

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

After reading the novel and analysing the portrayal of the protagonist in Jill Dawson's Wild Boy, I finally conclude that Dawson clearly describes that the characteristics of the protagonist in the novel change. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist, named Victor, is portrayed as an aggressive, childish, unsociable, uncivilized, and profoundly retarded boy. He changes into an unaggressive, more mature, sociable, civilized, and severely retarded boy.

Dawson's description of Victor as an aggressive, unsociable, and uncivilized boy is realistic. Such characteristics were likely to be found in real life if we were allowed to conduct an experiment in which a baby is deliberately abandoned in the forest and survives alone without having any contact with human beings but animals. The protagonist's inability to use simple tools and to know manners is also understandable if one is not exposed to civilization. The description of the protagonist as a profoundly retarded boy at the beginning of the novel is also realistic since a boy who is never exposed to a language is very likely to be unable to understand a language let alone speaking the language.

Victor is based on a true story. People who take care of him are Doctor Itard as his personal doctor and Madame Guérin, a woman who is hired to take care of Victor. Dawson uses two narrators in the story, Doctor Itard and Madame Guérin, so that the reader can distinguish between the advantages of having a male character and the benefits of employing a female character to handle a boy with unique characteristics. Her portrayal of the protagonist's characteristics is also based on her experience in dealing with her own child who is Autistic. Her description of the protagonist as a child who needs special care and attention must be very accurate because several characters in the novel are based on people in real life.

By conveying her idea through Madame Guérin's point of view, Dawson wants to reveal that Madame Guérin gives a great deal of contribution in the improvement of Victor's characteristics. Dawson wants to emphasize that a woman's role in taking care of an autistic child is very significant. Before writing the novel, Dawson has made an observation. She makes an effort to ask about the real Madame Guérin, as is stated in Afterword of her Novel Wild Boy:

This remarkable woman cared for the wild boy for twenty-eight years and yet little is known about her....I was told that although interest in Victor and Itard has continued in the thirty years since Truffaut's film, I was the first person to ask about Madame Guérin." (Dawson 289)

By portraying Victor as an autistic child, Dawson intends to remind parents who have autistic children to take care of their children carefully because sometimes autistic children are not aware of impending dangers. Moreover, she wants to emphasize that the belief that autistic children never care about other

people's feelings is wrong. They care about other people's feelings when they are in trouble, as is revealed in his attitude towards Madame Guérin, whose husband has just passed away.

The changes Victor experiences are influenced by some people around him. They are Doctor Itard, Madame Guérin, the husband of Madame Guérin, Henri, and her daughter, Julie. Each of them has different positive impacts on the development of his characteristics. Dawson also has a purpose in creating those characters. He wants to show that people of different roles are needed in the process of 'healing' an autistic child.

It is apparent that Dawson makes every effort to show that the presence of Doctor Itard, Madame Guérin and Monsieur Guerin, as well as Julie, is extremely significant in the protagonist's improvement. Their togetherness with Victor eventually makes him feel comfortable; he is no longer afraid to socialize with other people. Dawson obviously wants to warn parents who have autistic children to be patient and make consistent efforts to improve their children's psychological as well as physical conditions. Even though Victor's progress is slow and he cannot really become a normal person, at least he changes into a better person.