrested and sent to Newgate in 1703 (“Daniel Defoe”, Wikipedia).

Moll Flanders, one of Defoe’s famous novels, was published in 1722 and seems to be inspired by his experience in Newgate. Defoe's description of Newgate and its inmates in Moll Flanders is powerful and extremely memorable, an evidence that his time in Newgate had marked him deeply. Considering the strong influence of Defoe’s own experience in this novel, I decide to analyze the

portrayal of prison and prisoners' life using historical-biographical approach. Historical-Biographical critics see works as the reflection of an author's life and time (or of the characters' life and time), and they believe it is necessary to know about the author and the political, economical, and sociological context of his time in order to truly understand his works (Burris, para 4). The prison and prisoners' life in 18th century England portrayed in the novel are vividly horrifying. Using historical biographical approach to deepen my understanding, I will compare Defoe's description of prison and inmates' life with the real historical records. I will also study Defoe's biography to find his intention in making such portrayal in Moll Flanders.

Statement of the problem

Having studied the novel, I state the problems of my thesis as follows:

1. How are prison and its prisoners' life portrayed in Defoe's Moll Flanders?
2. How is his portrayal of prison and prisoners' life compared to the historical records?
3. What is the author's intention in creating such a portrayal in his novel?

Purpose of the study

This study is done to show

1. prison and prisoners' life portrayed in Defoe's Moll Flanders
2. how the historical records about prison and its prisoners' life are compared to their portrayal in Defoe's novel.
3. Defoe's intention in creating such portrayal in his novel

Method of research

In this thesis the present writer analyzes the portrayal of prison and prisoners' life in 18th century England in Moll Flanders, a novel written by Defoe in 1722. The present writer uses library research to write this thesis. Firstly, he reads the novel thoroughly. He also uses some information from the Internet and a number of references to help him do the analysis. Biographical and historical approaches are used to analyze this topic. Finally, some conclusions are drawn from the analysis.

The organization of thesis

The present writer divides the thesis into three chapters, which are preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the portrayal of prison and prisoners' life in 18th century England in Defoe's Moll Flanders. In Chapter Three, the present writer draws his conclusion. Then he ends the thesis with the Bibliography, which contains the list of references the present writer has used in the study, and the Appendices, which contain a synopsis of the novel and a biography of the author.